

W. K. C. GUTHRIE

THE
SOPHISTS



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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BY

W. K. C. GUTHRIE

F.B.A.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Most works cited in abbreviated form in the text will be easily recognizable under the author's or editor's name in the bibliography. It may however be helpful to list the following:

PERIODICALS

- AJP* *American Journal of Philology.*
BICS *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (London).
CP *Classical Philology.*
CQ *Classical Quarterly.*
CR *Classical Review.*
GGA *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen.*
HSCP *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.*
JHI *Journal of the History of Ideas.*
JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies.*
PCPS *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society.*
REG *Revue des Études Grecques.*
TAPA *Transactions of the American Philological Association.*

OTHER WORKS

- CGF* *Comitorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. Meineke.
DK Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.*
KR G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers.*
LSJ Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed.
OCD *Oxford Classical Dictionary.*
OP *Oxyrhynchus Papyri.*
RE *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*,
ed. Wissowa, Kroll *et al.*
TGF *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, ed. Nauck.
ZN Zeller-Nestle (see bibliography).

PREFACE

The third volume of my *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1969) was divided into two parts, entitled respectively 'The World of the Sophists' and 'Socrates'. By issuing the two parts separately in paperback form, the Press hopes to make them more easily and cheaply available to students. This book reproduces the first part, with the minimum of alterations necessary to allow it to appear as a separate publication. Mentions of 'vol. I' or 'vol. II' in the text refer to the earlier volumes of this work.

The original title for the first part was chosen to mark the fact that it is impossible to understand the Sophists without taking into account a wider circle of writers and indeed the general contemporary climate of thought. Philosophy in the middle of the fifth century B.C. was closely bound up with problems of practical living, with views on morals and politics and the origin and purpose of organized societies, and the biggest difficulty which it presented was that of setting limits to the subject. What an authority on the eighteenth century has said of the *philosophes* of that epoch is equally true of the Sophists, namely that 'while the Enlightenment was a family of philosophes, it was something more as well: it was a cultural climate, a world in which the philosophes acted, from which they noisily rebelled and quietly drew many of their ideas, and on which they attempted to impose their programme'.¹ One cannot isolate the Sophists from their contemporary world, from writers like Thucydides, Euripides, Aristophanes and the orators, while at the same time any tendency to allow the volume to develop into a history of Greek literature had, for obvious reasons, to be resisted.

A recent writer has remarked on the powerful impact which has always been made by fresh and immediate contact with the great minds of ancient Greece. More than once it has proved an inspiration to struggles for political freedom, so much so that the authorities of Czarist Russia, unable to suppress classical studies entirely, sought to combat their revolutionary effect by confining them to the harmless channel of the textual exegesis of a few selected authors instead of

¹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, London, 1967, p. xii.

Preface

allowing them the more dangerous outlet of education in ancient political theory.¹ Without departing from the limited aims of a historian, I may be allowed to hope that the link uniting Greek political and social ideas to the reconciliation of freedom with order in the modern world may never be broken.

Books have most frequently been referred to in the text and notes by short titles, and articles by periodical and date only. Full particulars of books, and titles and page-references for articles, will be found in the bibliography. The fragments of the Sophists, and other texts relating to them, are included in the *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* of Diels and Kranz (abbreviated DK). They are also to be found, with certain additions, Italian translation and commentary, in the four fascicules of Untersteiner's *I Sofisti*. This is referred to here as *Sof.*, followed by the number of the fascicule, whereas *Sophs.* stands for his book on the Sophists in its English translation by K. Freeman. The texts in an 'A' section of DK (*Testimonia*) have their number preceded by this letter, and those in a 'B' section, purporting to be actual quotations from the philosopher in question, are designated 'fr.' (fragment). Treatises in the Hippocratic Corpus have been referred to by book (when in more than one book) and chapter, followed uniformly by the volume and page in Littré's edition. Those who prefer to consult the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* (originally edited by Heiberg, Leipzig, 1927) for the particular treatises which it includes will not, I hope, find the passages difficult to locate.

Translations, from both ancient and modern authors, are my own unless otherwise stated.

DOWNING COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
MARCH 1971

W.K.C.G.

¹ H. G. Graham, 'The Classics in the Soviet Union', *Class. World*, LIV (1960-1), 107.

I

INTRODUCTION

'To describe is to select; to select is to evaluate; to evaluate is to criticize.'

Gouldner, *Enter Plato*, 168.

The Presocratic philosophers dealt to a large extent with questions which might be said to have been settled long ago, and to possess now an interest which is purely historical. We no longer debate whether the earth is round or flat, and if we want to discover the origin and substance of the stars, we are hardly likely to be helped by the speculations of Xenophanes or Anaxagoras. With the change that came over philosophy in the fifth century, we are plunged into a discussion of questions which are as relevant now as they were when first raised by the Sophists. Whatever we may think of the Sophistic movement, we must all agree that (as Alban Lesky puts it in his history of Greek literature) no intellectual movement can be compared with it in the permanence of its results, and that the questions which the Sophists posed have never been allowed to lapse in the history of Western thought down to our own day.¹ This is obvious from many recent writings on the period, in which the conflict between the Sophistic and Platonic points of view is expounded, even by professional scholars, in tones not so much of dispassionate historical investigation as of vehement partisanship. It is difficult to remain impartial in discussing questions which are of such vital importance to the preservation of civilized values in our own day.

¹ Lesky, 341. Many of course have made the same point. One may take at random a German (W. Schmid, *Gesch.* 1.3.1, 216): 'The questions and controversies of that time have lost nothing of their actuality'; or an Italian (Gigante, *Nom. Bas.* 15): 'The theoretical foundation of the general doctrine of law in the twentieth century recapitulates the speculation of fifth-century Greek Sophistic.' Its effect on the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century is vividly portrayed in Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, especially ch. 6, where he justifies his statement (p. 285) that 'after more than two thousand years the eighteenth century establishes direct contact with the thinking of antiquity... The two fundamental theses represented in Plato's *Republic* by Socrates and Thrasymachus oppose each other again.' They still stand opposed today.

Introduction

In spite of the shift of interest from natural phenomena to human affairs, there are nevertheless essential connexions between the Pre-socratic tradition and the new intellectual ferment generated by the Sophists. The Presocratics may fairly be said to have been pre-occupied with the nature of reality and its relation to sensible phenomena. This question of the relation between reality and appearance remains at the root of things, and in one form or another constitutes the fundamental difference between rival philosophies. On the one hand we have a complex of ideas whose basis may be loosely summed up in such terms as empiricism, positivism, phenomenalism, individualism, relativism and humanism. Appearances are constantly shifting, from one moment to the next and between one individual and another, and they themselves constitute the only reality. In morals this leads to a 'situational ethics', an emphasis on the immediately practical and a distrust of general and permanent rules and principles. Such rules or principles could remain valid only if instituted by some divine power, and religious beliefs, along with many other hitherto unquestioned traditions, are challenged on the grounds that they cannot be verified by positive evidence. This outlook in its turn is opposed by the attempt to restore, with philosophical justification, a belief in absolute standards and permanent and unvarying truths existing above, and unaffected by, sensible phenomena and individual actions and events. We may call it (using similarly evocative but as yet undefined terms) absolutism, idealism or transcendentalism. The first view is typified by the sayings of Protagoras, earliest and greatest of the Sophists, that man is the measure of all things and the existence of gods an undemonstrable assumption. The second is rooted in the teaching of Socrates, but culminates later in Plato's ideal theory, according to which such concepts as justice and beauty, as well as identity and equality and many others, have an existence apart from the human mind, as independent and unvarying standards to which human perceptions and human actions can and must be referred. With this goes naturally a view of the world as the product of divine intelligence.

It is remarkable how many arguments that might be thought to be ethical or political, and so to deal with purely practical matters,

Morals and Metaphysics

depend in fact on much deeper philosophical issues. This is none the less true because the men of action who put them into practice may not always be aware of it; and often the connexion is in fact a fully conscious one. Politics and morals, general theories of human nature, metaphysics and epistemology cannot be separated. On the surface we may have political differences about the relative merits of monarchy and republicanism, democracy and totalitarianism, and the general question of where sovereignty should lie, whether in the hands of one man, a select aristocracy or the whole people. We have questions, demanding immediate action, of slavery and its abolition, of colonial rule, or race-relations. Below this is a level of ideas which, while still remaining on the human plane, are more abstract and theoretical, raising fundamental questions of human nature. Are all men naturally equal? Is the existence of rulers and subjects, masters and servants, merely a matter of practical convenience, or is it grounded in ineradicable natural differences? In studying the various answers that have been given to these questions, the historian will often find that their explanation lies at a third, still deeper level. They rest on assumptions about the nature of reality and the workings of the universe, determining man's position within it, on the issues of divine government *versus* chance, a cosmos whose members are all organically related as opposed to a collection of unrelated parts thrown together at random.

An example is furnished by the English civil war of the seventeenth century. On the surface it is a political struggle between two rival factions, King and Parliament, as to which should govern. Beneath this was the question whether men are naturally, or divinely, divided into higher and lower orders; and those who believed that they were based this belief on the existence of a hierarchical dispensation prevailing throughout the whole of nature. At the head is God, the supreme ruler, after him the angels, then man, who in turn is lord over the animals, beneath which come plants and lowest of all the inanimate world. God himself has ordained that there should be higher and lower orders of being, and intended that a similar pattern should be followed in human society. Here, in divine ordinance, lay the ultimate sanction for absolute monarchy. Christian principles,

Introduction

which most of us now believe to teach that all men are equal in God's sight, were then invoked to prove precisely the opposite.¹

What is invoked here is the analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, the order of human society and the order of nature, involving the conception of the universe as a divinely constructed and close-knit organism, which goes back to Plato and beyond. Equally deeply rooted in Greek thought was the rival philosophy that found its political expression in the idea of a social compact upheld by Locke and others. The relations between a ruler and his subjects are based on acceptance of this compact, which lays obligations on both sides. It is no divine ordinance but a purely human agreement, and a people has the right to depose a ruler who breaks it just as he may punish his subjects if they disobey the laws in which it is embodied. The idea of law as no more than an agreement, instituted by men and alterable by consent, is, as we shall see, basic to the humanism of the Greek Sophists, and is attacked by Plato, for whom justice and law exist in their own right, and all that we can do is to try to reproduce them, so far as possible, in our relations with one another. For a later parallel one might cite Hugo Grotius, in whose work 'the Platonism of modern natural law is most perfectly expressed . . . In enacting his various positive laws the legislator follows an absolutely universally valid norm which is exemplary for his own as well as for every other will.'² The Sophists had held up nature as the antithesis of law, wrongly, said Plato, for nature itself, as the product of rational design, is the supreme embodiment of law and order.

In epistemology the one philosophy, initiated by Parmenides and elaborated by Plato, displays unbounded confidence in the powers of human reason, which for Plato is based on the essential identity of reason in man and God. Parmenides rejected the senses entirely, and

¹ Filmer thought it 'a fault scarce pardonable in a Christian' to believe in a community of goods and equality of persons (Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics*, 92). For Pusey the mere recognition of rank and station was still 'a fact in God's providence' (Report of the Royal Commission on the Universities 1852, on the wearing of distinctive gowns by noblemen). Cf. Miss M. A. Stodart reviewing *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review*, 84 (December 1848), 173-4: 'Altogether the auto-biography of Jane Eyre is pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition. There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment.'

² E. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 240.

Empiricism and Rationalism

Plato would allow them no loftier role than as a starting-point which the mind must quickly leave behind. If heeded too much, they could only be a hindrance to the comprehension of reality. Knowledge only deserved the name if it was absolute and universal, and to attain such knowledge it was necessary to transcend experience, penetrating the veil of sense and rousing into consciousness truths that were latent in the mind because that immortal essence had already been vouchsafed a direct vision of them in its disembodied state.

The reappearance of this outlook in later history can be strikingly illustrated by a passage from Dr W. H. Greenleaf's book *Order, Empiricism and Politics* (276f.) describing rationalism in seventeenth-century England:

The rationalist philosophers of the time . . . shared many features of thought with the empirical tradition but basically their views were contrary to its tenets. While the empiricist acknowledged the importance of the rational faculty and had great faith in its ability to understand the reality of things, he nonetheless placed primary emphasis on the need to base the process of reasoning on a solid foundation of experience. Reliable sense-data were the first requirement of his inductive method. On the other hand, the rationalist tended to stress the unique significance of reason alone and to argue that the other faculties of memory and imagination, far from being of assistance in the comprehension of reality, presented obstacles to its achievement. Information derived from the senses was, therefore, obscure, unreliable and misleading, and it was only by transcending experience to the higher level of reason that indubitable conclusions could be reached. This reason was an innate faculty, an inner light, placed in every individual by God, which guaranteed its compatibility with the reality of his creation. It was self-sufficient in the sense that its intuitions alone provided the clear and precise understanding characteristic of and basic to true knowledge. Like the empirical reason, it analysed and resolved things into basic 'natures'; however, these were not mere names (as they were to the empiricist), but real, absolute ideas.

This account is drawn from contemporary English sources, but its derivation will be obvious to any reader of Plato; and, although the author goes on to name Descartes, with his vision of a 'universal mathematical science', as the prototype of such notions, the seventeenth-century rationalists knew their Plato too, and no doubt looked

on him as their first ancestor. The idea of mathematics as a model of exact and rational science is certainly not absent from his works. It is the Platonic philosophy which Macaulay rightly singled out as dominant over men's minds up to the time when Francis Bacon turned them in a new direction.

The empirical outlook holds a much more modest view of the human faculties. Doubts of the adequacy of our equipment to attain truth were first voiced in a religious context in contrast to the clarity of divine vision,¹ but in Ionians like Anaxagoras and Democritus we see rather the modesty of the scientific spirit. For Democritus in his more pessimistic moments, 'we know nothing, for truth is in the depths', and 'either truth does not exist or it is hidden from us'. But he was not a complete sceptic.² The senses give a false picture of reality, and for the mind to probe beneath their 'bastard knowledge' is not easy; but at least for him there was a reality behind appearances, whether or not we could grasp it fully. Even this was abandoned by some of the Sophists in favour of an out-and-out phenomenalism. Such radical scepticism as that of Protagoras and Gorgias was hardly helpful to the progress of scientific thought. It was a violent reaction from the extreme rationalism of the Eleatics, but it owed much to the attitude of contemporary Ionian scientists, whose religious agnosticism or disbelief, denial of final causes, and humility before the magnitude of cosmic problems in comparison with the feebleness of human perceptions cleared the way for every variety of free thought. Here too they have their counterparts in other periods, including our own. As to the upsurge of the scientific spirit at the Renaissance, no one can read far in the literature of the time without observing its openly acknowledged connexion with the Greek philosophers. Stimulus to empirical methods and the whole empirical way of thought came from the revival of Greek learning as much as from contemporary advances in knowledge. A founder of experimental science like Francis Bacon knew well that the two competing schools of thought in his own day reflected a similar conflict of ideas in the ancient world. He wrote for instance in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*:

¹ E.g. by Alcmaeon, Xenophanes and Heraclitus. See vol. I, 344, 398.

² Fr. 117 and A 112. See vol. II, 461 f.

Empiricism and Idealism

For this reason the natural philosophy of Democritus and others who have removed God and mind from the fabric of the world, who have attributed the construction of the universe to an infinity of attempts and experiments on the part of nature (which they called by the single name of chance or fate) and assigned the causes of particular things to necessity, without admixture of final causes, seems to me (so far as one may conjecture from the fragmentary remains of their philosophy) to be, so far as physical causes are concerned, on a much firmer basis, and to have penetrated more deeply into nature, than the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle; and this solely for the one reason, that they wasted no thought on final causes, whereas Plato and Aristotle forced them in at every turn.¹

Kathleen Nott was hardly fair to Bacon in giving Lord Russell the credit for pointing out that there are two main lines of development through European thought in so far as it stems from the Greeks, the idealist and the empirical, one beginning with Plato and the other with Democritus. Like most people since Bacon she is a partisan: 'On the whole, the humane developments have sprung from the empirical approach, while those which are anti-human can be linked with various forms of philosophical idealism.'²

The empiricism and scepticism of the Sophists can best be understood in contrast to their most redoubtable opponent, the idealism of Plato;³ but this immediately presents a problem for the study of Sophistic thought. With the Sophists we are in the same situation as with the Presocratics, of reconstructing the ideas of men whose own writings are for the most part no longer available, and our richest source of information is Plato himself, their philosophical opponent. At the same time the dramatic skill with which he presents their personalities and conversation, and the sheer charm of his literary productions (seldom if ever equalled by any other philosopher),

¹ *De Augm. Sc.* bk. 3, ch. 4. I have translated the Latin, which will be found in vol. 1 of the Ellis and Spedding edition, 569f. Their own translation is in vol. IV, 363f.

² 'German Influence on Modern French Thought', *The Listener*, 13 January 1955.

³ Two points should be noted here. (1) At a later stage it will be necessary to determine more precisely who the Sophists were, and what is the meaning of the word. At present I am allowing myself to use it in a broad sense to stand for certain trends of thought which the men called Sophists certainly represented, even if not exclusively. (2) It is usual to couple Socrates with Plato in this connexion, because it is through the mouth of Socrates that Plato delivers most of his attacks on the Sophists in his dialogues. The position of Socrates, however, is more complex, and for the present it will be preferable to speak of Plato alone as at the opposite pole from Sophistic thought.

Introduction

make an almost indelible impression on our minds. The present century has seen a particularly violent controversy over the fairness or otherwise of Plato's account and the relative merits of the two ways of looking at the world.

Until comparatively recently the prevailing view, the view in which a scholar of my own generation was brought up, was that in his quarrel with the Sophists Plato was right. He was what he claimed to be, the real philosopher or lover of wisdom, and the Sophists were superficial, destructive, and at worst deliberate deceivers, purveyors of sophistry in the modern sense of that term. Since the 1930s, however, we have seen a strong movement to reinstate the Sophists and their kin as champions of progress and enlightenment, and a revulsion from Plato as a bigoted reactionary and authoritarian who by blackening their reputation has ensured the suppression of their writings. Sir Karl Popper has christened them 'the Great Generation', and it is they who are primarily referred to in the title of Professor Havelock's book *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*. To him they represent the spearhead of liberal and democratic thinking in Greece, which was overwhelmed by the big battalions represented by Plato and Aristotle.¹ In 1953 the American scholar R. B. Levinson could say, sadly, that 'today friendship for Plato is to be found chiefly among those scholars (and their friends and disciples) whose vision of him antedated the rise of Nazism'. It is true that a powerful impetus to this movement was given by the rise of totalitarian governments in Europe and the second world war, and it was indeed disturbing to learn that the aim of the German Nazi party, as described in its official programme, was the production of 'guardians in the highest Platonic sense'. Another form of attack was the psychoanalytical, which saw Plato as a guilt-ridden homosexualist with an irresistible urge to dominate.²

¹ For an interesting critique of Havelock's book see L. Strauss, 'The Liberalism of Classical Political Philosophy', in *J. of Metaph.* 1959. I would commend in particular his final paragraph, in which he speaks of 'the danger that stems from the inspiration of scholarship by what is called a philosophy', and of the alleged tolerance which 'turns into violent hatred of those who have stated most clearly and most forcibly that there are unchangeable standards founded in the nature of man and the nature of things'.

² The fullest and most influential attack on Plato and eulogy of the empiricists is Sir Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945, 5th ed. 1966). The attack in its modern form began with W. Fite's *The Platonic Legend* (1934), and has grown into a considerable literature,

Modern Defenders of the Sophists

However, as I have tried to show, such a dispute goes deeper than contemporary events or fashionable theories, and in fact disagreement over Plato's presentation of the Sophists is older than some of the disputants on either side seem to remember. From the middle of the nineteenth century the question was vigorously and ably debated. Zeller's *History* in its first edition (1844-52) was probably the last to uphold unchallenged the view that the teaching of even the best of the Sophists was bound in the end to reduce everything to a matter of individual preference and prejudice, and turn philosophy from the search for truth into a means of satisfying the demands of selfishness and vanity; and that the only way out was that of Socrates, who sought to win back by reason a deeper, surer foundation for both knowledge and morality (ZN, 1439). This view had been particularly strongly held in Germany, and was opposed by Grote in the powerful ch. lxvii of his *History of Greece*. The German historians of philosophy, he complained, 'dress up a fiend called "Die Sophistik", whom they assert to have poisoned and demoralised by corrupt teaching the Athenian moral character'. Grote was a utilitarian and a democrat, at a period when, in describing the rise of Athenian democracy, he was constrained to remark that 'democracy happens to be unpalatable to most modern readers'.¹ His vindication of the Sophists was hailed as a 'historical discovery of the highest order' by Henry Sidgwick in 1872, who summarized the current opinion of the Sophists thus:

They were a set of charlatans who appeared in Greece in the fifth century, and earned an ample livelihood by imposing on public credulity: professing to teach virtue, they really taught the art of fallacious discourse, and meanwhile propagated immoral practical doctrines. Gravitating to Athens as the Prytaneion of Greece, they were there met and overthrown by Socrates,

from which the following is a selection: R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato Today* (1937, 2nd ed. 1959); A. Winspear and T. Silverberg, *Who Was Socrates?* (1939, written from a Marxist standpoint); O. Neurath and J. A. Lauwerys, *Plato's Republic and German Education*, and the controversy which followed it (including contributions from G. C. Field and C. E. M. Joad), in the *Journal of Education* for 1945; E. A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (1957); *Plato, Totalitarian or Democrat?*, essays ed. by T. L. Thorson (1963); *Plato, Popper and Politics*, ed. Bambrough (1967). The best and fullest justification of Plato against his attackers is Levinson's *In Defense of Plato*, with a full bibliography up to its date of publication (1953). For the psychoanalytical approach of H. Kelsen see Levinson, pp. 100ff.

¹ Grote, *History* (6th ed. 1888), vii, 52, and iv, 106. The first edition of this work was almost exactly contemporary with Zeller's.

who exposed the hollowness of their rhetoric, turned their quibbles inside-out, and triumphantly defended sound ethical principles against their pernicious sophistries.

Yet he did not go all the way with Grote. To Grote's statement that few characters in history have been so hardly dealt with as these so-called Sophists, he retorted: 'They had in their lifetime more success than they deserved, and many better men have been worse handled by posterity.' Sidgwick's main criticism was that in his anxiety to do justice to the Sophists Grote had exaggerated the partisanship of Plato. For Grote, Plato

not only stole the name out of general circulation in order to fasten it specially upon his opponents the paid teachers, but also connected it with express discreditable attributes, which formed no part of its primitive and recognised meaning, and were altogether distinct from, though grafted upon, the vague sentiment of dislike associated with it.

The reaction against commentators like Stallbaum, said Sidgwick, who 'treat their author as if he were a short-hand reporter of actual dialogues', was necessary and right, but nevertheless 'one always feels that the satirical humour of Plato was balanced by the astonishing versatility of his intellectual sympathy'.¹ Jowett also published a judicious criticism of Grote in the introduction to his translation of Plato's *Sophist* (1871), in which he argued that the principal Sophists may well have been good and honourable men, but that their bad reputation at Athens was something already current for a variety of reasons (they were foreigners, made large fortunes, excited youthful minds and so on), and was by no means an invention of Plato.² A further appraisal came in a long and well-reasoned essay by Sir Alexander Grant. His conclusions were that Grote had succeeded in disposing of the former sweeping denunciations of the Sophists, but that even so they were not all either morally blameless or philosophically adequate, and that the 'subtle and discriminating pictures drawn by Plato' did not deserve the censure they received at his hands.³

Reading these scholars of a past generation tempts one to linger

¹ See Sidgwick's two articles in *J. Phil.* 1872 and 1873.

² Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato* (4th ed. 1953), III, 325 ff.

³ Grant, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (4th ed. 1885), I, 104-55.

and quote at length. That would be disproportionate, but at least it is important to show that Plato's portrayal of the Sophists, so hotly debated today, was well and truly put on trial by the great Victorians, many of whom were not only fine scholars but men of affairs with experience in political, educational and other fields.¹ Needless to say, their conclusions, like those of their successors, were not unaffected by their personal political or philosophical beliefs. Karl Joël in 1921 (*Gesch.* 674f.) noted how the positivists rallied in support of the Sophists, especially in England from Grote and Lewes onwards. In Germany Theodor Gomperz (under Grote's influence), Laas and Nietzsche in his positivist period did the same. More surprisingly at first sight, Joël adds on the same side 'Hegelian intellectualism', which hailed them as 'masters in reflective reasoning', and 'out of its philosophy of history understood all and pardoned all'. On the other hand, it was inevitable that, history having taken the course it has, Plato should now be suffering from the lavish praise that was bestowed on him by some English commentators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Staunchly liberal as they might be in their personal beliefs, they could yet, under the influence of what Havelock has called 'the Oxford school of neo-idealism', see him in the image of a Victorian liberal like themselves. There is some substance in Havelock's claim (*Lib. Temper*, 19) that in one at least of these writers 'exposition reads as if it were fervent apology', and 'the naturalists and the materialists, the Sophists and the democrats, are treated only as faint and futile voices protesting off-stage'. A reaction was inevitable in the shocks and disillusion that overwhelmed Europe as our century advanced. In the following pages I hope to set forth the intellectual conflict of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. as far as possible in the light of contemporary evidence, and see it as arising out of its own crises and its own educational and social needs. We need not fear that either its intrinsic interest or its continuing relevance will thereby be diminished.

¹ Of Grote and Jowett it is unnecessary to speak, and Grant served for eight years in educational posts in India. Havelock's description of the Sophists' methods as essentially those of democratic processes is anticipated by Grote, especially in VII, 39, n. 2 (on p. 40, col. 2).

II

TOPICS OF THE DAY

In volume II (ch. VI) I briefly sketched the climate of thought in the fifth century, especially at Athens, and the effect in several different fields of the substitution of natural for divine causation. The present chapter will attempt an outline of the main causes and features of this changing outlook, before we go on to consider the meaning of Sophistic and investigate each separate topic in detail.

To determine the causes of an intellectual revolution is always a rash undertaking, and when a great many things are happening together it is not always easy to distinguish cause from effect; but a few things may be mentioned as more likely to belong to the former category. We are bound to dismiss, on chronological grounds, the assumption that the 'Presocratics', and in particular the Ionians, could all have been influential in moulding the thought of the Sophists. If there is any causal connexion between the ideas of Democritus and those of Protagoras or Gorgias, it is more likely to have been the other way round. On the other hand the influence of the Eleatics on Protagoras and Gorgias is undeniable, as is that of Heraclitus on Protagoras, and Gorgias is said to have been a pupil and follower of Empedocles.¹ One of the most powerful influences for humanism is to be found in the theories of the natural origins of life and society which were a feature of Ionian thought from Anaximander onwards. Life, including human life, was the product of a kind of fermentation set up by the action of heat on damp or putrefying matter, and social and political groups were formed by agreement as man's only effective form of defence against non-human nature. The cosmogonies themselves assisted in banishing divine agents from the world, not because they were evolutionary rather than creative—the idea of divine creation was never prominent in Greek religion—but because they made more difficult the Greek habit of seeing divine or semi-divine beings every-

¹ See vol. II, 135.

where in nature. It was a blow to religion when even the stars and the sun were asserted to be ignited clouds, or rocks torn from the earth and put into orbit by the cosmic vortex. The Olympians, even if they did not create the world, had at least controlled it, but the theories of the natural philosophers left no part for Zeus to play in the production of rain, thunder or lightning, nor for Poseidon in the terror of earthquakes.¹

In so far as the new spirit was a reaction from an interest in external nature to a concentration on human affairs, the Presocratics contributed to it by what must have seemed in many eyes their failure. It is, after all, the world of sensible experience and its impact on them with which men have to come to terms if they are to carry on a satisfying and happy life. This is for most of us the 'real world', yet in their different ways philosophers as wide apart as Parmenides and Democritus denied its reality and undermined the evidence of the senses. To the plain man's question: 'I can believe my own eyes, can't I?', their answer was a definite 'No'. Either motion and change were illusion, and 'what is' an immovable plenum, or else the only real things were atoms which were expressly denied to have any sensible qualities at all. Moreover the speculative character of their theories made them highly vulnerable, and the ingenuity of a Gorgias was quite capable of using arguments of the Eleatic type to prove the direct contrary of the Eleatic conclusion: not 'what is, is', but what is is not, and nothing exists (pp. 193 ff. below). Besides their remoteness, the Presocratics were discredited by their mutual contradictions. Each believed himself to be nearest to the truth, but were there any solid grounds for trusting one rather than another? Gorgias attacked on this front too. For him they were simply, like orators, masters of the art of verbal persuasion.²

¹ It should hardly be necessary to repeat the often-stated truth that the rationalism of any so-called age of enlightenment is by no means universal. The rejection of divine agency is confined to a section of the educated and intellectual. When in Plato's lifetime (373 B.C.) the Achaean city of Helike was overwhelmed by a combined earthquake and tidal wave, opinion was still divided between 'the piously inclined' (including Heraclides of Pontus), who ascribed the disaster to the wrath of Poseidon, and the rationalists who explained it solely by natural causes. See Strabo 8.7.2 and Diodorus 15.48 (Heracl. Pont. fr. 46 Wehrli). Thucydides tells how, during the plague at Athens, many sought aid from religious rites (2.47.4), but he himself obviously attributes it to purely natural causes.

² Gorg. *Hel.* 13 (DK, II, 292). See p. 51 below.

Often adduced as a cause of the new humanism is the widening of horizons through increasing contacts with other peoples, in war, travel and the foundation of colonies. These made it increasingly obvious that customs and standards of behaviour which had earlier been accepted as absolute and universal, and of divine institution, were in fact local and relative.¹ Habits that to the Greeks were wicked and disgusting, like marriage between brother and sister, might among the Egyptians or elsewhere be regarded as normal and even enjoined by religion. The history of Herodotus is typical of the mid fifth century in the enthusiasm with which he collects and describes the customs of Scythians, Persians, Lydians, Egyptians and others and points out their divergence from Hellenic usage. If all men, he says, were asked to name the best laws and customs, each would choose his own; and he illustrates this by the story of Darius, who summoned some Greeks and Indians to his court and first asked the Greeks for what consideration they would consent to eat their dead fathers. When they replied that they would not do it for anything, he turned to the Indians (of a tribe who normally ate the bodies of their parents) and asked them if anything could persuade them to burn their fathers (as the Greeks did), whereupon they cried aloud at the mere mention of such impiety.² Euripides too noted that incest is practised among non-Greek peoples, 'and no law forbids it' (*Andr.* 173-6), and shocked many by making a character say (again with reference to incest) that no behaviour is shameful if it does not seem so to those who practise it (fr. 19).³

¹ It is remarkable how persistently this kind of thing reappears as responsible for a questioning of the moral code. H. L. A. Hart (*Law, Liberty and Morality*, 68) mentions as a cause of division and hesitation over the issues of sexual morality 'in our own time' the free discussion of it 'in the light of the discoveries of anthropology and psychology'. The exceptional freedom of discussion now tolerated must have other roots, for enough anthropology and psychology to show up the relativity of moral codes was known to Herodotus, and again to seventeenth-century Europe (cf. especially Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics*, 198), let alone to the Victorians.

² Hdt. 3.38; not, incidentally, a very good argument for moral relativity, since it showed both parties agreed on the fundamental moral principle, that parents should be honoured in death as in life: the dispute was only about the means of fulfilling it. Thucydides (2.97.3-4) notes a custom of the Odrysians in Thrace which is the direct opposite of one observed in Persia.

³ As we shall see (pp. 119f. below), Socrates did not agree that a law was any the less universal and divine because some people broke it: incest, for instance, brings an unavoidable penalty, for its effects are dysgenic.

Effect of Foreign Contacts

Such examples could be multiplied, but it should be remembered that contact between Greeks and barbarians was no new thing. The Ionian Greeks of the Anatolian coastal strip had been in close contact with Orientals for centuries, and their intellectual progress owed much to foreign sources. Trade and colonization took them to the Black Sea and Mesopotamia, and the Milesian colony Naucratis was founded in Egypt in the seventh century.¹ Sojourns among Egyptians and Chaldaeans are recorded of early philosophers and sages like Solon, and are perfectly credible. The same may be said about the effect of the codification of laws. The unquestioning acceptance of law and custom, we are told, was no longer possible in a time of legislative activity. 'A code of laws drawn up by a human lawgiver whose name was known . . . could not be accepted in the old way as part of the everlasting order of things.' So Burnet (*T. to P.* 106), and the work of Protagoras in drawing up the laws for Thurii in 443 is sometimes quoted as a relevant example. But the names which Burnet mentions are Zaleucus, Charondas and Solon, whose activity can hardly be held responsible for the emergence of new theories denying the religious sanction of law in the period following the Persian Wars. The Greeks had seen laws in the making long before that, yet they continued to attribute them to the instructions of Apollo, advising the legislator through his oracle at Delphi.² The causes of the reasoned rejection of tradition which marked the middle of the fifth century were exceedingly complex, and, even if the inflammable mixture can be analysed, it may remain difficult to see why the spark was applied to it just when it was.³

Undoubtedly the successes of the Greeks against barbarians had given them enormous self-confidence and pride in their achievements; and, although popular opinion was still ready to lend an ear to stories of the personal intervention of gods or heroes at Marathon and elsewhere, the feeling that they had stood alone and overcome was strong, especially among the Athenians. They had been the leaders of Greek

¹ See vol. 1, 29f., where the mention of the eighth century must be corrected. R. M. Cook in *JHS*, 1937, 227ff., concludes that Naucratis was founded about 615-610.

² For details see my *Greeks and their Gods*, 184-9.

³ Diels in *Hermes*, 22, noted some signs that the 'enlightenment' of the Sophists had its forerunners as early as the sixth century, particularly among logographers like Hecataeus of Miletus. See on this Dümmler, *Akad.* 250.

resistance and borne the brunt of the Persian attack, and their consciousness of strength developed into an urge to dominate the rest and turn their former allies into subjects. If asked by what right they did this, they would reply as Thucydides shows them doing in the Melian Dialogue that it is a 'law of nature' that the stronger should do what is in their power and the weak give way (pp. 85 f. below).

This consciousness of power was being fostered from another direction by a new emphasis on the triumphs of human invention and technique. It is too easily assumed that the Greeks as a whole believed in an ideal of knowledge for its own sake, divorced from practical aims, and despised the useful arts, and there is some justice in recent claims that this generalization results from the academic habit of relying too heavily on Plato and Aristotle as representative of the Greek mind. In the fifth century the practical achievements of the human race were admired as much as their understanding of the universe. The stages of man's material progress were celebrated, for instance, by all the three great tragedians, as well as by philosophers like Anaxagoras and Democritus and the Sophist Protagoras. They might be associated with the name of Prometheus, patron saint of technology, or an unknown god as in Euripides's *Supplices* (201 f.), but, if so, his first gift to men is sagacity or ingenuity, and the rest follows from that. In the famous chorus of Sophocles's *Antigone* (332 ff.) there is no mention of higher beings: 'man with his skills' (περιφραδῆς ἀνὴρ) is the most dread and wonderful thing in the world. The technical triumphs extolled by these writers include speech and writing, hunting and fishing, agriculture, the domestication of animals and their use in transport, building, cookery, mining and metalwork, shipbuilding and navigation, spinning and weaving, pharmacy and medicine, calculation, astronomy and the mantic arts. It is a list entirely in the spirit of Macaulay's catalogue of the fruits of Baconian science, in which his express purpose was to show up by contrast the practical barrenness of Greek thought. A difference is that the Englishman, besides omitting the art of prophecy, includes new weapons of war among the blessings of progress. Perhaps the Greek also showed his wisdom by adding at the end of the list of technical achievements that they may be used for evil ends as well as good. So too Theseus in the *Hippolytus* (Eur.

Hipp. 915 ff.) asks to what purpose it is that men teach ten thousand arts and discover every ingenious device, when their science does not tell them how to put sense into the head of a man who has not got it.

Social and political changes played their part, especially the growth of democracy at Athens. This was a gradual process, begun by Solon (who first introduced the principle of appointing public officials by a combination of election and lot) and continued by Cleisthenes after the Peisistratid tyranny. It was already far advanced by the time of the Persian Wars, and completed by the reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes about 458. These opened the archonship to the lowest classes and introduced pay for the archons, *boulé* and people's courts, thereby making it not only legal but practically possible for the poorer citizens to give up their time to public affairs. At the same time they introduced the lot in its pure form for appointment to many offices, that is, without preliminary election of candidates; and of course any citizen could speak and vote in the Assembly, which passed laws, declared war and concluded treaties. This situation naturally encouraged the belief that one man's opinion was as good as another's, for, as Socrates complained, although in matters considered technical no one would be consulted unless he could give proof of his training and competence, where the art of government was concerned the Athenians would listen to anyone—smith or shoemaker, rich or poor. These anti-democratic sentiments were not lost on his critics (*Socrates*, p. 91), but the faults of the system (very different from a modern democracy) were glaring, not the least being fickleness. The treatment of Mytilene by the Athenian democracy illustrates its dangers, and perhaps its virtues also. After putting down a revolt there in 428, the Assembly under the influence of Cleon sent a trireme with orders to kill every man in the city and enslave the women and children. Next day they repented of this atrocious cruelty, and after a second debate reversed the decision by a tiny majority and despatched a second trireme post-haste to cancel the order. By eating at their oars and taking it in turns to sleep the rowers managed to arrive before it was put into effect. In this case the weakness of the democracy in the face of mob-oratory was just counterbalanced by its readiness to

reconsider and give both sides a fair hearing.¹ The little island of Melos was less fortunate, and its inhabitants suffered the fate originally intended for Mytilene. Their crime was to prefer neutrality to inclusion within the Athenian empire.

While the harsh realities of history, in a period of unscrupulous imperialism and war of Greek with Greek, were encouraging corresponding theories of the right of the powerful to do as they pleased—the kind of theories that are commonly associated with the names of some of the Sophists—the spread of democracy was creating the demand which the Sophists claimed to supply in their capacity of professional educators. The road to political success was open to anyone, provided he had the wit and the training to outdo his competitors. In the absence of universities or colleges of adult education the gap was filled, to their profit, by men like Protagoras, who gloried in the title of Sophist and proudly advertised his ability to teach a young man ‘the proper care of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and also of the State’s affairs, so as to become a real power in the city, both as speaker and man of action’. For this purpose the prime necessity was to master the art of persuasive speaking, and it has even been argued (by Heinrich Gomperz) that the whole teaching of the Sophists is summed up in the art of rhetoric.² That is a considerable exaggeration; the *areté* which Protagoras claimed to impart consisted of more than that. But one of them, Gorgias, did indeed laugh at the professed teachers of civic virtue. The art of clever speaking, he said, was all that he taught and all that any ambitious young man need learn. It was the master-art, for the man with the gift of persuasion had all the other experts in his power. (On this, however, see pp. 271f. below.)

I have spoken as if the political circumstances and public actions of the Greek states gave rise to the irreligious and utilitarian moral

¹ Thuc. 3. 36ff. (The speeches on this occasion are referred to on pp. 86f. below.) The size of modern states would forbid a complete, as opposed to a representative, democracy, even if one were desired, and probably the only places where it can be observed today are the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where similar instances of vacillation are not unknown.

² At the other extreme Bignone (*Studi*, 32) contrasted the orators, ‘living amid the harsh realities of politics’, with the Sophists, who led the ‘sheltered and segregated lives of paid educators of the public’. I imagine that this is the first and last time that we can expect to see the life of the Sophists described as *ombratile e appartata*!

The Sophists in their Setting

theories of the thinkers and teachers, but it is more likely that practice and theory acted and reacted mutually on one another. Doubtless the Athenians did not need a Thrasymachus or a Callicles to teach them how to deal with a recalcitrant island, but the speeches which Thucydides puts into the mouths of the Athenian spokesmen, in what he represents as a set debate with the Melian assembly, bear unmistakable marks of Sophistic teaching. Pericles was a friend of Protagoras, and when Gorgias appeared before the Athenians in 427 the novel flowers of oratory with which he pleaded the cause of his Sicilian fatherland aroused their astonished admiration (p. 179, n. 3, below). If the Sophists were a product of their age, they also assisted in their turn in crystallizing its ideas. But at least their teaching fell on well-prepared ground. In Plato's opinion it was not they who should be blamed for infecting the young with pernicious thoughts, for they were doing no more than mirror the lusts and passions of the existing democracy:

Every one of these individual professional teachers, whom the people call Sophists and regard as their rivals in the art of education, in fact teaches nothing but the beliefs of the people expressed by themselves in their assemblies. This is what he claims as his wisdom.¹

Whether Plato was right we can only say, if at all, at a much later stage of our study.

Turning (so far as the two can be distinguished) from causes to features of the change, the most fundamental is the antithesis between *physis* and *nomos* which was developed at this time among natural and humanistic philosophers alike. Once the view had gained currency that laws, customs and conventions were not part of the immutable order of things, it was possible to adopt very different attitudes towards them. On the one hand Protagoras could argue that accepted canons of good behaviour, including some restraint on selfish appetites and consideration for others, although not an original and essential part of human nature, were necessary for the preservation of society, and life in societies was necessary for actual survival. At the other extreme

¹ *Rep.* 493 a. The whole passage 492 a-493 d is illuminating.

is the rampant individualism of those, like Plato's Callicles, who maintained that ideas of law and justice were merely a device of the majority of weaklings to keep the strong man, who is nature's just man, from his rightful place. *Nomos* and *physis* were enemies, and right was on the side of *physis*. The Sophist Antiphon drew an elaborate contrast between the works of *nomos* and those of *physis*, the former being unnecessary and artificial curbs imposed on nature by human agreement, the latter necessary and of natural origin. In the idea that laws are a matter of human agreement, 'covenants made by the citizens' as Hippias called them (p. 138 below), instead of divinely sanctioned, we have the essence of the theory of the social compact or contract which was developed especially in Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the eyes of Callicles it condemned them, whereas Critias, through the mouth of Sisyphus in his play of that name, represented the invention of law as an important step on the road from men's originally 'disorderly and brutish' life to civilization. An unequivocal statement of the contractual theory of law is ascribed by Aristotle to Lycophron, a pupil of Gorgias, and in its historical form, as a theory of the origin of law, it is clearly stated by Glaucon in the *Republic* as a current view which he would like to see refuted.

Besides laws in the ordinary sense, contemporary opinion recognized the existence of 'unwritten laws', and the relation between the two illustrates well the transitional nature of this period of thought. For some, the phrase denoted certain eternal moral principles, universally valid and overruling the positive laws of men because their origin was from the gods. This conception is best known from the splendid lines of Sophocles in the *Antigone* (450ff.), where Antigone defends the burial of her dead brother contrary to the edict of Creon by declaring: 'It was not Zeus or Justice who decreed these *nomoi* among men, nor did I deem your proclamation so mighty that you, a mortal, could overthrow the sure, unwritten laws of the gods.' Later we shall look at other references to these divine laws which have existed for all time, and their superiority to the faulty and changeable decrees of men. However, with the spread of democratic ideas the phrase took on a new and more sinister meaning. The codification of law came to be seen as a necessary protection for the people. Not only

Nature and Law: Religious Scepticism

Euripides (*Suppl.* 429 ff.) saw it as a guarantee of equal rights and a bulwark against tyranny, but also in practice the restored democracy at the end of the Peloponnesian War expressly forbade a magistrate to make use of unwritten law (p. 126 below).

Here is another discussion which finds its reflection in the second great period of enlightenment, Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries A.D. On the one hand we have Rousseau writing:

To these three kinds of law [political, civil, criminal] a fourth should be added, and it is the most important of them all. It is to be found not graven on pillars of marble or plates of bronze but in the heart of the citizens. It is the true foundation on which the State is built, and grows daily in importance . . . I refer to manners, customs, and, above all, opinion.

Then for a different point of view we can turn to Locke:

The law of nature being unwritten, and so nowhere to be found but in the minds of men, they who, through passion or interest, shall miscite or misapply it cannot so easily be convinced of their mistake where there is no established judge; and so it serves not as it ought, to determine the rights and fence the properties of those that live under it, especially where everyone is judge, interpreter, and executioner of it too, and that in his own case; and he that has right on his side, having ordinarily but his own single strength, hath not force enough to defend himself from injuries or to punish delinquents.¹

The growth of atheism and agnosticism at this time was also connected with the idea of *nomos*. Beside the classic utterance of Protagoras, that he could not say whether gods existed or not, one may set the curious and thought-provoking words of Euripides's Hecuba in her plea for mercy (*Hec.* 799 ff.): the gods, she says, have power, and so has *nomos*, which is master of the gods because it is by *nomos* that we believe in them and live according to standards of right and wrong. For Critias the gods were the invention of an ingenious legislator to prevent men from breaking the laws when not under supervision. Prodicus may, like some nineteenth-century anthropologists, have seen the early stages of religion as two, first the

¹ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 2. 14 (trans. Hopkins); Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, 2. 136. (Both passages may conveniently be found in the World's Classics volume *Social Contract*, ed. Barker, 313 and 115.)

Topics of the Day

deification of useful natural objects like the sun and rivers, corn and the grape, and later of human discoverers or inventors of such essentials as bread and wine, shelter, and the useful arts in general. This has been called an ancient example of the theory of the advance from fetishism to anthropomorphism.¹

An attractive aspect of the *nomos-physis* antithesis is that it sponsored the first steps towards cosmopolitanism and the idea of the unity of mankind. Here *nomos* plays the part of *die Mode* in Schiller's hymn, which divides those who are naturally brothers. That is how Hippias sees it in Plato's *Protagoras*, speaking of those who come from different Greek states. Antiphon went further (as Hippias may also have done), and after censuring distinctions based on high or low birth proceeded to declare that there is no difference in nature between barbarians and Greeks. With this disapproval of distinctions based on birth and race, one would have expected him to include a condemnation of slavery, and he may well have done so; but there is no mention of it in the fragments. The only witness in the fifth century to the existence of a belief that slavery is unnatural is Euripides, whose characters utter such sentiments as 'Only the name brings shame to a slave: in all else slave is no worse than free, if he be a good man'. This is not necessarily the dramatist's own opinion, for others in his plays will damn all slaves alike as a worthless and greedy lot. Not many years after him, however, Alcidas is quoted as having written that God set all men free and nature has made no man a slave; and by Aristotle's time there were certainly some who maintained that slavery was unnatural. (The subject is treated in ch. vi (4) below.)

One of the most important lessons taught in the lectures and handbooks of the Sophists was the art of speaking with equal cogency on both sides of a question. Protagoras started from the axiom that 'there are two arguments on every subject'. We may recognize the virtues of seeing both sides of a question, and the democratic quality of a willingness to give them both a hearing, and yet be alive to the dangers of such doctrine unless it is kept in very scrupulous hands. In fact it was being imparted, for high fees, to headstrong and ambi-

¹ The evidence for ascribing the two-stage theory to Prodicus is not absolutely conclusive. It is discussed on pp. 238 ff. below.

The Power of the Word: Can 'Virtue' be Taught?

tious youth. In the eyes of Gorgias 'the word' was a despot who could do anything, but like a slave of the lamp it would be at the service of those who took his courses. Reading the remains of Gorgias's writings, one is not inclined to accuse Plato of unfairness when he makes him disclaim any responsibility for the use to which his teaching may be put by others. It was subversive stuff, both morally and epistemologically, for the conviction that men could be persuaded of anything went naturally with the relativity of Protagoras's 'man the measure' doctrine and the nihilism of Gorgias's treatise *On Nature or the Non-existent*.

Finally, one of the most hotly debated questions of the day, which because it was taken up by Socrates continued to be discussed by Plato and even Aristotle, sprang directly from the Sophists' appearance in the new role of paid educators. They claimed to teach *areté*, but was this something that could be instilled by teaching? *Areté* when used without qualification denoted those qualities of human excellence which made a man a natural leader in his community, and hitherto it had been believed to depend on certain natural or even divine gifts which were the mark of good birth and breeding. They were definitely a matter of *physis*, cultivated, as a boy grew up, by the experience of living with and following the example of his father and elder relations. Thus they were handed on naturally and scarcely consciously, a prerogative of the class that was born to rule, and the thought that they could be implanted by an outsider, offering schematic instruction in return for payment, was anathema to fathers of the old school. Hence the urgency to a young man like Meno—high-born and wealthy yet a pupil and admirer of Gorgias—of the question which he springs on Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue that bears his name: 'Can you tell me, Socrates, whether *areté* can be taught? Or is it a matter of practice, or natural aptitude, or what?'

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MENON (30

The above is a foretaste of some of the topics of burning interest in the lifetime of Socrates which we shall be examining in detail in later chapters: the status of laws and moral principles, the theory of man's progress from savagery to civilization replacing that of degeneration from a past golden age, the idea of the social compact, subjective //

Topics of the Day

theories of knowledge, atheism and agnosticism, hedonism and utilitarianism, the unity of mankind, slavery and equality, the nature of *areté*, the importance of rhetoric and the study of language. But first something about the class of men who are usually named as the chief propagators of the new humanism and rationalism. What was a Sophist, and what do we know of the individuals who posed these questions that have exercised thoughtful minds ever since?

III

WHAT IS A SOPHIST?

(I) THE WORD 'SOPHIST'¹

The Greek words *sophos*, *sophia*, usually translated 'wise' and 'wisdom', were in common use from the earliest times, and, standing as they do for an intellectual or spiritual quality, naturally acquired some delicate shades of meaning which can only be crudely illustrated here. At first they connoted primarily skill in a particular craft. A shipwright in Homer is 'skilled in all *sophia*', a charioteer, a steersman, an augur, a sculptor are *sophoi* each in his occupation, Apollo is *sophos* with the lyre, Thersites a contemptible character but *sophos* with his tongue; there is a law in Hades (for comic purposes) that whoever excels his fellow-craftsmen in 'one of the great and clever arts' shall have special privileges until someone else comes along who is 'more *sophos* in his art'.² This sense merges easily into that of generally knowing or prudent, by way of a line like that of Theognis (119 ff.) that it is easy for a *sophos* to detect counterfeit coinage, but much more difficult to unmask a man of spurious character. Here *sophos* might still mean an expert (there are experts in testing coinage, but alas none in testing humanity), though more probably it is going over to the meaning of knowledgeable in general. In a similar doubtful position is Hesiod's description of Linus, the mythical singer and musician, as 'versed in all kinds of *sophia*' (fr. 153 Rzach). In this way it was used of the seven *Sophoi*, Wise Men or Sages, whose wisdom consisted chiefly of practical statesmanship and was enshrined in brief gnomic sayings, or of anyone of good sense (Eur. *I.A.* 749).

¹ In what follows, in addition to primary sources I have made especial use of the following, to which a reader may be referred for further information and views: Grote, *History*, vii, 32 ff.; Grant, *Ethics*, I, 106 ff.; ZN, 1335, n. 1; Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, III, 326 ff.; Kerferd in *CR*, 1950, 8-10; Morrison in *Durham U.J.* 1949, 55-63.

² *Il.* 15, 412; Pind. *Pyth.* 5, 115; Aesch. *Suppl.* 770 and *Sept.* 382; *Soph. O.T.* 484; Eur. fr. 372 and *I.T.* 1238; *Soph. Ph.* 439 f.; Aristoph. *Frogs* 761 ff.

What is a Sophist?

Along with generalization, a term of value like this, implying positive approval, inevitably suffers division into a 'true' and a 'false' meaning according to the user's point of view. The *sophia* of charioteer, shipwright or musician must have been to a large extent acquired by learning, but Pindar no doubt pleased his royal patron when he wrote that he who knows much by nature is wise (*sophos*), in contrast to the chattering crows who have gained their knowledge by learning. Not the man who knows many things is *sophos*, said Aeschylus, but he whose knowledge is useful. At the same time there creeps in an ironic note, a hint that the *sophos* is too clever and may overreach himself. Taxed by the wily Odysseus (whom he has earlier described as a *sophos* wrestler) with acting in a way that is not *sophon*, Neoptolemus replies that what is right and just is better than what is *sophon*. So we get the oxymoron of a chorus in Euripides: when men set themselves up against the gods, their *sophia* is not *sophon*, they are clever but not wise. The verb *sophizesthai*, to practise *sophia*, which Hesiod used of acquiring skill in seamanship and Theognis of himself as a poet, suffered a parallel development until it meant to trick or deceive, or to be over-subtle.¹

The word *sophistes*, 'sophist', is a noun of the agent derived from the verb.² As Diogenes Laertius remarked (I. 12) long after it had acquired an uncomplimentary sense, *sophos* and *sophistes* were once synonymous. This appears especially in Herodotus, who applies the name 'sophist' to Pythagoras, Solon and the founders of the Dionysiac cult, and says that all the sophists of Greece visited Croesus's Lydian capital, including Solon. That the Seven Sages were called sophists we know from a fragment of Aristotle and from Isocrates, who says that they were given this name 'which is now held in dishonour among you'. Isocrates dwells on the change which has come over the word, which he equates with his conception of philosophy:

¹ References for this paragraph: Pind. *Ol.* 2. 86; Aesch. fr. 390; Soph. *Ph.* 1246 (and cf. the use of *σόφισμα* and *σοφίζεσθαι* at 14 and 77); Eur. *Bacch.* 395; for *σοφίζεσθαι* Hes. *Op.* 649; Theognis 19; Eur. *Bacch.* 200. With Theognis cf. Solon 1. 52, where *σοφία* is used of poetry. When Pericles finds the young Alcibiades's questions are getting awkward, he closes the discussion with 'at your age we too τοιαῦτα ἐσοφίζομεθα' (Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2. 46). B. Gladigow in *Hermes*, 1967, has collected examples of the invidious sense of *σοφός* in Euripides.

² Kerferd in *CR*, 1950, 8, gives a classified list, with references, of the earlier uses of the word.

The Meaning of 'Sophistes'

It offends me to see chicanery more highly regarded than philosophy, as the accuser who puts philosophy in the dock. Who of the men of old time would have expected this, among you of all people who pride yourself on your wisdom (*sophia*)? It was not so in our forefathers' time. They admired those who were called sophists and envied their associates... The best evidence of this is that they chose Solon, the first Athenian citizen who bore that title, to rule the state.¹

Probably it was assumed that a *sophistes* would be a teacher.² This accords with the fact that the name was often applied to poets, for in Greek eyes practical instruction and moral advice constituted the main function of the poet. Solon himself was a poet, and J. S. Morrison has suggested that it was in this capacity that he first attracted attention and came to be entrusted with the preservation of political harmony.³ Before him Hesiod had written his *Works and Days* both as a manual of instruction for farmers and as a vehicle for ethical precept. Theognis is full of ethical maxims, some of general import and some in support of the threatened supremacy of the upper class. Parmenides and Empedocles were poets, and the great dramatists of the fifth century, both tragic and comic, certainly regarded themselves as having an educational mission. The contest which Aristophanes stages in Hades between Aeschylus and Euripides is fought on moral rather than aesthetic ground, and in the course of it Aeschylus expressly declares that, although the story of Phaedra's guilty love as Euripides told it might be true, a poet should conceal such wickedness rather than present it on the stage, because 'as schoolboys have teachers to show them the way, so poets are teachers of men'. Euripides himself, challenged to state the grounds on which a poet deserves admiration, replies: 'For his wit and good advice, and because he makes men better citizens.' So much is common ground between the disputants,

¹ Hdt. 4.95.2, 1.29.1, cf. also 2.49.1; Aristotle fr. 5 Rose, Ross p. 79; Isocr. *Antid.* 235, 311. For Isocrates's use of the word see also Grant, *Ethics* 1, 111-13.

² In Hdt. 1.29.1, 2.49.1 and 4.95.2, the translator in the Penguin series, Mr de Selincourt, renders the word each time by 'teacher', which besides sounding very natural in its English contexts is probably as accurate as an English equivalent can be.

³ Morrison in *Durham U.J.* 1949, 59. His article contains much of the evidence that (as Jaeger also maintained in *Paideia* 1, 293) the Sophists were the heirs of the educational tradition of the poets. Not that this was their sole inheritance. Nestle was more correct when he called them heirs of the Ionian philosophers as well (*VMZuL*, 252). So also in effect Morrison, *loc. cit.* 56.

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and it is exactly what the professed Sophist Protagoras claimed to do.¹

So we find that at its earliest known occurrence, in an ode of Pindar, the word *sophistes* clearly means poet. With poetry went music, for the lyric poet was his own accompanist. Athenaeus quotes a line of Aeschylus about a *sophistes* playing the lyre to illustrate his statement that 'all who practise the art of *mousiké* used to be called sophists', and the reference to the singer and musician Thamyras as *sophistes* in Euripides's *Rhesus* is quoted as another example. Here however the Muse is speaking of him with hatred and disgust, and the word probably carries something of the unfavourable tone which it acquired early in the fifth century.²

It looks however as if in the fifth century the word was beginning to be used of prose-writers in contrast to poets, as the didactic function came to be more and more fulfilled through this medium. Some of the Seven Sages, in their capacity as *sophistai* or teachers, uttered in prose the kind of maxims which Theognis or Simonides uttered in verse, and this may have sown the seeds of the distinction.³ Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.2.1) says that Euthydemus collected 'many of the written works of the most celebrated poets and sophists'. Among the latter would be a man like Anaxagoras, whose book we know to have been on general sale, and whom Aeschines of Sphettus may have bracketed as a *sophistes* with Prodicus, one of the recognized 'Sophists'.⁴

A *sophistes* writes or teaches because he has a special skill or knowledge to impart. His *sophia* is practical, whether in the fields of conduct and politics or in the technical arts. If anyone could make the products of every separate craft, and in addition all the things in the natural world, he would indeed be a wondrous *sophistes*, says Glaucon in the *Republic* (596d), and a similar phrase, 'a marvellous

¹ Aristoph. *Frogs* 1053-5, 1009f.

² Pind. *Isth.* 5.28; Aesch. fr. 314; Eur. *Rhes.* 924.

³ Schmid, *Gesch. gr. Lit.* 1.3.1, 14.

⁴ That Aeschines did this is generally taken as fact (e.g. by Zeller, ZN, 1335, n. 1). This would be good contemporary evidence for the appellation, but the passage in question does not guarantee more than that it was used of the two men by Athenaeus. It runs as follows (Ath. 5.200b, Aesch. fr. 34 Dittmar): ὁ δὲ Καλλίας αὐτοῦ (i.e. Aeschines's dialogue *Callias*) περιέχει τὴν τοῦ Καλλίου... Προδικου καὶ Ἀναξαγόρου τῶν σοφιστῶν διαμώκησιν. Anaxagoras was also called *sophistes* by Diodorus (12.39, DK, 59 A 17). For Anaxagoras's book see vol. 11, 269.

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(*deinos*) *sophistes*', is uttered in the same tone of incredulity by Hippolytus in Euripides (*Hipp.* 921) of a man who could make fools wise. So the noun occurs with an objective genitive meaning a deviser or contriver ('I became a *sophistes* of many calamities', Eur. *Heracl.* 993). Hence the sense of expert, pundit, for instance in mathematics. Socrates in the *Meno* (85 b), having by means of diagrams got Meno's slave to recognize the diagonal of a square, tells him 'the name the *sophistai* give it is "diagonal"', and Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.1.11, perhaps with the Pythagoreans chiefly in mind) speaks of 'what is called the *kosmos* by the *sophistai*'. In the same vein Socrates says of the wise Diotima, with a touch of humour, that she answered his question 'like a real *sophistes*'.¹ Here the translation of Michael Joyce, though lengthy, strikes the right note: 'with an air of authority that was almost professorial'. When Socrates in the *Lysis* (204a) says of a certain Miccus that he is 'no common man, but a very competent *sophistes*', the compliment to his gifts as a teacher is genuine. An even more striking use of the word in a complimentary sense is in Xenophon (*Cyrop.* 3.1.14 and 38 ff.): the Armenian prince Tigranes tells Cyrus of a teacher with whom he was associating, and whom Xenophon calls *sophistes*. His father put the man to death, in the belief that he was corrupting Tigranes, but so noble was his character that before his execution he sent for Tigranes and told him not to hold it against his father, because he had acted out of ignorance. That such a term should be applied to the natural philosophers is only to be expected, and Socrates includes Alcmaeon, Empedocles, Ion of Chios, Parmenides and Melissus along with Gorgias among 'the *sophistai* of past days' (*Anid.* 268). In the other few instances recorded one seems to detect a hint of that disparaging note of which we shall have to speak next. Diogenes of Apollonia called his predecessors *sophistai* in the course of writing against them (vol. II, 363), and, when the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* (ch. 20) speaks of 'certain doctors and *sophistai*' who claim that one cannot be versed in medicine without understanding the whole nature of man, it is strongly attacking their position.

¹ *Plato, Symp.* 208c. The same phrase, τέλειος σοφιστής, is used jokingly of Hades in the *Cratylus*, 403c, with reference to his powers of persuasion.

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The Athenians, like other people, tended to be suspicious of intellectuals, pundits, professors and the like. Their qualities were summed up in a word difficult to translate: *deinotes*, with the adjective *deinos*. Derived from a noun meaning 'fear', it stands for anything terrible or dreadful, as for instance in Homer weapons, the glare of a foe, the whirlpool Charybdis, thunder, lions. Of a goddess, it is coupled with 'reverend', and may have conveyed an idea more like 'the fear of the Lord'. This sense of 'awful' persists, often with a suggestion of the strange, incomprehensible, uncanny; and so used the word contributes to some of the most moving, and untranslatable, lines of Greek tragedy. Hephaestus cannot bring himself to chain Prometheus to the rock because 'kinship is something *deinon*'. Clytemnestra hates and fears her son, yet when she hears of his death cannot feel the expected joy and relief because 'to give birth is *deinon*'—the fact of motherhood has a strange power. Degenerating, as words do, in popular use, it became coupled with *sophos* to mean clever or skilful: the Egyptians are *deinoi* (terrible fellows) for devising stratagems, Prometheus is *deinos* at wriggling out of difficulties, a good driver is *deinos* at his art. It also, and particularly, meant clever in speech or argument.¹

Anyone who had this quality was a natural object of suspicion to his less clever fellows, as Antiphon the orator, says Thucydides (8. 68. 1), was to the Athenian public 'on account of his reputation for *deinotes*', and later Demosthenes alleges (*De cor.* 276) that Aeschines has called him '*deinos*, sorcerer, sophist and the like'. Here we have *deinos* expressly coupled with *sophistes* as an insult to be resented, and, though Demosthenes is a fourth-century figure, the idea of the *sophistes* as a man who claims superior knowledge, and can have the claim ironically flung back at him, occurs as early as Aeschylus. His Prometheus, the bringer of fire to men, who taught them all crafts and raised them from savagery to civilization, is roughly addressed by Hermes as 'you, the sophist, who have sinned against the gods', and is mocked

¹ Aesch. *P.V.* 39; Soph. *El.* 770; Aesch. fr. 373 and *P.V.* 59. The expression *δεινὸς λέγειν* is frequent. The degeneration resembles that of the English 'terribly' or 'awfully'. It is amusingly illustrated in Plato, *Prot.* 341a-b, where Socrates tells how the purist Prodicus rebukes him for using *deinos* as a term of praise, calling Protagoras '*deinos* and *sophos*', 'awfully clever'. *Deinos*, said Prodicus, properly applies to evils like disease, war, poverty.

'Deinotes' and the Sophists

by Kratos as a duller *sophistes* than Zeus.¹ The two criticisms, that a sophist is not so clever as he thinks he is, and that his cleverness is used for wrong purposes, are hinted at again in a fragment of Sophocles (97 Nauck): 'A well-disposed mind, with righteous thoughts, is a better inventor than any *sophistes*.'

Sophocles was an exact contemporary of Protagoras, and in him the word could have been coloured by the appearance on the scene of Sophists as a professional class.² Aristophanes too was well aware of their existence when he satirized sophists in the *Clouds*, but still used the word in a more general sense, in which it could include (for those who disapproved of him) Socrates, although he took no fees and is constantly represented by Plato as the Sophists' inveterate opponent. At ν . 331 the *Clouds* are said to be the foster-mothers of a crowd of 'sophists', who are itemized as soothsayers from Thuri, quack doctors, lazy long-haired and beringed dandies, dithyrambic poets and bogus astronomers—a pretty comprehensive list. At 360 Socrates and Prodicus are mentioned together as 'meteorosophists' or experts in celestial phenomena. At 1111 Socrates promises that his teaching will turn young Pheidippides into a clever sophist, on which his unwilling pupil comments 'A poor pale-faced devil, you mean', and at 1309 the word as applied to Strepsiades by the chorus means nothing but 'trickster', in allusion to his cheating of his creditors.

The word 'sophist' then had a general sense as well as the special one of which we have yet to speak, and in neither sense was it necessarily a term of opprobrium. (Compare the judgment of Socrates on the professional Miccus.) If we remember the educational vocation of Greek poets, we may say that the word which comes nearest to it in English is teacher or professor. From early in the fifth century it could be pronounced with a depreciatory inflexion, as may the words pundit or intellectual today. In the hands of the conservative Aristophanes it became definitely a term of abuse implying charlatanry and deceit, though still by no means confined to the class of professional Sophists. We cannot therefore agree with Grote in blaming Plato

¹ *P.V.* 62. Prometheus would not deny the title. He boasts of his σοφισματα, and laments that he has no σόφισμα to get him out of his present plight. The word is for him synonymous with μηχανημα, τέχνη and πόρος. But already it can be thrown back at him with irony.

² I am reserving the capital initial for the members of this profession.

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as solely responsible for casting discredit on the word (p. 12 above). What existed already was more than a 'vague sentiment of dislike', nor is it true that 'what was new was the peculiar use of an old word which Plato took out of its usual meaning, and fastened upon the eminent paid teachers of the Sokratic age'.¹ Apart from the evidence of Xenophon, it would have been quite impossible for Plato to have referred, in the manner and the contexts in which he does so refer, to the paid teachers as Sophists if that had not been their recognized title. A view like Grote's can only be upheld by the uncritical practice (which will not be followed here) of accepting as fact all references to the Sophists in Plato which are either neutral or sympathetic ('Even Plato is forced to admit . . .') and dismissing any less complimentary remarks as due solely to illiberal prejudice. When Protagoras in Plato's *Protagoras* avows himself a Sophist and an educator in spite of the odium which attaches to the term, an odium which he explains as due to the fact that they enter the great cities of Greece as foreigners and attract their most promising young men away from their relations and friends by claiming that their own teaching is better, there is no reason to doubt the reality of the state of affairs which he describes. His boast has an element of bravado: it needs courage to declare oneself a Sophist. Equally true to the character of the Athenians is the remark of Socrates in the *Euthyphro* (3c) that it does not matter if they think somebody *deinos* provided he keeps it to himself, but if he starts imparting his superior cleverness to others by teaching they get angry, whether from jealousy or some other cause. Here Socrates has his own plight in mind, but plainly the observation applies to the professional Sophists too; indeed he shared their reputation, as the *Clouds* makes plain. In the next century Aeschines the orator could refer to him casually as 'Socrates the sophist'.²

¹ Grote, *History*, vii, 35 and 37. Nor shall we follow Popper (O.S. 263, n. 52) in saying that Plato is 'the man who by his attacks on the "Sophists" created the bad associations connected with the word'. (My italics.) A fairer statement is Havelock's (*Lib. Temper*, 158): 'The playwrights of Old Comedy played upon the prejudice [against intellectualism], if they indeed did not create it, and when Plato uses the word *sophistes* it has lost its dignity. He cannot forget, perhaps, the burlesques staged in his youth which he had either read or seen.'

² In *Timarch*. 173. It was in the same speech that Aeschines called Demosthenes a sophist. Though the lapse of centuries makes it of doubtful relevance to the present discussion, it is interesting that Lucian could refer to Christ as 'that crucified sophist' (*Peregrinus* 13).

Sophists as a Professional Class

(2) THE SOPHISTS

(a) *Professionalism*

In the lifetime of Socrates the word came to be used, though not solely, of a particular class, namely professional educators who gave instruction to young men, and public displays of eloquence, for fees. They recognized their descent from the earlier tradition of education by the poets; indeed Protagoras, in the somewhat self-satisfied speech which Plato puts into his mouth (*Prot.* 316d), accuses Orpheus and Musaeus, Homer, Hesiod and Simonides of using their poetry as a disguise, through fear of the odium attached to the name descriptive of their real character, which was that of Sophists like himself.¹ (The anachronistic confusion is in keeping with the light-hearted tone which Plato adopts in the dramatic parts of this dialogue, for needless to say no professional stigma attached to the name in earlier days, and in any case, as we have seen, it was in fact applied to the poets.) In the *Meno* (91e-92a) Plato speaks of 'many others' besides Protagoras who have practised the Sophists' profession, 'some before his time and others still alive'. Of professionals before Protagoras we have no record, and indeed Socrates in the *Protagoras* (349a) addresses him as the first to take payment for his teaching. Plato may have been thinking of a man like the Athenian Mnesiphilus, who is mentioned by Herodotus (8.57) as an adviser of Themistocles and of whom Plutarch writes in a passage of some interest for the development of the sophistic profession (*Them.* 2):

¹ The same was said by Plutarch (*Pericles* 4) of Damon, a Sophist who was a pupil of Prodicus and friend of Socrates (Plato, *Laches* 197d). He was chiefly known as an authority on music but, says Plutarch, though a leading Sophist and in fact the mentor of Pericles in politics, he used his musical reputation to hide his δεινότης. This however did not avail him and he was ostracized. His association with Pericles is confirmed by Plato (*Alc. I* 118c) and Isocrates (*Antid.* 235), and his ostracism (already in Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 27.4) by the discovery of an ostrakon bearing his name (DK, I, 382 n.). In the *Republic* (400b, 424c) Plato makes it clear that his interest in musical modes was bound up with wider questions of their moral and social effects. He goes so far as to say that in Damon's view 'the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling the most fundamental political and social conventions' (trans. Shorey). If more were known of him he might occupy an important place in the history of the sophistic movement, but in our comparative ignorance he can only appear as a footnote to it. Texts are in DK, I, no. 37, and modern studies include W. D. Anderson, 'The Importance of the Damonian Theory in Plato's Thought' (*TAPA*, 1955; see also his book *Ethos and Education in Greek Music* and its review by Borthwick in *CR*, 1958); ch. 6 of F. Lasserre, *Plut. de la musique*; J. S. Morrison in *CQ*, 1958, 204-6; H. John, 'Das musikerzielende Wirken Pythagoras' und Damons' (*Das Altertum*, 1962).

What is a Sophist?

He was neither an orator nor one of those called philosophers of nature. Rather he made a practice of what was called *sophia* but was in reality political shrewdness (*deinotes*) and practical sagacity, and so perpetuated what one might call a school which had come down in succession from Solon. His successors combined it with the art of forensic eloquence, and, transferring their training from action to speech, were called Sophists.¹

References to the Sophists as paid for their work are frequent in Plato,² and occur also in Xenophon, Isocrates and Aristotle. The character of the Sophists may have changed, but they remained professionals from Protagoras to the time of Isocrates at least. 'Those who sell their wisdom for money to anyone who wants it are called Sophists', says Socrates in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.6.13), and adds a comment more caustic than anything in Plato. In the *Meno* (91c ff.) it is Anytus, a typical well-bred member of the governing class, who violently abuses them, and Socrates who is their somewhat ironic defender. Isocrates in his old age³ defended the profession, which he equated with his own philosophical ideal, an ideal much closer to Protagoras than to Plato. The best and greatest reward of a Sophist, he says, is to see some of his pupils become wise and respected citizens. Admittedly there are some bad Sophists, but those who make a right use of philosophy ought not to be blamed for the few black sheep. In conformity with this he defends them from the charge of profiteering. None of them, he says, made a great fortune or lived other than modestly, not even Gorgias who earned more than any other and was a bachelor with no family ties.⁴ Plato on the other hand emphasizes their wealth, saying for instance that Protagoras earned more from his *sophia* than Phidias and ten other sculptors put together (*Meno* 91d), and Gorgias and Prodicus more than the practitioners of any other art (*Hipp. Maj.* 282d). Aristotle describes a Sophist as one who makes money out of an apparent but unreal

¹ On Mnesiphilus see further Morrison, *Durham U.J.* 1949, 59, and Kerferd, *CR*, 1950, 9f.

² E. L. Harrison in *Phoenix*, 1964, 191, n. 44, has collected thirty-one Platonic references to the Sophists' earnings. What is known about the practice of individuals will be noted below in the sections devoted to them (pp. 262ff.).

³ He was 82 when he wrote the *Anitidosis*; see §9. For the Protagorean standpoint of Isocrates see Morrison's comparison of Platonic and Isocratean *philosophia* in *CQ*, 1958, 216-18.

⁴ *Anitid.* 155f. Dodds (*Gorg.* 7), in his argument that Gorgias was not a Sophist, tries to explain away this passage, as well as Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 282b5 and Isocr. *Anitid.* 268.

Sophists as a Professional Class

wisdom, and, setting aside the jibe, this and other passages are evidence that paid Sophists still existed in his time.¹

The professionalism of the Sophists is emphasized by the fact that Protagoras had two classes of pupil: young men of good family who wished to enter politics, and those, like a certain Antimoerus of Mende (not, that is, an Athenian), who was studying 'for professional purposes (ἐπι τέχνη), to become a Sophist himself'.² In the *Protagoras* (313c) Socrates describes a Sophist as 'a seller of the goods by which a soul [or mind] is nourished', and suggests reasons why a young man should hesitate before entrusting himself to such a one: like retailers of bodily foods, they praise their wares indiscriminately without a dietitian's knowledge of their wholesomeness; unlike foods, their products enter the mind directly, and cannot be kept in jars until we find out which to consume and how and in what quantities. By the time Plato wrote the *Sophist* (where Socrates takes no part in the main argument) they had simply become (along with other undesirable characteristics) 'paid hunters of rich young men'. Mistrust of the Sophists was not confined to Plato. The outburst of Anytus must be true to life, as it is also when young Hippocrates, son of a 'great and prosperous house', blushes for shame at the thought of becoming one himself (*Prot.* 312a). In the *Gorgias* (520a) Socrates's most violent opponent, Calicles, dismisses them as 'worthless fellows', and in the *Phaedrus* (257d) Phaedrus asserts that the most powerful and respected politicians are afraid to write speeches and leave works of their own to posterity, for fear of being called Sophists. Plato himself, though he disagreed with the Sophists, was much gentler in his handling of the best of them like Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus. A disparaging remark about Sophists, in connexion with Prodicus, is put into the mouth of Laches, not Socrates (*Laches* 179d). Xenophon, in a moral epilogue to his treatise on hunting (ch. 13), castigates them as masters of fraud.³

¹ *Soph. El.* 165a21; cf. 183b36ff. (where μισθαροούντων recalls the μισθαροούντες ἰδιῶται of Plato, *Rep.* 493a) and *EN* 1164a30.

² *Prot.* 315a. For Sophistic as a τέχνη cf. e.g. τὴν σοφιστικὴν τέχνην 316d, and Protagoras 40 years ἐν τῇ τέχνη, *Meno* 91e.

³ If the *Cynegeticæ* is by Xenophon, which some have doubted. See Lesky, *Hist. Gr. Lit.* 621f. Others have maintained that the passage is influenced by Plato's *Sophist* (Grant, *Ethics* I, 111) and have pointed out that both were written after the brilliant first generation of Sophists were dead. So, one may presume, were the *Protagoras* and *Meno*, yet it is Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias and Prodicus who are still for Plato the representative Sophists.

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The attitude of the Athenian public was ambivalent, reflecting the transitional situation of Athenian social and intellectual life. The Sophists had no difficulty in finding pupils to pay their high fees, or audiences for their public lectures and displays. Yet some among the older and more conservative¹ strongly disapproved of them. This disapproval was linked, as Plato shows, to their professionalism. Why should this be? We are accustomed to thinking of teaching as a perfectly respectable way of earning a livelihood, and there was no prejudice in Greece against earning a living as such. Socrates was the son of a stonemason and probably followed the same trade, but (unpopular as he was in many quarters) this was never held against him. Poets had been paid for their work, artists and doctors were expected to charge fees both for the practice of their art and for teaching it to others.² The trouble seems to have lain first of all in the kind of subjects the Sophists professed to teach, especially *areté*. Protagoras, when asked what Hippocrates will learn from him, replies (*Prot.* 318e): 'The proper care of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and also of the State's affairs, so as to become a real power in the city both as speaker and as man of action.' In short, says Socrates, the art of citizenship, and Protagoras emphatically agrees. Though some of them taught many other things as well, all included political advancement in their curriculum, and the key to this, in democratic Athens, was the power of persuasive speech.³

¹ This does not necessarily mean aristocratic or oligarchic as opposed to democratic. Anytus was a leading democrat. The division between democrat and anti-democrat cut across that between high-born and plebeian. Pericles, who completed the democratic revolution, was an Alcmaeonid like Cleisthenes who started it. Dr Ehrenberg has called him 'the aristocratic democrat'. Cf. his remarks on p. 65 of his *Soc. and Civ. in Gr. and Rome*: 'The old aristocratic education was out of touch with the realities of contemporary life, but it was largely the same leading class which governed the democratic state.' Cf. also M. A. Levi, *Pol. Power in the Anc. World*, 65, 90.

² See e.g. Isocr. *Anitid.* 166; *Ar. Rhet.* 1405b24 (poets); Plato, *Prot.* 311c, *Meno* 91d (sculptors); *Prot.* 311b and *Hdt.* 3.131.2 (doctors). Further references are in Nestle, *VMZuL.* 259, n. 36. Zeno the philosopher is said by Plato to have exacted the impressive fee of 100 minas for a course (*Alc. I* 119a), though, when late authorities say the same of Protagoras (as indeed they do of Gorgias, *Diod.* 12.53.2), Zeller dismisses it as highly exaggerated (*ZN*, 1299, n. 2). Yet Zeno does not seem to have shared the name or the blame of the Sophists.

³ Similarly in the *Clouds* (v. 432) Socrates, who is there caricatured as among other things a professional Sophist (cf. 98 ἀργύριον ἢν τις διδῶ), assures Strepsiades that through his instruction ἐν τῷ δέημω γνώμας οὐδεὶς νικήσει πλείονας ἢ σὺ. At *Gorg.* 520e Socrates suggests a reason why teaching this kind of thing is generally frowned on.

Criticism of Sophists as Fee-takers

Gorgias indeed concentrated solely on rhetoric and refused to be included among the teachers of *areté*, for he held that rhetoric was the master-art to which all others must defer.¹ Now 'to teach the art of politics and undertake to make men good citizens' (*Prot.* 319a) was just what at Athens was considered the especial province of the amateur and gentleman. Any upper-class Athenian should understand the proper conduct of affairs by a sort of instinct inherited from his ancestors, and be prepared to pass it on to his sons. Even Protagoras admitted this, while claiming that it still left room for his pedagogic art as a supplement.² In the *Meno* passage already referred to Socrates innocently suggests to Anytus, a prominent democratic leader who became his chief accuser, that the Sophists are the proper people to instil into a young man the *sophia* which will fit him to manage an estate, govern a city, and in general show the *savoir-faire* proper to a gentleman. When Anytus reviles them as a menace to society, and Socrates asks to whom then, in his opinion, a young man should turn for such training, he replies that there is no need to mention particular individuals, for 'any decent Athenian gentleman whom he happens to meet will make him a better man than the Sophists would'.

The grounds on which Socrates criticized their fee-taking were rather different, and typical of the man. He held (we have this not from Plato but Xenophon) that by accepting money they deprived themselves of their freedom: they were bound to converse with any who could pay their fees, whereas he was free to enjoy the society of anyone he chose (*Mem.* 1.2.6, 1.6.5). He went so far as to call it prostitution, selling one's mind being no better than selling one's body. Wisdom was something that should be freely shared between friends and

¹ Pp. 271ff. below. ἀρετῆς διδάσκαλοι was Plato's regular way of referring to the Sophists (Dodds, *Gorgias*, 366). For Gorgias see *Meno* 95c, *Gorg.* 456c-e, especially οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν περὶ οὗτου οὐκ ἂν πιθανώτερον εἶποι ὁ ῥητορικὸς ἢ ἄλλος ὅστισούντων δημιουργῶν ἐν πλήθει, Gorgias even admits that his pupils will learn from him the principles of right and wrong 'if they don't happen to know them already' (460a), while at the same time maintaining that the teacher is not responsible for the use made of his teaching. For the correctness of including Gorgias among the Sophists see now E. L. Harrison in *Phoenix*, 1964 (against Raeder and Dodds).

² I do not understand how anyone can read the brilliant and sympathetic speech of Protagoras in the *Protagoras* from 323c to 328c and still hold that Plato in his representations of the best of the Sophists was setting out to blacken their memory.

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loved ones (1.6.13). This was how philosophy had been regarded hitherto, especially in the Pythagorean school, of which Plato certainly, and Socrates probably, was an admirer. The complex Socratic-Platonic concept of *eros*, a sublimated homosexual love, will also have been at work.

(b) *Inter-city status*

The Sophists, then, were disliked for different reasons both by philosophers like Socrates and Plato and by leading citizens like Anytus. The odium which they incurred in the eyes of the establishment was not only due to the subjects they professed; their own status was against them. Not only did they claim to give instruction in what at Athens was thought to be for the right people a kind of second nature, but they themselves were not Athenian leaders or even citizens. They were foreigners, provincials whose genius had outgrown the confines of their own minor cities. Some of them first went abroad on official missions, as Gorgias to Athens to plead the cause of Leontini against Syracuse in 427.¹ Both he and Prodicus of Ceos took the opportunity, while presenting their cities' case before the Council, of advancing their own interests by giving classes and demonstrations which brought in considerable sums (*Hipp. Maj.* 282b-c). Hippias, too, boasted of the number of diplomatic missions on which his city employed him (*ibid.* 281a). Leontini, Ceos or Elis afforded inadequate outlet for their talents. At Athens, the centre of Hellenic culture at the height of its fame and power, 'the very headquarters of Greek wisdom' as Plato's Hippias calls it (*Prot.* 337d), they could flourish; but there they had no chance of becoming political figures themselves, so they used their talents to teach others. It was no wonder that, as Protagoras said, the position of such men could easily become precarious. Plato refers to it again more than once, in the *Apology* (19e) and in the *Timaeus* where Socrates says (19e) that the Sophists are very good speechmakers in general, but that 'their habit of wandering from city to city and having no settled home of their own' is a disadvantage when it comes to matters of active statesmanship in

¹ Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 282b, Diod. 12.53.1-2. Thucydides also tells of the embassy from Leontini (3.86.3), but without mentioning Gorgias.

Sophists as Foreigners: their Methods

war or negotiation. This has been cited as an example of Plato's disparagement of the Sophists, but is only a statement of evident fact.¹

(c) *Methods*

The Sophists gave their instruction either to small circles or seminars or in public lectures or 'displays' (*epideixeis*).² The former might be conducted in the house of a patron like Callias, the richest man in Athens, who was said to have spent more money on the Sophists than anyone else (Plato, *Apol.* 20a). His home is the scene of the gathering in Plato's *Protagoras*, and his hospitality to the Sophists and their admirers seems to have turned it into a rather unhomelike place. Protagoras paces the forecourt attended by a considerable crowd, including both Athenians and the foreigners whom he draws, like a Pied Piper, from every city that he passes through. In the opposite portico Hippias is holding forth to another circle, and Prodicus is occupying a former store-room which Callias has had to convert into a bedroom owing to the large number staying in the house. He too has his own circle of listeners round his bed. Callias's hall porter is understandably sick of the sight of Sophists. When hosts were so com-
plaisant, even public displays could take place in private houses. We hear of Prodicus giving one at Callias's (*Axioch.* 366c),³ and when Socrates and Chaerephon have missed a display by Gorgias, evidently in some public place, Callicles assures them that Gorgias is staying with him and will put on another performance at home for their benefit. Sometimes the displays would be in a gymnasium or other place of resort. Cleon accuses the Athenian assembly of behaving 'more like the audience at Sophists' displays than a serious deliberative body' (Thuc. 3. 38. 7). Hippias tells Socrates that in two days' time he will be giving a recital 'in the School of Pheidostratus', and Prodicus did the same in the Lyceum (*Hipp. Maj.* 286 b, *Eryxias* 397c). Prices

¹ The point about the alien status of the Sophists is made by Joël, *Gesch.* 646f., who remarks, adapting a well-known story of Plato's, that if Themistocles had been a Seriphian he would have become a Sophist! At *Rep.* 493a the Sophists are μισθαροῦντες ἰδιῶται, which is also a fair description.

² The two methods are mentioned together in connexion with Prodicus at *Hipp. Maj.* 282c: πῶς αὖτε ποιοῦμενος καὶ τοῖς νέοις συνῶν.

³ Even if our authority is of doubtful reliability for the actual fact, the author probably knew that such occurrences did take place.

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of admission are mentioned more than once, as $\frac{1}{2}$, 2 and 4 drachmas for a performance by Prodicus (*Axioch.* 366c). Socrates laments that his knowledge of correct diction is inadequate because he had only been able to afford the 1 dr. lecture of Prodicus and not the 50 dr. one.¹

The display might take the form of inviting questions from the audience. This is mentioned as a practice of Gorgias (*Gorg.* 447c, *Meno* 70c), and Hippias was bold enough to do the same before the great pan-Hellenic concourse at Olympia (*Hipp. Min.* 363c-d). Alternatively the Sophist gave a display of continuous eloquence on a prepared theme and from a written text. Such were the Trojan dialogue of Hippias (*Hipp. Maj.* 286a, described by its author as 'splendidly composed'), and the speeches of Gorgias at Olympia, Delphi and Athens, the last a funeral oration for the dead in battle.² These declamations might be simply rhetorical exercises on mythical themes, designed to show how, with skill and effrontery, the most unpromising case could be defended. Of such we still possess two specimens in the *Helena* and *Palamedes* of Gorgias. Besides Gorgias and Hippias, Protagoras also claimed to excel in both genres, long and elaborate speeches and the technique of question and answer (*Prot.* 329b, 335a).

The appearance of the Sophists at the great festivals of Olympia and elsewhere had a threefold significance. First, it is further evidence that they considered themselves to be in the tradition of the poets and rhapsodes. Xenophanes and Empedocles had, like other poets, introduced their own work to the public by recitation either in person or through a rhapsode. Poets and rhapsodes wore special clothes, in particular a purple robe.³ Hippias and Gorgias did the same (DK, 82 A 9), and Hippias made his own finery (*Hipp. Min.* 368c). It has to be remembered that we are still in an age when it was much more usual to hear a literary work read than to read it to oneself, and

¹ Many think that the 50 dr. must have been for a course, though the expression is πεντηκοντάδραχμος ἐπίδειξις (*Crat.* 384b). Cf. *Ar. Rhet.* 1415b15. Judging by what we know of the Sophists' standards, 50 dr. would have been rather little for a whole course. Euenus (p. 45 below) charged 5 minae, and Isocrates about the year 390 mentions 3-4 minae as the price for which Sophists are prepared to impart their secrets.

² See Philostr. *V.S.* 1.9.5 (DK, 82 A 1) and Gorgias fr. 5a-9.

³ Empedocles at Olympia, D.L. 8.66; his poems recited there by a rhapsode, *ibid.* 63; Xenophanes αὐτὸς ἑρραψῶδει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, *idem* 9.18. For the poets' garb see Morrison, *Durham U.J.* 1949, 58, n. 21.

Competitors at the Festivals

recitation at a pan-Hellenic festival, or in one of the cities,¹ was a way of making a new work known. Formerly the subjects had been poems, especially epic poems, and, although by the fifth century the public reading of prose authors was also common,² the elaborate epideictic rhetoric of the Sophists, when performed at the Olympian or Pythian games, aimed at something further. It was (and this is the second point) agonistic, competing for prizes in set contests as did the poets, musicians and athletes. Hippias speaks of 'entering the lists' (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) at Olympia and being unbeaten (*Hipp. Min.* 364a). This competitiveness came to be a general characteristic of the Sophists. For Protagoras any discussion is a 'verbal battle', in which one must be victor and the other vanquished (*Prot.* 335a), in contrast to Socrates's expressed ideal of the 'common search', one helping the other that both may come nearer the truth. The contest, said Gorgias, needs both boldness and wit, for the argument, like the herald at Olympia, summons whoever will come, but crowns only those who can succeed.³ Thucydides is contrasting himself with the Sophists when he says that his own work is not intended as a 'competition-piece for a single occasion' but a possession for all time. As often, Euripides makes his characters speak in true contemporary sophistic style when Creon's herald sings the praises of monarchy as opposed to democracy and Theseus replies (*Suppl.* 427f.): 'Since you yourself have started this competition, listen to me; for it is you who have proposed a battle of words.'⁴ Thirdly, the festivals were occasions for

¹ Isocrates comments on the fact that the first founders of the great festivals instituted athletic contests only, and praises Athens as a city where one can see 'contests not only of speed and strength but also of speech and wit and other accomplishments, for which prizes of great value are awarded' (*Paneg.* 1 ff., 45). Isocrates made this speech at the age of 92, some half-dozen years after the death of Plato, but cf. Cleon's criticism of the Athenians in Thucydides (3.38.4, ἀγωνοθετοῦντες . . . θεαται τῶν λόγων).

² Plutarch, *Mal. Hdt.* 862, speaks of Herodotus reading his work to the Athenians. Thuc. 1.21.1 and 22.4 compares the effect of hearing the work of logographers and hearing his own. (Nestle, *V.MzuL*, 260 with n. 41.)

³ Gorgias fr. 8 DK. DK translate as if ὁ γὰρ τοι λόγος καθάπερ τὸ κήρυγμα were simply τὸ γὰρ κήρυγμα. Whether this is due to inadvertence, or they intended to impute the mention of the λόγος to Clement, I do not know (they give no note on the passage), but the elaborate balance of the clauses shows that Clement is giving a verbatim extract from the rhetorician, and I see no reason to suppose that the simile is an importation of his own.

⁴ With ἀγωνισμα and ἀμίλλας in these lines cf. D.L. 9.52 of Protagoras καὶ πρῶτος . . . λόγων ἀγωνίας ἐποιήσατο, and Plato, *Prot.* 335a, where Protagoras says πολλοῖς ἤδη εἰς ἀγῶνα λόγων ἀφικόμεν ἄνθρώποις.

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members of all the Greek city-states to meet together and forget their differences, and the public appearance there of the Sophists was symbolic of a pan-Hellenic outlook that went naturally with their habit of staying in different cities in turn. Gorgias was as welcome in Larissa as in Athens, and Hippias (even more remarkably) in Athens as in Sparta. The subject of Gorgias's Olympic oration was *homonoia*, concord, and his advice, which he repeated in his Athenian funeral oration, was that Greek states should turn their arms against the barbarians, not against each other. We have already seen Hippias upholding the brotherhood of all Greeks.¹

(d) Interests and general outlook

It is an exaggeration to say, as has often been said,² that the Sophists had nothing in common save the fact that they were professional teachers, no common ground in the subjects that they taught or the mentality which these produced. One subject at least they all practised and taught in common: rhetoric or the art of the *logos*.³ In Athens in the mid fifth century to be an effective speaker was the key to power. 'The word is a mighty despot', as Gorgias said in one of his surviving declamations (*Hel.* 8, DK, II, 290); and with the art of *logos* would go all that was necessary for a successful political career. When young Hippocrates is asked what he thinks a Sophist is, he replies: 'A master of the art of making clever speakers' (*Prot.* 312d). The speaker's art they practised themselves, taught personally, and expounded in written handbooks (*technai*) covering both rhetorical argument and the correct use of language in general.⁴ All save Gorgias would admit

¹ Gorgias A 1 (Philostr. 1.9.5), and fr. 5b. Plato, *Meno* 70b, *Hipp. Maj.* 283b.

² E.g. T. Gomperz, *Gr. Th.* 1, 415: 'It is illegitimate, if not absurd, to speak of a sophistic mind, sophistic morality, sophistic scepticism and so forth.' (Even the bare fact of being professional teachers can have an effect: some at least would be prepared to maintain that there is such a thing as a schoolmasterly or donnish mind.) For a similar point of view see H. Gomperz, *Soph. u. Rh.* 39.

³ See the evidence collected by E. L. Harrison, *Phoenix*, 1964, 190ff., nn. 41 and 42. Schmid's contention (*Gesch. gr. Lit.* 1.3.1, 56f.) that rhetoric was unknown among the early Sophists and introduced by Gorgias in the last third of the century is not borne out by the evidence.

⁴ For the written *technai* see Plato, *Phaedr.* 271c οἱ νῦν γράφοντες . . . τέχνας λόγων and cf. 266d. Isocrates, *In Soph.* 19, speaks of 'those of an earlier generation' who wrote τὰς καλουμένας τέχνας. Protagoras's ὀρθόπειρα is mentioned in the same context by Plato (267c; see p. 205, n. 2, below), and the list of his works in D.L. includes τέχνη ἐριστικῶν. Accordingly to Plato (*Soph.* 232d) he published sets of arguments to enable a man to hold his own against

The Subjects Taught

to being teachers of *areté* (of which, as understood by them, the art of persuasive speech was a prerequisite), and one may suspect that Gorgias's disclaimer was a little disingenuous (pp. 271 f. below): his teaching of rhetoric was aimed at securing for his pupils the same kind of success in life that Protagoras promised as a teacher of *politiké areté*.¹ In accordance with their claim to be the educational successors of the poets, the Sophists included in their art of *logoi* the exposition and criticism of poetry. This is well attested for Protagoras (pp. 205, 269, below), and another Sophist, Euenus of Paros ('fee 5 minae', Pl. *Apol.* 20b), who was especially interested in knowing why Socrates should have taken to writing poetry in prison (*Phaedo* 60d), also lectured on poetry, as well as writing it himself.² It is also recorded of Hippias and Antisthenes (pp. 282, 309 below).

Apart from this one overriding interest, many of them had their own specialities. Hippias prided himself on his polymathy and versatility. He not only taught mathematics, music and astronomy (which Protagoras derided as useless for practical life)³ and had perfected his own system of memory-training, but claimed mastery over many handicrafts as well.⁴ It has been said of the Sophists that they were as much the heirs of the Presocratic philosophers as of the poets. W. Schmid has claimed for Protagoras a debt to Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, the Milesian physicists and Xenophanes, and gives him the credit for making the paradoxical conclusions of Heraclitus and

experts in divers arts and crafts. He also wrote on grammar. For Gorgias see Plato, *Phaedr.* 261b-c. He τέχνας ῥητορικὰς πρῶτος ἔξευρε, Diod. 12.53.2 (DK, A 4). D.L. 8.59 speaks of him as ὑπερέχοντα ἐν ῥητορικῇ καὶ τέχνῃν ἀπολλειοπίπτα, and Quintil. 3.1.8 (A 14) puts him among the *artium scriptores*. Thrasymachus wrote a rhetorical τέχνη (Suda, A 1) which seems to have been known as the Μεγάλη Τέχνη (B 3). For something of its content see *Phaedr.* 267c with DK, B 6. Prodicus and Hippias are also mentioned in Plato's review of the βιβλία τὰ περὶ λόγων τέχνης γεγραμμένα (*Phaedr.* 266d ff.), and Hippias's expertise in the minutiae of speech at *Hipp. Min.* 368d. Prodicus's passion for distinguishing between apparent synonyms is often referred to by Plato, e.g. *Prot.* 337c, *Euthyd.* 277e (περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος), *Laches* 197d (ὀνόματα διαίρεσιν). More on this below, pp. 222f.

¹ Cf. E. L. Harrison in *Phoenix*, 1964, 188f. Bluck has pointed out (on *Meno* 73d) that *areté* according to Gorgias is there said to be 'the capacity to govern men', which is precisely what Gorgias himself, in the *Gorgias* (452d), claims to impart through the art of persuasion. See also p. 181, n. 2, below.

² See *Phaedr.* 267a. Some fragments of his elegiacs have survived, and will be found in Diehl, *Anth. Lyr.* 1.78 ff. Aristotle quotes him a number of times.

³ For a more definite reason for Protagoras's quarrel with mathematics, based on his general theories of knowledge and reality, see vol. II, 485 f.

⁴ Plato, *Prot.* 318d-e, *Hipp. Min.* 368b-d; Philostr. *V.S.* 1.11.1 (DK, 86 A 2).

Parmenides generally current in educated circles. (See *Gesch. gr. Lit.* 1. 3. 1, 16 and 38.) On the other hand it has been said that they had no interest in natural philosophy at all. There can be no doubt that they were familiar with the writings of the philosophers and that their general outlook, with its rationalism, rejection of divine causation, and tendency to scepticism, owed much to them. This is not inconsistent with a fundamental difference of aim, and, making allowance for this, there was also a meeting ground in their common interest in anthropology, the evolution of man as a product of nature and the development of human society and civilization. But there is little positive evidence of a serious interest in cosmology or physical questions generally, though this has sometimes been claimed for Protagoras on the basis of a quotation in Eustathius from the comic poet Eupolis (DK A 11), who ridiculed him for 'pretending an interest in the heavens but eating what came out of the ground'. This is slender, and probably comic slander like Aristophanes's jibe against Socrates and Prodicus together as 'meteorosophists'.¹ In Plato's *Protagoras* (318e, a better source), Protagoras disclaims an interest in all such unpractical studies. At the gathering in the house of Callias (*ibid.* 315c), Hippias is shown answering questions about 'natural science and astronomy', and in the *Hippias Major* (285b) Socrates speaks to him of 'the stars and other celestial phenomena, in which you are such an expert'; but his pride was in the astonishing breadth and variety of the topics on which he could discourse. His acquaintance with each must have been extremely superficial, and there is no suggestion that, except possibly in mathematics, he had any original contribution to offer. Galen reports a work of Prodicus (fr. 4) *On the Nature of Man* which repeats the title of a Hippocratic work and shows an interest in physiology. Some fragments of Antiphon (between 22 and 43 in DK) seem to reveal an interest of Pre-socratic type in questions of cosmology, astronomy, earth and sea. Cicero speaks (*De or.* 3. 32. 126-8) of Prodicus, Thrasymachus and Protagoras as having spoken and written *etiam de natura rerum*; but he

¹ As Schmid notes (*Gesch.* 1. 3. 1, 36, n. 3), after the trial of Anaxagoras μετεωρολόγος became a general term of abuse. One may compare also Plato, *Apol.* 26d, and, for Anaxagoras as the high priest of μετεωρολογία, *Phaedr.* 270a.

puts this in the right perspective when he connects it with the Sophists' claim to hold forth on any subject whatsoever and answer any question that can be put to them. Among the 'practitioners of every art', with whom Protagoras undertook to enable a pupil to argue on their own ground, would no doubt be the cosmologists and astronomers. The aim was to be a good talker and to make debating points, not to acquire a scientific interest in a subject for its own sake.

One branch of Presocratic philosophy had a profound influence on sophistic as on all other Greek thought: the extreme monism of Parmenides and his followers. Its challenge to the evidence of the senses, and rejection of the whole sensible world as unreal, inspired a violent reaction in the empirical and practical minds of the Sophists, who opposed it in the name of common sense. Protagoras, we are told, took time off from teaching political *areté* to write a work on Being which was directed against 'those who uphold the unity of Being',¹ and Gorgias in his *On Non-Being* showed his mastery of Eleatic argument by turning it against its inventors. Yet the Sophists could not, any more than other pretenders to serious thought, brush aside the Eleatic dilemma, which forced a choice between being and becoming, stability and flux, reality and appearance. Since it was no longer possible to have both, the Sophists abandoned the idea of a permanent reality behind appearances, in favour of an extreme phenomenalism, relativism and subjectivism.

The Sophists were certainly individualists, indeed rivals, competing with each other for public favour. One cannot therefore speak of them as a school. On the other hand to claim that philosophically they had nothing in common is to go too far. They shared the general philosophical outlook described in the introduction under the name of empiricism, and with this went a common scepticism about the possibility of certain knowledge, on the grounds both of the inadequacy and fallibility of our faculties and of the absence of a stable

¹ Protog. fr. 2. The informant is Porphyry, who mentions that 'by accident' he has come across this book himself. Some have tried to identify it with other known works of Protagoras. Bernays (*Ges. Abh.* 1, 121), followed by T. Gomperz, Nestle and others, said it was only another name for the *Καταβάλλοντες* or *Ἀλήθεια*. For Untersteiner, on the other hand (*Sophs.* 11), this is incorrect, and it belongs to the second part of the *Ἀντιλογίαι*, while von Fritz (*RE*, xl. Halbb. 919f.) thought it might be an independent work. The title does not occur in D.L.'s list of Protagoras's works, which is however defective.

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reality to be known. All alike¹ believed in the antithesis between nature and convention. They might differ in their estimate of the relative value of each, but none of them would hold that human laws, customs and religious beliefs were unshakeable because rooted in an unchanging natural order. These beliefs—or lack of beliefs—were shared by others who were not professional Sophists but came under their influence: Thucydides the historian, Euripides the tragic poet, Critias the aristocrat who also wrote dramas but was one of the most violent of the Thirty Tyrants of 404 B.C. In this wider application it is perfectly justifiable to speak of a sophistic mentality or a sophistic movement in thought. The Sophists, with their formal instruction backed by writing and public speaking, were prime movers in what has come to be known as the Age of Enlightenment in Greece. This term, borrowed from the German, may be used without too much misgiving to stand for a necessary transitional stage in the thought of any nation that produces philosophers and philosophies of its own. Thus Zeller wrote (ZN, 1432): ‘Just as we Germans could hardly have had a Kant without the Age of Enlightenment, so the Greeks would hardly have had a Socrates and a Socratic philosophy without Sophistic.’² That Socrates and Plato could never have existed without the Sophists is repeated by Jaeger (*Paid.* I, 288), and this in itself would make them repay study even if they were not (as some of them are) important figures in their own right.

¹ This is expressly attested for Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias and Antiphon, and can be confidently asserted of Prodicus, who shared Protagoras’s view of the practical aims of his instruction (Plato, *Rep.* 600 c–d). It is traceable in later Sophists like Alcidas and Lycophron, and it would be difficult to produce a clear counter-instance.

² Burnet (*Th. to P.* 109) complains of the influence which this ‘superficial analogy’ has had over German writers, and claims that if there is any parallel it occurs much earlier, and Xenophanes not Protagoras is its apostle. But Xenophanes was rather the first swallow that does not make a summer; the sophistic Age of Enlightenment means not only Protagoras but Prodicus, Gorgias, Hippias, Antiphon, Critias, Euripides and many others. Burnet’s next remark, that ‘it is not to religion but to science that Protagoras and Gorgias take up a negative attitude’, is a strange one to make of the man who declared that he did not know whether there were gods or not. As a general rule such warnings against facile analogies are salutary, but the resemblances between the Enlightenment and the age of the Sophists are certainly many and striking. The relationship of the *philosophes* and their contemporaries to their predecessors in the ancient world, both Greek and Roman, is discussed by Peter Gay in *The Enlightenment* (1967), 72–126 (chapter entitled ‘The First Enlightenment’).

The Sophistic Mentality

(e) *Decline or adolescence?*

To a hostile contemporary like Aristophanes, sophistic ideas were a symptom of decline. The great days of Greece were those of the Persian Wars, when men were men. Courage and hardiness, simplicity of life, high moral standards were all attributed to this immediately preceding generation. Now, he lamented, all standards are being abandoned and no one can distinguish right from wrong, or, if they do, they blatantly uphold the wrong and despise the right. The young generation are luxury-loving, effeminate, immoral and cowardly. Look at the drama: no longer do playwrights choose high and noble themes as Aeschylus did. Instead we have Euripides with his plays of adultery, incest and deceit, his flaunting of the mean and sordid, his endless quibbling talk. All this, thought Aristophanes, came of following the new atheistical science and the new morality of the Sophists.

This view—that Greece had already passed the peak of her greatness and that the Sophists were a sign of the times and by their own teaching hastened her decline—has tended to reappear in modern histories. On the other hand Karl Joël in the 1920s (*Gesch.* 674f.) was already seeing, in the intellectual ferment of which they were the leaders, not decline but the ‘Rausch der Jugend’. Like the young they were ambitious, contentious, breaking out in all directions. In the same strain T. Gomperz (*Gr. Th.* 1.480) perceived in the rhetoric of Gorgias ‘the streaming and unbridled vitality of an age in which the young blood leaps with a wayward pulse, and the mind’s activity is in excess of the matter at its disposal’. Grant (*Ethics* 1, 76f.) worked out a division of morality into three eras: ‘first, the era of popular or unconscious morals; second, the transitional, sceptical or sophistic era; third, the conscious or philosophic era’. (In the third era, of course, the three stages will exist contemporaneously among people of different education and intellectual powers.) He noted a parallel development in the individual:

The simplicity and trust of childhood is succeeded by the unsettled and undirected force of youth, and the wisdom of matured life. First, we believe because others do so; then, in order to obtain personal convictions, we pass through a stage of doubt; then we believe the more deeply but in a somewhat different way from what we did at the outset.

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Now if one thinks of the great things that lay ahead—the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, to be followed by the Stoics, Epicureans and other philosophers of the Hellenistic age—there can be no doubt that, however it may be with Greek history in general, with the Sophists Greek thought entered not on its decline but on its early manhood.¹

(f) Rhetoric and scepticism

There was, we have seen, one art which all the Sophists taught, namely rhetoric, and one epistemological standpoint which all shared, namely a scepticism according to which knowledge could only be relative to the perceiving subject. The two were more directly connected than one might think. Rhetoric does not play the part in our lives that it did in ancient Greece. Nowadays the words 'success' or 'a successful man' suggest most immediately the world of business, and only secondarily that of politics. In Greece the success that counted was first political and secondly forensic, and its weapon was rhetoric, the art of persuasion. Following the analogy, one might assign to rhetoric the place now occupied by advertising. Certainly the art of persuasion, often by dubious means, was no less powerful then, and, as we have our business schools and schools of advertising, so the Greeks had their teachers of politics and rhetoric: the Sophists. *Peitho*, Persuasion, was for them a powerful goddess; 'the charmer to whom nothing is denied', Aeschylus called her (*Suppl.* 1039f.), and Isocrates a century later reminded his Athenian audience that it was their custom to offer her an annual sacrifice (*Antid.* 249). Gorgias in his *Encomium of Helen*—a school exercise in rhetoric, sophistic in every sense—names speech and persuasion as the two irresistible forces. 'He who persuaded did wrong by compelling, but she who was persuaded acted under the compulsion of the word and it is vain to upbraid her.' Thus Helen is absolved from blame and depicted as a helpless victim, deserving pity, not hatred or condemnation.²

It was part of rhetorical instruction to teach the pupil to argue with •

¹ The comparison of the stages of Greek thought to the stages of an individual life is also made by Cornford in *Before and after Socrates*, 38ff. For further comment on Grant's division see p. 164 below.

² In Aeschylus on the other hand it is Paris whose hand is forced by Persuasion, 'the insufferable child of Doom' (*Ag.* 385 f.). Pindar speaks of the 'lash of Persuasion' (*Pyth.* 4. 219).

Rhetoric and Scepticism

equal success on both sides of a question. As Protagoras said, 'On every topic there are two arguments contrary to each other'. He aimed at training his pupils to praise and blame the same things, and in particular to bolster up the weaker argument so that it appeared the stronger.¹ Rhetorical teaching was not confined to form and style, but dealt also with the substance of what was said. How could it fail to inculcate the belief that all truth was relative and no one knew anything for certain? Truth was individual and temporary, not universal and lasting, for the truth for any man was simply what he could be persuaded of, and it was possible to persuade anyone that black was white. There can be belief, but never knowledge.

To prove his point that 'persuasion allied to words can mould men's minds as it wishes', Gorgias adduced three considerations, which illustrate the way in which the Sophists' teaching grew out of the life and philosophy of their times (*Hel.* 13):

1. The theories of the natural scientists, each one thinking that he has the secret of the universe, but in fact only pitting one opinion against another and setting up the incredible and the invisible in the eye of the imagination.

2. The inevitable contests and debates of practical life [as in the law courts or the Assembly], where a single speech can delight and convince the crowd just because it is artistically and cleverly contrived, not because it contains the truth.

3. The disputes of philosophers, which only go to show the rapidity with which thought can demonstrate the mutability of opinions and beliefs.

In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that an epistemology should gain favour according to which 'what appears to me *is* for me, and what appears to you *is* for you', and that no man can be in a position to contradict another.²

(g) Fate of sophistic literature: Plato and Aristotle

Finally, a word about the loss of the Sophists' writings. Havelock has written of Greek liberalism, which roughly corresponds to what

¹ See D.L. 9.51 and Protagoras A 21 and C 2 in DK.

² For such opinions in Protagoras see Plato, *Theaet.* 152a, *Euthyd.* 286c. The subject is resumed in ch. VIII below.

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is here called the sophistic outlook, that 'to chart its course with precision is a difficult task, impossible but for the twin guide-posts supplied by the *ipsissima verba* of these two men' (*L.T.* 255). The two in question are Democritus and Antiphon, and since on the same page he has to warn us that 'the chronology of Antiphon's life, nay his very identity, is in doubt'; since moreover the liberal temper is represented for him not only by these two but by Archelaus, Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias, Gorgias, Thrasymachus, Lycophron and others, this is a somewhat pessimistic view. His suggestion that these are the only two contributors to the school of thought in the classical age who are documented by their own utterances is happily belied by what he says elsewhere.¹ Nevertheless it is true that the fifth-century empiricists are represented for us in the main by meagre fragments, or more or less hostile paraphrases, of the extensive writings which they produced. Hitherto historians had assumed that this, though unfortunate, was accidental: many other works of classical Greece have perished, not surprisingly, in the passage of upwards of 2,400 years. But their modern champions see a more specific reason determining the fate of the Sophists, namely the authority of Plato and Aristotle. Plato's idealism carried the day, and, since he himself would have liked to suppress the teaching of his opponents, his followers duly suppressed it; or at least, as contrary philosophies became entrenched, nobody saw reason to preserve what were generally considered unorthodox and objectionable views. So it has come about, to quote Havelock (*L.T.* 18), that 'the history of Greek political theory, as also of Greek politics, has been written in modern times exactly as Plato and Aristotle would have wished it to be written'.

Here again, like Sidgwick with Grote, one may say that these critics have a real point which others have neglected, but that they probably overstate their case. What they allege may have been part-cause, but other reasons, no less plausible, suggest themselves for the loss. It has been pointed out that in general the Sophists were not scholars writing philosophical and scientific treatises for the future.

¹ On p. 157 he speaks in the same terms of *ipsissima verba* of Thrasymachus, Gorgias and Protagoras. (For T. Gomperz, *Gr. Th.* 1, 490, 'the sole surviving literary monument of the movement known as sophistry' was the Hippocratic treatise *On the Art* [of medicine].)

Aristotle and the Sophists

They were rather teachers, lecturers and public speakers, whose aim was to influence their own age rather than to be read by posterity. Moreover, since much of their work was educational, of the handbook type, it would naturally get incorporated in the handbooks of later teachers, including Aristotle, which would be regarded as superseding it. Aristotle, besides writing his own *Art of Rhetoric*, compiled a summary of the earlier 'Arts', from their originator Tisias onwards, of which Cicero wrote that he not only lucidly explained the precepts of each teacher but so exceeded the originals in brevity and attractiveness of style that no one any longer consulted them, preferring to read Aristotle as a much more convenient exponent of their teaching.¹

While on the subject of Aristotle it may be as well to issue a caveat against speaking of 'Plato and Aristotle' in one breath,² as if their opposition to sophistic empiricism were equal and identical. On the subjects in which the Sophists were primarily interested, Aristotle's standpoint was in many ways closer to theirs than to Plato's. True, he shared Plato's teleological view of the world, and on the question of realism *versus* nominalism he is usually supposed to have been a Platonist. That is to say, though he gave up the transcendence of the Platonic Forms, he continued to believe in the existence of permanent substances or essences corresponding to universal terms—*universalia in rebus* if not *ante res*. In general this may be true,³ but his position is complex, and it cannot be asserted without qualification when we turn from his metaphysics to his treatment of human action both individual and collective, that is, his ethical, social and political theory. For one thing, he drew an explicit distinction between the aims, and in consequence the methods, of scientific investigation on the one hand and inquiry into the problems of human behaviour and character on the other. In the former, the most exacting standards of accuracy must be demanded, but these would be inappropriate to the study of

¹ Cic. *De inv.* 2.2.6. See Jaeger, *Paideia* 1, 302 and Untersteiner, *Sophists*, 9. Untersteiner does recognize, as an additional reason for the loss, the different turn taken by the prevailing philosophies in succeeding generations.

² As Havelock regularly does, e.g. on pp. 12, 17, 18, 19, 32, 34 (five times) in his *Liberal Temper*.

³ See however Miss Anscombe in Anscombe and Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 31 f.

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human material, which is undertaken not for theoretical but for practical ends. In the *Ethics* he puts the point many times, perhaps most forcibly in the statement that to demand strict logical proof from an orator is no more sensible than allowing a mathematician to use the arts of persuasion.¹ In the ethical field the abandonment of Plato's absolute, self-existent moral norms or patterns had far-reaching effects, for it made possible a divorce of theory from practice, of knowledge from action, which for Plato had been unthinkable. Aristotle can write (1103b27): 'The object of our inquiry is not to know what virtue is, but to become good men', whereas on the Socratic-Platonic view 'to know what virtue is' was an essential prerequisite of becoming good. He openly prefers Gorgias's method of enumerating separate virtues to the Socratic demand for a general definition of virtue, which he calls self-deception (*Pol.* 1260a25), and in the first book of the *Ethics*, which contains one of his most sustained and effective attacks on the Platonic theory of Forms, we find a defence of the relativity and multiplicity of goods which might almost have been written by Protagoras.²

¹ 1094b25. See also 1098a26ff. (the carpenter is not looking for the same straightness as the geometer), 1104a3, 1102a23.

² The brevity of the above remarks may lay them open to a charge of over-simplification. In so far as Aristotle believed in the relativity of goodness, it was only in the first of the two senses enumerated on p. 166 below, and he was Socratic enough to combine it with a belief in a single function of man as such, resulting from our common human nature and overriding the different subordinate functions of individuals or classes. This and related points are well brought out in Lloyd's article on Aristotle's biological analogies in *Phronesis*, 1968, in which however one is conscious all the time of an influential figure standing in the background though never mentioned: Protagoras.

IV

THE 'NOMOS'—'PHYSIS' ANTITHESIS IN MORALS AND POLITICS

(I) INTRODUCTORY

The two terms *nomos* (pl. *nomoi*) and *physis* are key-words—in the fifth and fourth centuries one might rather say catch-words—of Greek thought. In earlier writers they do not necessarily appear incompatible or antithetical, but in the intellectual climate of the fifth century they came to be commonly regarded as opposed and mutually exclusive: what existed 'by *nomos*' was not 'by *physis*' and *vice versa*. It is with this use of the terms that we shall now be chiefly concerned.

The meaning of *physis* emerges from a study of the Presocratics.¹ It can safely be translated 'nature', though when it occurs in conjunction with *nomos* the word 'reality' will sometimes make the contrast more immediately clear.² *Nomos* for the men of classical times is something that *nomizetai*, is believed in, practised or held to be right; originally, something that *nemetai*, is apportioned, distributed or dispensed.³ That is to say, it presupposes an acting subject—believer, practitioner or apportioner—a mind from which the *nomos* emanates. Naturally therefore different people had different *nomoi*, but, so long as religion remained an effective force, the devising mind could be the god's, and so there could be *nomoi* that were applicable to all mankind. 'Human laws (*nomoi*) are sustained by the one divine law' said Heraclitus (fr. 114, vol. 1, 425), and for Hesiod (*Erga* 276, echoed in the myth of Protagoras, Plato, *Prot.* 322d) Zeus has laid down 'a law for all men', that unlike the beasts they should possess justice. This conception persisted in the Sophistic age. Even the rationalist Thucydides can speak of the self-seeking party politicians of his day as partners in crime rather than observers of the divine

¹ See vol. 1, 82 f. and II, 351-3.

² See vol. 1, 82 f., vol. II, 351-3 and 353, n. 1.

³ See Pohlenz in *Philol.* 1948, 137=*Kl. Schr.* II, 335, and the references in Ehrenberg, *Rechtsidee*, 114, n. 1.

law.¹ It appears also in the 'unwritten laws' of Sophocles's *Antigone*, which are divine and everlasting and which no mortal can successfully defy, as Creon learns too late (ν. 1113; on 'unwritten laws' see pp. 118ff. below). But when belief in gods is undermined, and they are no longer 'current coin' (*nomisma*),² this universal authority for *nomos* no longer exists. Then the phrase 'unwritten law' takes on a new and more sinister meaning, appropriate to the political realism of the age.

The earlier history of the terms *nomos* and *physis* is interesting, but has been told more than once.³ We have now reached the point where a new generation has divorced *nomos* from *physis*, as what is artificially contrived from what is natural, and sometimes what is false (though commonly believed) from what is true. The latter sense of *nomos* we have met in philosophical contemporaries of the Sophists: Empedocles denying birth and destruction but confessing that he conforms to *nomos* by using the terms, and Democritus declaring that sensible qualities exist only in *nomos*.⁴ However, in the Sophists, historians and orators of the day (and in the tragedian Euripides, another spokesman of the new thought) the antithesis was more commonly invoked in the moral and political spheres. Here its more important uses are two: (i) usage or custom based on traditional or conventional beliefs as to what is right or true, (ii) laws formally drawn up and passed, which codify 'right usage' and elevate it into an

¹ Thuc. 3.82.6. And even Gorgias, who believed in suiting his rhetoric to the occasion (καίρως), could speak of war-heroes as observing the θεϊστῶτων καὶ κοινὸν νόμον (fr. 6).

² Aristoph. *Clouds* 248, playing on the two senses of the word. 'Coinage' is the commonest, but for the other see Aesch. *Sept.* 269, Eur. *I.T.* 1471, Pind. fr. 203 Bowra (p. 132 below).

³ The fullest treatment is F. Heinemann's *Nomos und Physis* of 1945, reprinted 1965. In a notice of the reprint in *L'Ant. Class.* for 1965, E. des Places mentions some works that have appeared on the subject in the interval. Pohlenz's article with the same title in *Hermes*, 1953, is avowedly a critique of Heinemann's work. His article *Nomos* in *Philol.*, 1948, treats briefly the etymology and semantic development of the word. On *nomos* see also Ehrenberg, *Rechtsidee*, 114ff.

⁴ Emped. fr. 95 (vol. II, 156); Democr. fr. 9 (vol. II, 440). Reminiscent of Empedocles is Hippocr. *De victu* 1.4 (VI, 476 L.) ὁ νόμος γὰρ τῇ φύσει περὶ τούτων ἐναντίος, where τούτων refers to the identity of becoming and perishing with mingling and separation. Cf. also *Morb. sacr.* 17 (VI, 392 L.): the seat of thought and feeling is the brain; the φρένες (lit. 'diaphragm', but used in ordinary Greek to mean mind or sense) have a name which is owed to chance and *nomos* and does not correspond to reality. In this sense the pair νόμος-ἔτηρ or νόμος-λόγος (or ἀλήθεια, cf. Soph. fr. 83.3 N.) comes close in sense to the common expression λόγος μὲν . . . ἔργον δέ. In Hdt. 4.39.1 λόγος could replace νόμος without detriment to sense or idiom. (Cf. 4.8.2.)

obligatory norm backed by the authority of the state. The first was the earlier use, but was never lost sight of, so that for the Greeks law, however much it might be formulated in writing and enforced by authority, remained dependent on custom or habit. 'The law', wrote Aristotle (*Pol.* 1269a20), 'has no power to compel obedience beside the force of custom.' To some extent this remains true in any society. As H. L. A. Hart has written (*Law, Liberty and Morality*, 51): 'It is of course clear (and one of the oldest insights of political theory) that society could not exist without a morality which mirrored and supplemented the law's proscription of conduct injurious to others.' In primitive society there is little if any difference between the two, for custom itself has binding force. Codification only becomes necessary at a fairly advanced stage of civilization. Hence, in origin, the oscillation of the word between the two ideas. Since, however, they are already separated for us, and no English word has the same coverage, it will be best to retain the Greek. It will serve to remind us that, since the same word *nomos* expressed both ideas, 'the distinction between what is legally enforceable and what is morally right was much less clear-cut among the Greeks than it is with us'.¹

It will be convenient to deal under separate headings with topics which are normally regarded as distinct, but an examination of the *nomos-physis* antithesis (the effects of which have been outlined in an introductory way in the previous chapter) must come first, because it will be found to enter into most of the questions of the day. Discussion of religion turned on whether gods existed by *physis*—in reality—or only by *nomos*; of political organization, on whether states arose by divine ordinance, by natural necessity or by *nomos*; of cosmopolitanism, on whether divisions within the human race are natural or only a

¹ Dodds, *Gorgias*, 266. Heinimann (*N. u. Ph.* 78) quotes passages from Hdt. to show that there was no sharp distinction in his time between the two senses, custom and law. The original coincidence of custom and law (noted by Pohlenz in *Hermes*, 1953, 426) has an obvious bearing on the question of 'unwritten laws'. The derivative verb νομίζειν has a similar range, though the sense of law-making is rarer and that of believing much the commonest. The two occur together in Xen. *Rep. Lac.* 2. 4: Λυκουργος ἐνόμιζεν ἐνὶ ἡμαρτίῳ δι' ἔτους προσεθίζεσθαι, νομίζων οὕτως . . . ἀμεινον ἄν παρεσκευάσθαι. It means 'to make a practice of' in Hdt. 4.59.2: the Scythians νηούς οὐ νομίζουσι ποιεῖν — it is not their *nomos*. In the same chapter it occurs in the sense 'believe in' (gods) and 'believe that' (Ge is the wife of Zeus). That in the indictment of Socrates θεούς οὐ νομίζων indicates actual disbelief is shown below, p. 237, n. 2. The sense 'to set up, institute' appears in Thuc. 2.38, and cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1275b7.

matter of *nomos*; of equality, on whether the rule of one man over another (slavery) or one nation over another (empire) is natural and inevitable, or only by *nomos*; and so on. The plan involves a risk of overlapping, which must be kept in check; but a little may even be desirable, to show how the various questions were interlocked in contemporary thought. This chapter will explain the antithesis itself in more detail, and the ways in which, once established, it led to very different estimates of the relative value of *physis* and *nomos* in the moral and political field.

The question who was responsible for the distinction in the first place has often been discussed, but is probably unreal, and at least unanswerable on the evidence we have. Aristotle called it a widespread *topos* recognized by 'all the men of old' as a means of trapping an opponent into paradox (*Soph. El.* 173a7). Heinimann cites a passage in the Hippocratic *De aere aquis locis* as the earliest occurrence, but the statement of it attributed to Archelaus (A 1 and 2 DK) is probably earlier, and in any case is the first known mention of it in an ethical context.¹ The slightly comic juxtaposition of physical and ethical in the version of Diogenes Laertius ('He said that living creatures first arose from slime, and that justice and baseness exist not naturally but by convention') is doubtless due to the naivety of the compiler, and we cannot tell in what words Archelaus expressed the thought; but it may legitimately remind us of the historic connexion between evolutionary physical theories and theories of the conventional origin of morality and law. Archelaus was a contemporary of Democritus.

¹ Heinimann, *N. u. Ph.* 13ff. The testimony to the views of Archelaus pretty certainly goes back to Theophrastus's special study of him mentioned by D.L. (5.42). The context in the medical writer is anthropological and ethically neutral: he will describe the differences between different races whether these are due to νόμος or φύσις. As to date, Archelaus must have been older than Socrates, and Hippocrates was probably a few years younger, in spite of the rather loose statement of Aulus Gellius, *N.A.* 7. 21 (*RE* VIII, 1803, Jones in Loeb Hippocr. 1, xliii). Heinimann dates *De aere, etc.* to shortly before the Peloponnesian War, Pohlenz (who thought it was by Hippocrates himself) after 428, and from the way the distinction is introduced thought it must have been already familiar. He inclined to Archelaus as the originator. See his article in *Hermes*, 1953, and, for Archelaus in general, vol. II, 339f., Heinimann 111-14. He was an Athenian of the Periclean age, contemporary with the first generation of Sophists. The combination of an interest in the origin of life with that of human society and laws recalls Protagoras, but it is impossible to assign priority between them, beyond saying with some confidence that Protagoras was the older man.

Physical Theories and Morality

We are entering a world in which not only sweet and bitter, hot and cold, exist merely in belief, or by convention, but also justice and injustice, right and wrong.¹ Doubts about the order and stability of the physical world as a whole, and the dethronement of divinity in favour of chance and natural necessity as causes, were seized upon by upholders of the relativity of ethical conceptions and became part of the basis of their case. To see that this was so, we need only look ahead to the time when Plato took the field against them: to combat their distasteful moral theories he felt compelled to construct a whole cosmogony, in which the first place was given to intellect and conscious design. It is, he says, the idea that the cosmos has come about by chance that has made possible the denial of absolute standards of right and wrong (pp. 115 f. below).

Law, then, and moral standards enforced by public opinion, are not god-given as was formerly believed. They are something imposed by man on his fellows, or at best created by agreement to set a limit on the freedom of each individual. In this way

the use of history and experience helped to evolve a rather different set of standards, not of traditional moral goodness or badness but simply of success or failure, expediency or in expediency . . . None of the rules was absolutely rigid or invariable: they had always to be adapted to changing conditions . . . The voyages of discovery . . . revealed numerous different systems of morality . . . To none of these customs, so infinite in matter and diversity, could 'permanent authority' be attributed. The idea of a universal moral law was, therefore, to this extent on the wane, and it became *pari passu* more credible to regard moral rules as merely customary and relative, as having grown up to meet the needs of particular people in given places and times. On this view, 'interest' was what seemed to underlie ethical standards, an attitude which readily lent itself to some sort of hedonistic or utilitarian interpretation.

This passage, which so well describes the changing climate of thought in fifth-century Athens, was in fact written about seventeenth-century England,² and could be applied with almost equal propriety

¹ This juxtaposition of physical and moral as equally subjective is made in connexion with Protagoras by Plato, *Theat.* 171 e-172 a.

² Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics*, extracts from pp. 197-9.

The 'Nomos'—'Physis' Antithesis

to the 'situational ethic' of today.¹ As we proceed we shall find plenty of reference to expediency or interest (τὸ συμφέρον) as a standard, especially in Thucydides. In the political sphere Untersteiner quotes a pleasing² example from Lysias: 'The first thing to keep in mind is that no man is by nature either an oligarch or a democrat, but each strives to set up the kind of constitution which would be to his own advantage.'

With this denial of the absolute status of law and moral values, or any place for them in the permanent nature of things, the stage is set for a controversy between the two, but admission of the contrast does not of itself decide the outcome. The place to be accorded to law and tradition was, in Greece at least, by no means determined by the initial admission that they are artificial, and men who agreed on that could nevertheless draw different practical conclusions from it. For convenience, three main positions may be distinguished: support of *nomos* against *physis*, support of *physis* against *nomos*, and an attitude of hard-headed realism or fact-facing which without passing judgment declares that the more powerful will always take advantage of the weaker, and will give the name of law and justice to whatever they lay down in their own interests. It will retain the name for as long as they keep their power.

(2) THE UPHOLDERS OF 'NOMOS'

(a) *Anthropological theories of progress*

'What is this pact but the means by which man, as a relatively weak and defenceless creature, is able to maintain a biological status, which otherwise he could never achieve?'

H. G. Baynes, 'Psychological Origins of Divine Kingship', *Folklore*, 1936, 91.

In the fifth century, as a natural corollary of physical theories of the evolution of life from inanimate matter, some remarkably consistent theories of human progress began to replace the mythical idea of

¹ Cf. *Time Magazine* (22 April 1966): 'The traditional values are giving way to "situation ethics"—meaning that nothing is inherently right or wrong, but must be judged in context on the spur of the moment.'

² Pleasing in its reminder of Private Willis in *Iolanthe*, with whose faith in nature as the arbiter of party-political allegiance the orator was not in agreement. The quotation is from Lysias, *Apol.* (or. 25), 8 (Untersteiner, *Sof.* 1v, 74).

degeneration from a primeval perfection like that of Hesiod's Golden Race. They can be traced in Democritus, and appear in the most diverse authors, in Aeschylus as well as Euripides, in the Hippocratic Corpus, the Sophist Protagoras, and the aristocrat Critias; and somewhat later in the tragic poet Moschion. Though Sophocles does not picture the original savage state, his praise of man's technical progress in the *Antigone* presupposes the same order of events. Prometheus, 'Forethought' or 'The Forethinker', may be brought in as the teacher, or left out; his presence seems to matter little. In Aeschylus he is there, but only as bestower of intelligence, who taught men to use their own minds. In Euripides the benefactor is unknown ('whichever of the gods it was who first gave us wits'), and in Sophocles it is man himself who by his own achievements has become the marvel of the world. Moschion, though later,¹ reflects an indifference already evident in the fifth century when he writes that the author of the process was time itself, whether aided by Prometheus or necessity or simply by the promptings of experience and nature.

According to these accounts, the first men lived like animals, without clothes or houses, in caves and holes. They had no idea of combining together, but scattered over the countryside feeding on whatever offered itself. Even cannibalism was resorted to. They died in great numbers, from cold, from diseases caused by the crudity of their diet, and from the attacks of wild beasts. At length their hardships impressed on them the necessity of combining for survival, and with the need for rational communication they gradually learned to turn their inarticulate cries into speech. They also proceeded, through a stage of storing wild produce for the winter, to cultivation of the soil and the growing of corn and vines. This marked the beginning of civilized life in communities, recognition of the rights of others and the rudiments of law and order. Demeter giver of grain was also Thesmophoros, Law-bringer. After all, as Rousseau pertinently remarked, who would be so absurd as to take the trouble of cultivating

¹ Possibly third century B.C. See Diehl in *RE*, xxxi. Halbb. 345. The author of the Hippocratic *De vet. medicina* (ch. 14; I, 600 L.) says that although medicine is a purely human art, developed by rational investigation, its inventors thought it worthy of being attributed to a god, as indeed it commonly is (ὡς καὶ νομίζεται); Edelstein's *Idea of Progress*, 54, n. 71, is open to correction on this point.

a field, if the state of society was such that it might be stripped of its crop by anyone who took a liking to it?¹ This comes out particularly in the claim of the Athenians to have been the originators both of corn-growing and of laws and constitutional government.² Side by side with these advances we read of the domestication of animals and the acquisition of technical skills. Houses and cities were built, the use of fire made cookery possible and led to the extraction and working of metals, ships were launched and overseas trade developed, and disease was held in check. Greek doctors saw the maintenance of health as very largely a matter of correct diet, and for the fifth-century author of *On Ancient Medicine* (ch. 3; I, 576–8 L.) the healing art began when cultivated foodstuffs, cooked meals and a balanced diet replaced the 'animal-like' regime of primitive man, a process which in his opinion covered a lengthy period of time, and was brought about [not by Asclepius but] by 'necessity'.

These soberly rationalistic accounts of human development are in strong contrast to the older religious conceptions of degeneration from an age of perfection, the 'golden race' of Hesiod or the 'age of Love' in Empedocles, when the goodness of man was matched by the kindly abundance of nature.³ The coincidences, of thought and also of vocabulary, between the various authors⁴ strongly suggest a common source, which may possibly have been Xenophanes, the long-lived poet and philosopher who probably survived until about 470 (vol. 1, 362f.). At least the lines (fr. 18) in which he says that 'the gods did not reveal all things to men from the beginning, but in course of time,

¹ *Origin of Inequality*, Everyman ed. 188. Cf. the quotation from Grotius about Ceres Legislatrix on p. 217.

² See especially the passages of Moschion, Diodorus (13.26.3) and Isocrates on 82, 83, 84 below. Agriculture does of course imply the change from a nomadic to a settled form of life, though this is not expressly mentioned in our sources. The connexion was helped by the associations of the word ἡμερος, meaning (a) cultivated as opposed to wild crops, (b) gentle or civilized as opposed to savage, a combination which no English word provides. Cf. esp. Moschion fr. 6.23 Nauck καρπὸς ἡμέρου τροφῆς with 29 ἡμερον βίον, and Diod. 13.26.3: the Athenians shared their τροφῆς ἡμέρου with other Greeks and brought them εἰς ἡμερον καὶ δικαίων συμβίωσιν.

On the relationship between θεσμός and νόμος see Ehrenberg, *Rechtsidee*, ch. 3, esp. p. 123.

³ A more detailed description than can be given here, together with some interesting attempts to combine the two, like that of Dicaearchus in the fourth century, will be found in my *In the Beginning*, chs. 4 and 5.

⁴ See the translations on pp. 79ff. below, with notes drawing attention to some of the repeated key-words or -phrases.

by searching, they find out better' show him to have been a believer in progress, not degeneration, and seem to foreshadow the detailed expositions of the advancement of civilization which we find in the younger writers.¹ Whether or not he expanded his statement on these lines, he certainly passed on the idea, which fitted well with his tirades against the religious outlook of Homer and Hesiod.² Wherever it came from, it gained wide currency in the secular atmosphere of the fifth century.

The adherents of these historical theories were obviously on the side of *nomos*, while at the same time rejecting any idea of it as innate in human nature from the beginning or divinely ordained. Critias, Isocrates and Moschion all name *nomoi* as the means of raising human life above the level of the beasts. The climax of the *Antigone* chorus is the declaration that technical achievements in themselves are neutral: they may bring man to evil as well as to good. The essential is that he observe *nomoi* and follow justice. Unlike the characters in Critias and Moschion, Euripides's Theseus is pious: he attributes man's progress from brutality to civilization to an unnamed god, though from indications elsewhere one may doubt whether Euripides himself did. In any case his moral is the same: avoid pride (τὸ γαυρόν); the ideal is the man of middle status who 'preserves the *kosmos* which the state ordains' (vv. 244f.).

(b) Protagoras on the original state of man

A holder of the progress theory who can claim to be a philosopher in his own right is Protagoras, the first and greatest of the Sophists. In the list of his works appears a title which may be translated 'On the Original State of Man',³ and it will be assumed here that when Plato

¹ For a full (perhaps too full) commentary on these lines see Edelstein, *Idea of Progress*, ch. 1.

² One word which must have stood in the original, if there was one, is θηριώδης (p. 80, n. 2, below). This tells against the expansion occurring in the context of fr. 18, which is purely hexametric, but it could have come in one of his iambic or mixed poems. It should be added, however, that the idea of progress as a human achievement may be traced back to the early sixth century. See O'Brien, *Socr. Paradoxes*, 59f., on the stories of Phoroneus and Palamedes.

³ περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως, D.L. 9. 55. The title would be unsuited to a cosmogony, even if we did not know that Protagoras's main interest was in humanity. (Lesky also translates it as referring to man, *HGL*, 345.) The words of Democritus fr. 278 are sometimes compared: to have children is believed to be a necessity for men ἀπὸ φύσιος καὶ καταστάσεώς τινος ἀρχαίης.

puts into his mouth a speech on that topic he is substantially reproducing Protagoras's own views, most probably as given in the work so named.¹ The passage in question is *Prot.* 320c ff. Protagoras has made his claim to teach political *areté* (pp. 38 f. above), and Socrates has expressed doubts whether it can be taught. He objects (a) that on subjects which are taught and learned, like architecture or naval design, the Athenians will only accept the advice of experts, but on general policy they allow anyone to give advice, evidently because they do not think of this as a technical subject calling for training; (b) that good and wise statesmen prove unable to impart their political gifts to others, even their own sons. Protagoras offers to give his views either as a reasoned argument or in the form of a story or parable, and, when his audience leave it to him, chooses the story as likely to give more pleasure. This warns us plainly that the introduction of the gods is not to be taken seriously, but can be stripped away as adornment to the tale. Plato knew well that Protagoras was a religious

More to the point is Moschion's announcement (fr. 6.2) that he will explain ἀρχὴν βροτείου καὶ κατὰστασιον βίου, which seems to be an echo of Protagoras. Nestle plausibly suggested (*VMZuL*, 282) that the original was a public lecture (ἐπιδείξις), which would have included even the mythical form, like Prodicus's 'Choice of Heracles' of which Xenophon says (*Mem.* 2.1.21) πλείστοις ἐπιδείκνυται. Note that Plato's Socrates too speaks of Protagoras as τοσαῦτα ἐπιδείξασαί μιν (*Prot.* 328d). See also p. 319 below.

¹ This is the opinion of a large majority of scholars. For summary of opinions see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 72, n. 24, who agrees with it, and Havelock, *L.T.* 407-9, who does not; also O'Brien, *Socr. Paradoxes*, 62f. To those in favour may be added Heinemann, *N. u. Ph.* 115, Schmid, *Gesch. gr. Lit.* 1. 3.1, 17, n. 10, Versényi, *Socr. Hum.* 23, and Bignone, *Studi* 22, n. 2; to those against, Capizzi, *Protagora*, 259. Cf. also von Fritz in *RE*, xlv. Halbb. 917.

The opposition of Havelock is to some extent based on the rhetorical question (*L.T.* 88): 'Why . . . should a genius take the trouble to advertise in his own writings a system already in circulation and put out by a representative of a school of thought which he distrusted?', which in turn rests on his general belief that 'no philosopher in his senses will take the trouble to report with historical fidelity views which intellectually he cannot accept' (p. 165). What he does is to make a 'critical examination' of them. It is not explained how one can properly criticize views without taking the trouble to report them accurately first. It is possible to think better of philosophers than that. The books in the excellent *Pelican* series of historical studies of individual philosophers of the past are written by active philosophers who would certainly not subscribe to all the views of their subjects. A rhetorical question can usually be countered by another, in this case M. Salomon's (*Savigny-Stift.* 1911, 136): 'What interest could Plato, who speaks with no little respect of Protagoras, have had in foisting on him views which would have distorted and falsified our picture of him?'

The question has been exhaustively discussed, and there is little point in reopening it. Two arguments used against authenticity may be dismissed at once: (i) internal inconsistencies, for, as examination of the content will show, there are none of any seriousness; (ii) the contention that it is a parody or distortion designed to discredit the Sophist, for an open-minded reading of the myth and the *logos* which follows it leaves one only with feelings of deep respect for their author.

agnostic (cf. *Theaet.* 162d), and had no wish to deceive. In fact the myth is followed by a rational explanation of the main points, from which divine agents are wholly absent.

Protagoras has a difficult position to defend, and he does it with astonishing skill. If he admitted that virtue (to use the common English translation of *areté*) is a natural endowment of the whole human race, rather than something acquired by training, he would argue himself out of his job, for training in virtue is what he has just claimed as his *métier*. On the other hand he has undertaken to justify the principle underlying Athenian democracy, that questions of public policy are in no sense technical, so that the advice of 'smith or shoemaker' may be as good as any other's, which seems to imply that the necessary virtues are innate in every man rather than imparted by instruction. Both positions are maintained in the myth and the explanation which follows it.¹

Technical sagacity (*ἔντεχνος σοφία*) is innate in man from the beginning, for in the myth it is bestowed by Prometheus at the moment when the first men see the light. It is only another expression for the practical intelligence (*σύνεσις* in Euripides) which is the first divine gift in Euripides and Aeschylus. Original also was the instinct for worship, because, as the myth puts it, men 'share in the divine'. This they would do both in the sense that reason was the gift of Prometheus, a divine being, and because the possession of reason was thought to be a mark of kinship with the gods. Protagoras himself probably recognized worship as something peculiar, and perhaps necessary, to man, without committing himself on the existence of its object.²

Using their native ingenuity, men soon provided themselves with food, houses and clothing, and learned to speak; but they still lived 'scattered', without cities, because although they had the 'craftsman's

¹ What follows is based on the fuller account in my *In the Beginning*, 85 ff.

² Protagoras did not deny the existence of the gods, but refused to discuss the question on the grounds that certainty was impossible (fr. 4 and Plato, *Theaet.* 162d-e). His friend Pericles said that our belief in gods rests on the honours that are paid to them as well as the benefits they confer (Stesimbrotus *ap.* Plut. *Per.* 8). Protagoras probably thought this evidence hardly sufficient. So Nestle, ed. of *Prot.* pp. 19 f. See further below, pp. 234 f. Similar language occurs in Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.4.13 (man is the only race that worships gods) and 4.3.14 (the soul of man τῷ θεῷ μετέχει).

art'¹ they lacked the 'political art'. Consequently many were killed by wild beasts, against which the only defence for the physically weaker human species lay in combined action. Fearing, therefore, that the whole race would be wiped out, Zeus (in the story) sent Hermes to bring men two moral virtues, aidōs and dikē, 'to make political order possible and create a bond of friendship and union' (322c). *Dikē* is a sense of right or justice, *aidōs* a more complicated quality combining roughly a sense of shame, modesty, and respect for others. It is not far from 'conscience'. These gifts are not to be restricted to selected individuals, as with the arts, where one can be a doctor, another a musician and so on, and life be conducted on a principle of division of labour. All must share them, because 'there could never be cities if only a few shared in these virtues as in the arts'. Even Zeus, however, cannot ensure that they are universal, for they were no part of the original nature of man, so he adds the rider that, if anyone prove incapable of acquiring them, he must be put to death as a cancerous growth in the body politic.

Zeus's decree stands for what in the non-mythical anthropologies (and in Protagoras's mind) was the work of time, bitter experience, and necessity.² The story teaches two things about the 'political virtues': (a) in the civilized world they are possessed to some degree (ἀμῶς γέ πως, 323c) by everybody, but (b) they were not innate in men from the beginning. In the explanation following the myth he takes up both these points. The first one justifies the Athenians in demanding expertise in the technical arts but not in the art of politics, for which the prime requisites are justice and moderation. Everyone in fact believes that these virtues are shared by all. A man entirely

¹ δημιουργική τέχνη, 322b. Comparison with ἀρετῆς... δημιουργικῆς at 322d affords a striking demonstration of the practical associations of *areté* and explains the (to an English reader) rather illogical way in which the account seems to treat technical skills and moral qualities as much the same sort of thing. The craftsman's art calls for technical *aretai* and the political man's for political *aretai*, which happen to be moral virtues. Cf. 322b ἡδίκουν ἀλλήλους ἅτε οὐκ ἔχοντες τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην. On statesmanship as τέχνη in the fifth century some interesting material is collected in O'Brien, *Socratic Paradoxes*, 67ff.

² Since writing the above I find that this point, which even now escapes most scholars, was made long ago by Kaerst in the *Zeitschr. f. Pol.* 1909, 513, n. 1: 'Der Umstand, dass im Mythos des Protagoras erst durch Hermes die δίκη und αἰδώς an die Menschen verteilt werden, soll natürlich nur die unbedingte Notwendigkeit der Allgemeinheit der Rechts- und Schamgefühle für das Bestehen des Staates veranschaulichen.'

Protagoras on the Development of Morality

without an artistic gift—say music—is a commonplace, but a man entirely without moral qualities could not lead a human life, and anyone who declared that this was his own case would be thought mad (322a-c). If Socrates ever met such a one—who *ex hypothesi* would be living in isolation, without education, courts of justice, laws or any other of the restraints of civilized life—he would regard the most hardened criminals of Athens as virtuous by comparison. Secondly, however, though the Athenians like everyone else believe that all have some share of the political virtues, they do not think of them as innate or automatic, but as acquired by teaching and effort (323c: these therefore correspond in reality to the decree of Zeus in the myth). The education starts in infancy, with mother, nurse and father, and is continued by schoolmasters, and in adult life by the state, which provides in its laws a pattern of how to live. Moreover the citizens prompt each other, for it is in our interests that our neighbours should understand the rules of organized social life (327a-b). In this continuous process it is difficult to single out a class of teachers of virtue, but this is no more proof that it cannot be taught than the lack of instructors in our native tongue would prove the same about speech.¹

It is in this connexion that Protagoras produces his justly celebrated theory of punishment, with its enlightened rejection of the motive of vengeance or retribution. The passage is worth quoting in full (324a-c):

In punishing wrongdoers, no one concentrates on the fact that a man has done wrong in the past, or punishes him on that account, unless taking blind vengeance like a beast. No, punishment is not inflicted by a rational man for the sake of the crime that has been committed (after all one cannot undo what is past), but for the sake of the future, to prevent either the same man or, by the spectacle of his punishment, someone else, from doing wrong again. But to hold such a view amounts to holding that virtue can be instilled by education; at all events the punishment is inflicted as a deterrent.

Protagoras's view of *areté*, *diké* and *nomos* does certainly imply that raw human nature contains the possibility of moral advance,

¹ Echoed in Eur. *Suppl.* 913-15:

ἡ δ' εὐανδρία
διδασκός, εἴπερ καὶ βρέφος διδάσκαται
λέγειν ἀκούειν θ' ὧν μάθησιν οὐκ ἔχει.

though its realization is a matter of experience and education. As Aristotle said later, 'we are equipped by nature to acquire the virtues, but we achieve them only by practice (ἔθος)' (*EN*, 1103a24). Protagoras himself said (fr. 3, DK): 'Teaching needs both nature and practice (ἄσκησις: i.e. in the pupil).' It is this antecedent capability, varying between individuals, which he invokes against Socrates's other argument, that some good statesmen seem unable to impart their virtue even to their own sons. If virtue were distributed on the same principle as the other arts (326e ff.), with one practitioner to many laymen, the case might be different, though even there the sons of many artists, trained by their fathers, cannot hold a candle to them (328c). But as it is, everyone has some talent for virtue and everyone is continually having it developed by various, sometimes unnoticed, educative processes. In this situation, the advantages of contact with an outstanding father cannot have so much effect as the natural capabilities of the son, which may be very inferior.

As to his own claims as a Sophist, given that virtue can be taught, and is continually being instilled in an infinite variety of ways simply by the experience of being brought up in a well-governed state, we must, he modestly concludes, be content if we can find someone rather better than the rest at advancing us along the road, and that is all I claim to be.

(c) *Other equations of 'nomos' with the just and right*

For Protagoras, then, self-restraint and a sense of justice are virtues necessary to society, which in its turn is necessary for human survival; and *nomoi* are the guidelines¹ laid down by the state to teach its citizens the limits within which they may move without outraging them. Neither *nomos* nor the political virtues are 'by nature', but a 'return to nature' is the last thing that is wanted. The state of nature was uncomfortable and savage, with every man against his neighbour, and if persisted in would have led to the destruction of the race. Critias was on the same side, if we may take the quotations from his plays as

¹ At 326d Protagoras compares them to the lines ruled in children's copy-books when they are being taught to write. E. G. Turner in *BICS*, 12 (1965), 67f., is probably right in referring the words to parallel lines and not to a tracing of the letters themselves.

reflecting his own views.¹ This is plainly stated in the *Sisyphus* (fr. 25), and the interesting lines from the *Peirithous*, which belittle law in favour of character² as a guarantee of right conduct, do so only on account of its comparative weakness. 'The upright character no orator can pervert, but the law he often turns upside-down and dishonours with his talk.' In the *Sisyphus* too he pointed out that laws, relying on compulsion, could prevent open but not secret misdemeanours (fr. 25.9-11), a weakness which is also remarked on by Democritus (fr. 181). Democritus was another upholder of *nomos*, of which he offered an even more exalted conception. Law exists for the benefit of human life, and by obeying it we become aware of its excellence (*areté*). One should establish 'the *nomos* in the soul', the law of self-respect or shame which makes wrongdoing impossible even in secret. (See further vol. II, 495 f.)

Greek recognition of the supremacy of law, as opposed to the will of a king or tyrant, was something of which Greeks were proud. This is illustrated by the well-known story in Herodotus (7.104) of the reply made by Demaratus, the deposed king of Sparta, to Xerxes who had given him asylum. Before invading Greece, Xerxes asked him if the Greeks would fight, giving it as his own opinion that they would not, because of their vastly inferior numbers and because they had no overlord who could compel them to face such odds.

'They are free, yes,' replied Demaratus, 'but not entirely free; for they have a master, and that master is Law, whom they fear even much more than your subjects do you. Whatever this master commands they do, and his command is always the same. He does not permit them to flee in battle, against whatever odds, but compels them to stand firm, to conquer or die.'

¹ This is usually done without question, or even mention of the fact that the relevant passages are in the mouths of *dramatis personae*. The view of laws as man-made, to replace 'brutish disorder' with justice, is the prelude to an atheistical account of the gods as another human invention, delivered by the impious Sisyphus. Only Wilamowitz remarks (*Glaube* II, 216) that doubtless he received later in the play (which is lost) the traditional punishment. But when all is said, the motive was probably that which Aëtius attributes to the author (who he thinks is Euripides), namely to be able to disclaim responsibility for views which are really his own. (See Aët. 1.7.2, DK, 88 B 25: Euripides made Sisyphus the champion of his views for fear of the Areopagus.)

² Fr. 22 τρόπος δὲ χρηστός ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου. The same contrast between νόμος and τρόπος occurs in the funeral oration of Pericles (Thuc. 2.39.4 μὴ μετὰ νόμον τὸ πλεόν ἢ τρόπων ἀνδρείας ἐθέλομεν κινδυνεύειν).

The 'Nomos'—'Physis' Antithesis

As a loyal Spartan, he claims only to speak for his own city, but Xerxes applies his answer to the Greeks, and the story is told with a truly Hellenic pride.¹ For an Athenian expression of pride in *nomos* one can quote the words of Theseus in Euripides, *Suppl.* 429 ff., beginning:

A city has no greater enemy than a tyrant, under whom in the first place there are no common laws, but one man rules, having taken the law into his own possession. There is no fairness in this. But under written laws justice is meted out impartially to the feeble and the wealthy, the weaker if slandered may speak on equal terms with the prosperous, and the lesser man prevails against the greater if his cause is just.

Pericles utters a similar encomium of law in the Funeral Speech (*Thuc.* 2. 37).

Socrates was another who felt that the laws must in all circumstances be upheld. In a conversation which Xenophon reports him as having had with the Sophist Hippias, it is first agreed between them that laws are covenants made by the citizens themselves concerning what must be done and what not, and that they can at any time be amended or rejected. They are not therefore 'by nature', yet Socrates argues strongly that the essence of justice consists in keeping them, and that a state whose members obey the laws is both happiest and strongest.²

Law-abidingness begets concord, without which a city cannot prosper, while individually the law-abiding man is the most trusted, respected and sought as a friend. Even more striking is the scene in Plato's *Crito* where Socrates bases his refusal to evade execution on the ground that it has been decreed by the laws of Athens. 'Do you think a state can exist and not be overthrown, in which the law's decisions are of no force, but are disregarded and nullified by private individuals?' Here again his duty to the laws rests on nothing more fundamental than agreement—there is no hint of divine ordinance or

¹ A more lyrical appreciation of the Demaratus episode can be found in Gigante, *Nom. Bas.* 115–17. That Greeks fight better than Asiatics because they are not despotically ruled is also argued in Hippocr. *De aere etc.* 16 (II, 64L.), a work possibly of the late fifth century.

² *Mem.* 4.4.12 ff. Cf. 4.6.6, where Socrates argues that those who know and do what is lawful in human affairs are just.

bond of nature—but Socrates has had the benefit of the agreement all his life, and to break it now would show base ingratitude.¹

Another champion of *nomos* and *eunomia*, law and order, is the so-called 'Anonymus Iamblichus', a writer apparently of the late fifth or early fourth century.² His advice is aimed frankly at worldly success, and may be summed up as 'virtue is the best policy' and 'be what you would seem'. He has taken a hint from Socrates, who, says Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.7.1), 'always said that the best way to acquire a good name was to become what you wished to be thought to be'. Socrates however would hardly have included 'a ready tongue' among worth-while ambitions, nor made fame the end and virtue only a means to attain it.

The first necessity for success, says the writer, is to be born with natural gifts, but he is no aristocratic advocate of birth and breeding, for he immediately adds that this is a matter of chance. What is in a man's own power is to show that he really desires the good, and to devote the time and labour necessary to acquiring it, for in contrast to 'the art of speaking', which can be quickly mastered, *areté* demands long time and effort. Like Protagoras he sees both nature and practice as necessary, but he would evidently not have followed Protagoras in using *techné* (art, acquired skill) and *areté* interchangeably (see p. 66, n. 1), and his dismissal of the art of speaking as something in which 'the pupil can in a short time rival the master' is an almost Platonic hit at Sophists who made rhetoric the staple of their curriculum. *Areté* on the other hand is a matter of long nurture, of growing up in avoidance of evil in speech and action and pursuing and achieving good by protracted effort. *Areté* is here given the moral content which Socrates and Plato gave it.³ It consists in using one's other gifts—ready speech, cleverness, bodily strength—in the interests of law and justice; if they are put to a contrary use, it would be better

¹ This magnificent passage is cited again in connexion with the social compact on pp. 140, 143 below.

² On these extracts and their author see pp. 314f. below.

³ *Pace* Nestle, who says (*VΜζυL*, 425): 'That ἀρετή still has absolutely no moral sense is clear from the very fact that all these capacities may be put to the service either of the right and good or of the wrong and evil.' His following sentence weakens this one considerably, and in fact it is not ἀρετή but plibness, cleverness and physical strength which can be put to these contrary ends (*DK*, II, 401.16). These capacities have been distinguished from ἀρετή at the beginning of the extract (*ibid.* 400.3-4).

not to have them. To achieve perfect *areté* is to be useful to, or confer benefit upon, the largest possible number of people,¹ and this is best done, not by such crude and in their outcome dubious methods as indiscriminate charity, but by assisting the laws and justice, for it is they which create and preserve the union of human lives in political organizations. To achieve this calls for indifference to wealth, power and life itself. The reward will be an unailing good name.²

To think (he continues) of power-seeking as virtue and obedience to the laws as cowardice is pernicious. (This attacks the kind of view represented by Plato's Callicles, but it was all too common in the late fifth century, and is equally exemplified by the assertion of Thucydides, 3.82.4, that in the general transmutation of values reckless aggression was reckoned courage, and moderation a screen for cowardice.) The reason for this is Protagorean: necessity forced men to combine for survival, and communal life is impossible without submission to law. Hence law and justice must be supreme: 'their strength is established by nature' (DK, 402.29f.). On the surface this seems to resolve the *nomos-physis* antithesis by identifying the two on the basis of the same facts which Protagoras had adduced: men's nature (physical weakness) would have brought them to destruction without political organization; therefore laws are an ordinance of 'nature'. But the reconciliation could only be accepted by a superficial mind. Protagoras, like other evolutionary theorists more conscious of the ages of suffering and experience endured in the gradual and painful advance towards civilization, could not see law itself as a provision of nature. Nature gave men only the intelligence which enabled them, as a tardy

¹ ὁ πλείστοις ὠφέλιμος ὄν, DK, II, 401.23. Kaerst (*Ztschr. f. Pol.* 1909, 516, n. 5) compares the Benthamite principle of the greatest good of the greatest number.

² The equation of virtue and goodness with τὸ ὠφέλιμον, the characterization of other 'goods' as indifferent and capable of serving bad ends (DK, II, 401.16-23; cf. Plato, *Meno* 87e), and the picture of the good man as self-controlled (ἐγκρατέστατον), indifferent to wealth, power and even life (on the grounds that no man can live for ever), make it difficult to resist the impression that the author was an admirer of Socrates and writing after his death. For himself, it is true, Socrates would have put εὐδοξία among the indifferents, but he recognized it as a general and legitimate human aim (Plato, *Symp.* 208c), and his death may have strengthened the opinion that it would accrue anyway from a life of virtue. The sentence at DK, II, 402.12, ὅστις δὲ ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ ἀληθῶς ἀγαθός, οὗτος οὐκ ἄλλοτριῶ κόσμῳ περικειμένῳ τὴν δόξαν θηρᾶται ἀλλὰ τῇ αὐτοῦ ἀρετῇ, has a Socratic ring. I can hardly express strongly enough my disagreement with what H. Gomperz says on p. 84 of *Soph. u. Rhet.* about 'unerträgliche Tautologie und Selbstverständlichkeit', etc. In general he seems to have developed an unreasonable prejudice against this unfortunate author.

alternative to destruction, to organize themselves in this way. There is no disagreement of substance between the two accounts, and a genuine reconciliation between *nomos* and *physis* could only be effected, as Plato effected it, by seeing in nature not a series of accidents but the product of a supreme designing mind.¹

Suppose, goes on the Anonymus, that a superman could exist. Grant him 'a body and soul of steel', exemption from the ills of the flesh, and a total lack of human feeling. Even such a one could not continue to tyrannize with impunity, for all men would be his enemies, and through their allegiance to law would overcome him by combined force or skill. It is not, as many believe, the strength and violence of the tyrant that bring him to power, but the folly of the citizens themselves, for only a city that has already lost its respect for law and order can fall into his clutches. The extract concludes with a eulogy of the blessings of good government. Mutual trust (which Socrates also saw as the fruit of obedience to law) encourages commerce and the free circulation of money, the rich can enjoy their wealth in tranquillity and the poor are helped by the more fortunate,² men enjoy peace of mind and freedom to follow their private pursuits, untroubled by war or internal dissension and protected from tyranny. Law, says this democratic sympathizer, 'benefits the whole people'.

Most scholars would probably agree with the verdict of W. C. Greene (*Moirai*, 251 f.), that the chief value of this composition lies in showing 'how far the stock ideas and arguments of the age penetrated into rather ordinary minds'. Echoes have been detected not only of Protagoras, Socrates and Democritus but also of Prodicus, Critias, Antisthenes, Thucydides, and even those stout opponents of *nomos* Hippias and Antiphon. Many of the supposed resemblances are commonplaces (e.g. the idea that to hazard one's life for one's country wins fame, repeated in Thuc. 2.43.2—but how often elsewhere?),

¹ The reconciliation also seems to be attempted in an interesting and difficult passage of the *Bacchae* (pp. 113 f. below).

² The idea of the rich helping the poor in a state of unity and trust recurs in Democritus fr. 255 (vol. II, 495), of which Cyril Bailey wrote (*Gk. Atom. and E.* 212) that, 'considering the general state of class feeling in most of the Greek cities, this is perhaps the most remarkable of all Democritus's sayings'. On the other hand it looks as if such a protest against class hostility was becoming common, for it is repeated also in Archytas fr. 3 (vol. I, 336) and Isocrates, *Areop.* 31-2.

and one can say little more than that ideas are here reflected which were widely current, though Protagoras and Socrates certainly seem to have been among the models. At the same time the passage offers some interesting points which are not matched in other sources: the attempted reconciliation of *nomos* and *physis*, the idea of the 'man of steel' and his fate,¹ and the combination of democratic ideals with a horror of mob-rule as the breeding-ground of tyranny.

The foregoing passages illustrate a respect for, and pride in, the rule of law as something firmly entrenched in the Greek, and perhaps especially the Athenian, mind, irrespective of whether laws were regarded as a product of nature or strongly contrasted with it. If the latter, they were hailed as a triumph of reason *over* nature, the symbol of man's ability to raise himself by his own efforts out of a 'natural' state of mutual conflict and destruction. Laws were not 'by nature' to Protagoras or Socrates, and Herodotus was fully aware of the variety and inconsistencies between the *nomoi* of different societies. Two passages which make these points, and afford further evidence of their wide currency, have been left to the last owing to certain doubts about their authorship and date, which however do not (at least in my opinion) seriously affect their value for our purpose.

(i) The second oration of Lysias, which purports to be a funeral speech for Athenians who fell in the Corinthian war, is an inept production, written probably as a mere rhetorical exercise and unlikely to be by Lysias.² Certain coincidences with the *Panegyricus* of Isocrates suggest that one imitated the other, but it is not so easy to say which was the imitator.³ In §§ 18–19 the writer, eulogizing the early Athenians, says:

They conducted the city's affairs in the spirit of free men, by law honouring the good and punishing the wicked, for they thought it the action of beasts

¹ But see H. Gomperz, *Soph. u. Rhet.* 86, n. 187. There is a certain confusion (which Gomperz should have mentioned), at least as we have the passage in Iamblichus, between DK, 403.3 (not even a man of steel could overthrow the laws) and 404.27ff. (to do it *would need* a man of steel, not of flesh).

² Dobson, *Gk. Orators*, 92–4. Such judgments are admittedly subjective, and, although in this case I agree, it should be mentioned that Grote thought it 'a very fine composition' and Cope agreed with him. See Cope's ed. of Arist. *Rhet.* III, 120, n. 1.

³ Blass, thinking pseudo-Lysias the imitator, put his speech after 387, but the argument can be used the other way. See Plöbst in *RE*, xxvi. Halbb. 2537.

to prevail over one another by violence; human beings should make law the touchstone of what is right and reasoned speech the means of persuasion, subjecting themselves in action to these two powers, with law for their king and reason their teacher.

(ii) Among Demosthenes's speeches is included one against Aristogeiton (no. 25) which, though some in the past have defended its authenticity, is generally thought to be spurious.¹ Behind certain sections of this speech Pohlenz (in *Nachrichten... Gesellschaft*, Göttingen, 1924, hereafter *NGG*) claimed to have discovered, as their source, a single lost discourse, of unknown authorship, enjoining obedience to the laws on theoretical grounds. This he dated to the end of the fifth century, remarking in particular that there was no trace of Platonic or Aristotelian doctrines. His conclusions won general acceptance, and 'Anon. π. νόμων' was freely cited, until in 1956 M. Gigante argued (*Nom. Bas.* 268-92) *first* that the passages in question cannot be isolated from the rest of the speech (which is indiscriminately eclectic) and assigned to a single model, and *secondly* that the speaker, both here and elsewhere, betrays an acquaintance with Plato, Aristotle and even Stoicism, and cannot be dated earlier than 300. His first thesis is convincing, and the 'Anon.' ought probably to be dismissed as a phantom, but the second is much less securely based.² The following passage from the speech is pertinent to the present theme:

(15) The whole life of men, be their city great or small, is governed by nature and by laws. Of these two, nature is disorderly [ἀτακτος like the

¹ Its authenticity was contested in antiquity. For the chief names on both sides see Gigante, *Nom. Bas.* 269. On the negative side may be added those of Untersteiner and Gigante himself.

² It is not obvious, for instance, why inconsistent definitions of *nomoi* in §16 should necessarily imply late date, and Gigante is apt to rely too much on single words or phrases, as when a mention of σωφροσύνη causes him to exclaim (p. 281): 'Socrate—Platone!' Again, he says that the sections could not have been written by a Sophist because the definition of law as a σωθήκη is not held to condemn it as a plot of the weak to defend themselves against the strong or the strong to oppress the weak, and in fact the definition itself presupposes 'the whole of the *Crito*' and Lycophron! In the preceding pages we have seen sufficiently plainly both that the definition of law as a compact was current in the fifth century and that not all the Sophists rejected it on that account. It does not appear that Lycophron himself did, nor in an earlier generation did Protagoras. When Socrates is portrayed by both Xenophon and Plato as holding that law was a σωθήκη the only sensible conclusion is that he did so, not that Plato inserted it gratuitously and falsely in the *Crito*. In protesting that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary faults betrays Stoic influence, G. does not even mention the strong possibility, noted by Pohlenz, that the correct text of the speech does not contain it. His postponement of this point until four pages later is hardly fair, nor are his arguments on p. 276 fully relevant to the theory of a gloss upheld by Blass and Pohlenz.

primitive state of nature in Critias and Diodorus] and varies with the individual, whereas the laws are common, agreed, and the same for all. Nature may be corrupt, and often has base desires, and men with such a nature will be found doing wrong; (16) but the laws aim at what is just, good and beneficial. This they seek, and when it is found it is published as a common injunction, applying equally and impartially to all. So there are many reasons why it should be obeyed by all, and in especial because it is a discovery and gift of the gods, decided on by men of wisdom, the corrector of faults both voluntary and involuntary,¹ and established by common agreement of the city as that by which every citizen should regulate his life . . . (20) What I shall say is nothing new or clever or original, but what you all know as well as I do. From what cause does the Council meet, what brings the whole people to the Assembly, what mans the law-courts, causes last year's magistrates to make way voluntarily for their successors and everything to take place so as to ensure the good government and safety of the city? It is the laws, and the general obedience to them. Remove them, give every man licence to do what he will, and not only is the constitution abolished but life itself is reduced to the level of the beasts.

The threefold character of legal sanction, as described in §16, has naturally attracted considerable attention, and is universally criticized as an unintelligent juxtaposition of three mutually exclusive and contradictory accounts of 'the origin of law'. These are enumerated by Pohlenz as 'the age-old belief in the divine origin of the *nomoi*, the more modern one according to which individual legislators instituted them by virtue of their practical insight, and finally the latest and most widely accepted, according to which all *nomoi* owe their existence to a collective agreement of the community'. Further consideration of these views will give us a better insight into the Hellenic mind, and may reveal that to call them, as Pohlenz and others do, 'mutually exclusive' is to import our own viewpoint rather than enter into that of a Greek. It is unfortunate that Pohlenz should mention Lycurgus as his example of the second stage, for every Greek knew that, though a human being himself, he received his constitution for Sparta from

¹ Or 'faults of commission or omission'. So Pohlenz took the alternative text τῶν εἰς ἀμφότερα. The idea that ἐκουσίων καὶ ἀκουσίων ἀμαρτημάτων is a gloss on εἰς ἀμφότερα is attractive, for in themselves the words would naturally appear ambiguous and puzzling (as they still do). An alternative rendering is 'offences against both gods and men', which I do not find so grammatically incredible as Pohlenz did. (See *NGG* 29 = *Kl. Schr.* II, 324.)

Apollo. The Cretan who at the opening of Plato's *Laws* says that the laws of Crete and Sparta were owed to Zeus and Apollo respectively was not denying the work of Lycurgus.¹

For the belief in the divine origin of laws (which he calls 'uralt'), Pohlenz gives references in a footnote (*NGG* 28, *Kl. Schr.* 313, n. 2) to five passages of the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries, but without quoting, still less discussing, the texts. Let us take a look at them, and see how far they indicate a general belief in the divine origin of laws as such.

1. Sophocles, *OT* 863ff. Here the chorus are speaking solely of *nomoi* governing religious purity (ἀγνεῖαν . . . ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται), of which they very reasonably say that 'Olympus is their sole begetter, not did any mortal human nature bring them to birth'. What have these to do with the constitution of a *polis*? They belong to the so-called unwritten ordinances (ἄγραφα νόμιμα), of which Plato says that they ought not really to be called *nomoi*.²

2. Euripides, *Ion* 442. Ion, the idealistic young servant of Apollo, is shocked to learn that his lord has betrayed a mortal woman. Virtue should go with power. If a man sins, the gods punish him. 'How is it right for you, who have written the *nomoi* for men, yourselves to be guilty of lawlessness?' This comes nearer to supporting the generalization about 'a divine origin for *nomoi*', but, apart from the requirements of the dramatic situation, what is in question is a moral principle rather than positive law. This too, in spite of the metaphorical language about the gods 'writing' such laws, belongs rather to the 'unwritten ordinances' which were indeed believed to come from heaven. It recalls the conversation between Hippias and Socrates in which positive law as a human compact is distinguished from the unwritten laws which Hippias believes to be divinely sanctioned (pp. 118ff. below).

3. Euripides, *Hipp.* 98. Hippolytus's servant asks him if he does not think an affable, courteous nature preferable to a proud and haughty one. When Hippolytus agrees, he continues: 'And do you hope to

¹ For further discussion of this point, with references to Tyrtaeus fr. 3 Diehl, Hdt. 1.65, Plato, *Laws* 624a and Plut. *Lyc.* 5 and 6, see my *Gks. and their Gods*, 184f.

² *Laws* 793a, to which Jebb pertinently calls attention in the note in his edition of the *Oedipus*.

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find the same in the gods?' 'Yes,' replies Hippolytus, 'for we mortals adopt the *nomoi* of the gods.' This is simply an instance of the wide coverage of the word *nomos*, for it clearly means ways or manners rather than laws, and has no bearing on the origin of law.

4. Demosthenes 23 (against Aristocrates), 70, speaks of 'those who from the beginning fixed these usages [the word is not even *nomoi* but *nomima*], whoever they were, whether heroes or gods'. This is vague enough, but, apart from that, the reference is by no means general. It occurs in a high-flown eulogy of the court of the Areopagus, in which the orator has begun by mentioning 'many mythical traditions' about it (§65), for instance that the gods themselves once settled their quarrels there, or acted as judges, as in the dispute between Orestes and the Furies. Great emphasis is laid on the religious character of this ancient and revered institution, and the passage ends with the distinction between 'written *nomoi*' and 'unwritten *nomima*'.

5. Isocrates, *Panath.* 169. In this section leaving the dead unburied is condemned as 'spurning the ancient custom (ἔθος) and ancestral *nomos* which all men observe as not laid down by men but ordained by divine power'. This is the very sin which Sophocles's Antigone described as transgressing 'the sure unwritten ordinances (*nomima*) of the gods', and *contrasted* with the law that Creon as a mere human ruler had laid down!

The lesson of these passages is not that 'laws are of divine origin' but that there are certain divinely appointed ordinances (more often designated by the vaguer term *nomima* than as *nomoi*) covering religious observance or moral principle, which are distinct from the great body of positive law in a city like Athens.¹ Positive law itself, however, as the traditions about Lycurgus and other lawgivers show, could be regarded as the work of a man inspired by heaven and so of divine as well as human origin. This was an old belief, which admittedly was under heavy fire in the age of enlightenment. We need not suppose that when Pericles invited Protagoras to draw up a constitution for his new colony of Thurii either of them genuinely believed that he would be acting under divine guidance. Nevertheless the combination of 'gift of the gods' and 'decision of wise men' would by no means

¹ They are fully discussed on pp. 117ff. below.

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appear inconsistent to a Greek as it does to us, and in the mouth of an orator would seem only proper. As for the third of Pohlenz's 'mutually exclusive' stages, what inconsistency is there in stating the truth that, although in a democracy like that of Athens a law could only come into force by the consent of the whole *demos*, it must inevitably have originated from the proposal of a single man? The author of the speech against Aristogeiton may have his faults, but the concentrated attack of scholars on this particular target is astonishing. To a fifth-century Athenian who still respected the traditions of his race, good law was a gift of providence, conveyed through the decisions of wise statesmen, and ratified by the consent of the whole city.

APPENDIX

Some passages descriptive of human progress

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincitus* 442-68, 478-506. (Aeschylus died in 456 B.C. and the *Prometheus* was probably his latest play. The speaker is Prometheus.) But hear the sufferings of mortals, how aforetime they were witless but I gave them sense and made them masters of their minds. At first they had eyes but saw to no purpose, heard but took no heed. Like dream-shapes they lived their long lives in utter confusion. They knew no houses of brick to face the sun, nor working of timber, but lived like crawling ants deep in the sunless recesses of caverns. They had no sure sign of winter or flowery spring or fruitful summer, but acted all without judgment until I showed them the risings and obscure settings of the stars. I discovered for them also number, that supreme device, and writing which is the universal memory and mother of culture. I first brought beasts under the yoke, that with bodies bowed to the collar they might relieve mortals of their greatest toil, and brought horses to the chariot, obedient to the reins, to be the glory of wealth and luxury. None but I invented the sea-borne, canvas-winged craft of sailors . . . If one fell ill, there was no healing food, unguent or draught, but for want of medicines they pined away until I taught them to mix soothing remedies to drive away all diseases. I devised many systems of prophecy, I first judged which dreams were true visions and made known to them the secrets of omens and chance-met portents. I explained clearly the flight of crook-clawed birds, those on the right and on the left, the habits of each and their mutual hates, loves and gatherings; the smoothness of entrails also, what colour of gall-bladder is most pleasing to the gods, the subtle formation of the liver; and burning

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the limbs wrapped in fat, and the long loins, I brought men to a difficult art, and made plain the dim tokens of fire. So much for that. But as for those buried aids to human life, copper and iron, silver and gold, who could claim to have discovered them before myself? None, I well know, unless in vain talk. In one short word you may know all at once: all arts men owe to Prometheus.

Sophocles, *Antigone* 332–71. (Produced about 440. The lines are from a chorus.) There are many wonders,¹ but nothing more wonderful than man. This creature ventures over the grey sea when the stormy south wind blows, crossing in the teeth of the roaring billows. Earth, eldest of the gods, indestructible and inexhaustible, he harries as the ploughs year after year go to and fro, turning up the soil with the progeny of horses. The carefree race of birds he hunts and catches, and the hosts of wild beasts, and the tribes of the salt sea in the coils of woven nets—this cunning creature man. By his devices he tames the beasts of the fields and hills, he brings the horse and the tireless mountain bull to bend their necks beneath the yoke. He has learned speech and soaring thoughts and law-abiding ways in cities, and refuge from the tempestuous arrows of inhospitable frosts in the open air. Inventive always, never does he meet the future unprepared. Death alone can he not flee, but for dire diseases he has contrived the remedies. Skilful beyond expectation are the contrivances of his art, and he advances—now to evil, and again to good when he carries out the laws of the land and the just decrees of heaven to which he is sworn, proud of his citizenship. But an outlaw is the man whose reckless spirit leads him to consort with wickedness.

Euripides, *Supplices* 201–13. (Produced about 421. The speaker is Theseus, who represents Athenian humanity, democracy and rule of law against the claims of tyranny in the person of Creon's herald.) I bless the god who brought our life to order out of beastlike confusion,² implanting in us first of all intelligence,³ then giving us a tongue to be the messenger of speech, that words might be distinguished, and crops to feed us and for the crops rain from heaven, to raise the fruits of earth and give us drink; defences too against winter's cold, to ward off the chill of the sky, and sea voyages

¹ The word is *deina*, on which see p. 32 above.

² θηριώδους. Also in Critias fr. 25.2, Diod. 1.8.1, Hippocr. *VM* 3 (1, 576 L.), Isocr. (*Paneg.* 28, *Antid.* 254, *Bus.* 25) and Ditt. *Syll.* 704 (vol. II, 324), have θηριωδῶς, and Mosch. 6.4 θηροῖν ἐμφορεῖς. In the Homeric Hymn to Hephaestus (20.4) men lived in caves ἕτερε θῆρες until Hephaestus and Athena taught them better. With πεφυρμένου cf. ἐφυρον εἰκη πάντα in the Aeschylus passage (v. 450).

³ σύνεσιν. Prometheus in Aeschylus says ἐννους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους (v. 444).

to exchange with others what our own land lacks.¹ And the hidden things, that we discern not clearly, prophets declare by looking into fire and the folds of entrails, and from the flight of birds.

Diodorus, bk. 1.8.1-7. (For the date of Diodorus's material see vol. 1, 69, n. 1, 11, 210, n. 1, and 389, n. 1. This passage follows an account of cosmogony and the origin of life from the action of heat on damp and putrefying matter.) So much for what our predecessors have said about the first beginnings of all things. As for the first generations of men, they say that they lived in an unorganized and beastlike way, scattering² out into the fields and gathering the most appetizing plants and the wild fruits from the trees. Warred on by wild animals, expedience taught them to help each other, and being herded together³ by fear they gradually became aware of each other's characters. From meaningless and confused cries by slow degrees they articulated⁴ forms of speech, and by agreeing among themselves on expressions for every object, created a comprehensible mode of communication about everything. Similar groups of men collected all over the inhabited world, so that all did not have a language that sounded the same, for each group composed its words as they chanced to come. Hence all sorts of languages exist, and the first groups to be formed became the archetypes of all nations.

Now the earliest men, since nothing useful for life had been discovered, led a painful existence, bare of clothing, unused to house or fire, and altogether ignorant of cultivated food. Not knowing how to harvest the wild food, they made no store of fruits against times of want, so that many of them died in the winter from cold and famine. From this state, little by little they learned from experience to retire to caves in the winter and to lay by such fruits as would keep. Once fire and other useful things were discovered they gradually invented techniques and whatever else was conducive to life in common. In general, men's teacher in everything was sheer need, instructing appropriately in every branch of learning a creature well endowed by nature, and possessing, to assist him in everything, hands, rational speech, and a shrewd intellect.

Moschion, fr. 6 Nauck. (Moschion's date is uncertain. He is now thought to belong to the third century B.C., but this passage is certainly in the spirit

¹ Cf. the reference to trade in Isocr. *Paneg.* 42 (p. 84 below), and the connexion between lawful government and trade in Anon. *Iambl.* (DK II, p. 403.16-18, p. 73 above).

² σκορδάθη as in Plato, *Prot.* 322b, Isocr. *Paneg.* 39.

³ ἄθροισμένους. ἀθροίζεσθαι in Plato, *Prot.* 322a.

⁴ διαθροῦν. So we have φωνὴν καὶ ὀνόματα διηθρώσατο in Plato, *Prot.* 322a.

of the late fifth or fourth century. The name of the play and the speaker are unknown.)

First I will go back and unfold in speech how human life began and was established.¹ There was once a time when the life of men resembled that of beasts. They dwelt in mountain caves and dark ravines, for as yet there was no roofed house nor broad city fortified with stone towers. Nor did the curved ploughs cleave the black clod, nurse of the grain, nor the busy iron tend the fruitful rows of bacchic vines, but earth was barren. In mutual slaughter they dined on food of flesh. Law was of small account, and violence shared the throne of Zeus.² But when time,³ begetter and nurturer of all things, wrought a change in mortal life—whether by the solicitude of Prometheus, or from necessity, or by long experience, offering nature itself as teacher—then was discovered holy Demeter's gift, the nourishment of cultivated grain, and the sweet fount of Bacchus. The earth, once barren, began to be ploughed by yoked oxen, towered cities arose, men built sheltering homes and turned their lives from savage ways to civilized. From this time they made it a law to bury the dead or give unburied bodies their portion of dust, leaving no visible reminder of their former impious feasts.

Critias, fr. 25. 1–8 DK. (Critias was killed in 403. The extract is from the play *Sisyphus*, and Sisyphus is the speaker.) There was a time when the life of men was disorderly and beastlike,⁴ the slave of brute force, when the good had no reward and the bad no punishment. Then, as I believe, men laid down laws to chastise, that justice might be ruler and make insolence its slave, and whoever sinned was punished.

Sisyphus continues by expounding the theory of religion as the invention of an early legislator to prevent secret wrongdoing by instilling a fear of all-seeing gods. (See pp. 243 f. below.)

¹ ἀρχὴν βροτείου καὶ καταστάσιν βίου. Cf. the title of Protagoras's work Π. τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως, Moschion begins his story with the words ἦν γὰρ ποτ' αἰῶν and Protagoras his story in Plato with ἦν γὰρ ποτε χρόνος (320c).

² The reading Διί is not absolutely certain (Lloyd-Jones in *JHS*, 1956, 57, n. 24), though in my opinion extremely probable. The difference between the primitive and civilized eras is emphasized by the unspoken contrast here with the traditional belief that it is Law or Justice which sits enthroned with Zeus: Hes. *Op.* 259; Pind. *Ol.* 8.21 Διὸς Ζηνίου πάρεδρος Θέμις; [Dem.] *In Aristog.* 11 (citing Orphic literature) Δίκην . . . παρὰ τὸν τοῦ Διὸς θρόνον καθημένην; *Oxy. Pap.* 2256 fr. 9 (A), v. 10 (Lloyd-Jones, *loc. cit.* 59f.).

³ Cf. Philemon (Meineke, *CGF* IV, 54; Philemon was born c. 361 and lived to be a centenarian):

ἴσαι τέχνηαι γεγόνασι, ταύτας, ὦ Λάχης,
πάσας ἐδίδαξεν ὁ χρόνος, οὐχ ὁ διδάσκαλος.

⁴ The same pair of Greek words as in Diod. 1.8.1; ἄτακτος of φύσις in [Dem.] *In Aristog.* 15 (p. 75 above).

On Ancient Medicine 3 (I, 574-8 L.). (This treatise probably belongs to the late fifth or early fourth century. See G. E. R. Lloyd in *Phronesis*, 1963. His conclusion is on p. 125.) Sheer necessity caused men to seek and discover the art of medicine . . . I believe that in the beginning men used the same sort of nourishment [*sc.* as the beasts]. Our present way of life, I think, has been evolved by discoveries and inventions over a long period of time. Many and terrible were the sufferings of men from their strong and brutish diet when they lived on raw and uncompounded foods of strong qualities . . . and it is reasonable to suppose that the majority were of too weak a constitution and died, while the stronger put up a longer resistance . . . So from wheat, after steeping, winnowing, grinding and sifting, kneading, and baking, they produced bread, and from barley, cake. Experimenting with many other foods in this way, they boiled, baked and mixed, combining the strong and uncompounded with weaker components, adapting everything to the constitution and power of man.

Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 28 ff. Isocrates (436-338) here puts the theories of progress to a patriotic use: the Greek world owes its civilization to Athens, for Demeter, in gratitude for the kindness she received there when searching for her daughter, granted to the city her two gifts of the cultivation of corn and celebration of the mysteries, with their hope of a future life. The first ensured that we should not live 'like the beasts', and he goes on (§32):

If we leave all this aside and look at things from the beginning, we shall find that the first men to appear on the earth did not lead straight away the kind of life that we now enjoy, but reached it gradually by their own joint efforts . . . (38) This was the beginning of our city's benefactions, to find for those in want the kind of sustenance which men must have if they are going to live a well-ordered life in other respects. For she believed that life that was mere subsistence was not worth living, and took thought for the rest, so that none of the benefits which men now enjoy, and which we owe to each other and not to the gods, is unconnected with our city, and of most of them she is the direct cause. (39) She took over the Greeks living in scattered groups, without laws, some groaning under tyranny, others perishing for lack of leadership, and rid them of these evils, taking some under her protection and acting as an example to others; for she was the first to lay down laws and establish a constitution . . . (40) As for arts and techniques, both those useful for life's necessities and those devised for enjoyment, some were invented and others tested by our city, which then

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handed them over to the rest of mankind to use . . . (42) Moreover not every land is self-sufficient. Some are poor, others produce more than the inhabitants need, and it is a problem for them, in the one case to dispose of their surplus and in the other to find imports. In this difficulty too Athens came to their aid by establishing the Peiraeus as the emporium of Greece, so abundantly provided that everything can be obtained here which in any other single place it would be difficult to buy.

With the above passage of Isocrates compare

(a) Diod. 13.26.3 (speech of Nicolaus the Syracusan recommending mercy to the Athenian captives of 413 B.C.). The Athenians it was who first introduced the Greeks to cultivated food, which they had received from the gods for themselves and offered for the common use. They are the inventors of laws, through which our common life was transformed from a savage and wicked existence into a civilized and just society.

(b) to indicate the persistence of this idea, Ditt. *Syll.* 704 (vol. II, p. 324), an inscription of the second century B.C. containing a proposal of the Delphic Amphictyony to honour the Athenian *technitai* (theatrical artists). It states that the Athenian people brought men from a 'beastlike' state to civilization, admitted them to the mysteries, and gave them the boon of agriculture, laws and civilization.

(3) THE REALISTS

(a) *Thucydides*

To understand the temper of the age in which the Sophists lived, one cannot do better than start with the philosophic historian Thucydides. He is writing of the great inter-state war which was the background of Greek life for the last thirty years of the fifth century, and divided not only city from city but factions within each one. In his own words (3.82):

War, destroying the ease of everyday life, is a violent schoolmaster, and assimilates most men's tempers to the conditions around them . . . The customary values of words were changed as men claimed the right to use them as they pleased to justify their actions: an unreasoning daring was called courage and loyalty to party, a prudent delay specious cowardice; moderation and self-control came to be reckoned but the cloak of timidity,

to have an understanding of the whole to be everywhere unwilling to act . . . Applause, in a word, went to one who got in first with some evil act, and to him who cheered on another to attempt some crime that he was not thinking of.¹

Thucydides has primarily in mind the effects of internal strife, but his narrative, especially in the speeches, shows these traits to have been equally marked in the dealings of one Greek state with another. It is remarkable how seldom even his orators, aiming at persuasion, see any point in appealing to considerations of right, justice or other normally accepted moral standards: it is taken for granted that only an appeal to self-interest is likely to succeed. Thucydides had an impressive insight into the minds of his fellow-Greeks, and may be trusted when he claims that he has heard some of the speeches himself and had first-hand reports of others, and that he has reproduced the kind of thing that they were bound to say on each occasion, while keeping as close as possible to the gist of what they actually said (1.22.1).² His reports supply the necessary background to an outburst like that of Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, and throw light on the current interpretation of such conceptions as human nature, law, justice, advantage or interest, necessity, and their mutual relations. Some illustrations from his work will therefore be very relevant to our theme.

The most famous example of amoral 'realism' is the discussion which he represents as being held between Athenian envoys and the small island of Melos, which the Athenians wished to force into their confederacy (5.85-111). The Athenians begin by saying that they will neither use moral arguments nor expect them from the Melians, because both sides know that by human standards *justice* depends on equality of power: the strong do what they can and the weak submit. Very well, say the Melians (ch. 90). To confine ourselves, as you wish, to considerations of *interest* (τὸ συμφέρον) rather than *justice*, we

¹ Trans. based on Gomme, *Comm. on Thuc.* 2. 384, with slight alterations.

² This sentence takes a pretty fierce bull by the horns. On the thorny question of the historicity of Thucydides's speeches, scholars seem a little inclined to have it both ways. Ehrenberg says (*S. and P.* 42) that he agrees with most scholars 'in taking not only the "form" but to some extent also the "spirit" as Thucydidean . . . but there remains the certainty that truthful reproduction (τὰ ἀληθῶς λεχθέντα) lies at the bottom of the speeches'. Can both halves of this statement be true?

claim that it is useful (χρήσιμον) as a general principle that those in danger should meet with fairness and justice (τὰ εἰκότα καὶ δίκαια) —a principle that you yourselves may need to invoke some time . . . (98) Since you forbid us to talk of *justice*, and bid us give in to your *interest* (ξυμφόρῳ), we will tell you what is good (χρήσιμον) for us, and, if it agrees with your interests, try to persuade you.

Later however (ch. 104) the Melians do venture to introduce moral considerations, claiming that in spite of their weakness they may hope for divine favour because they stand for right against injustice (ᾄσιοι πρὸς οὐ δικαίους). The Athenians retort that this is unrealistic:

Our belief about the gods, and certain knowledge about men, is that universally, by *natural* necessity (ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκῆς), he who is superior rules. We did not make this law (νόμον) . . . We merely use it and shall leave it to exist for ever. You would do the same in our position . . . Nor will the Spartans help you. More than any others they equate pleasant with good and *interest* with *justice*.¹

Similarly in addressing the Spartans themselves (1.76.2), the Athenian representatives declare:

It has been established from all time that the weak should be subject to the strong. You Spartans, while really calculating your own *interests*, make use of the argument of *justice*, which never yet deterred anyone from seeking aggrandizement if he had the opportunity of obtaining it by superior strength. Those are deserving of praise who, while their *human nature* leads them to accept power, nevertheless display more justice than they are compelled to in their superior situation.

Closely parallel to this are the words of Hermocrates the Sicilian warning his countrymen against the Athenians (4.60.1):

Under the *legal* name of alliance they speciously turn their *natural* hostility to their own advantage . . . (61.5) It is wholly excusable that they should plot thus for their own aggrandizement. It is not those who seek to dominate that I blame, but those who too readily give in to them. It is universal human *nature* to dominate the unresisting, but equally to guard against attack.

Pericles told the Athenians frankly that they held their empire 'like a tyranny' (2.63.2): it might have been wrong to acquire it, but it

¹ Ch. 105: τὰ μὲν ἡδεῖα καλὰ νομίζουσι, τὰ δὲ ξυμφέροντα δίκαια.

would now be dangerous to let it go. Cleon, in advocating condign punishment for the rebellious city of Mytilene, repeats this more emphatically.¹ In his speech, which is more notable for audacity than logic, he does not shun the concept of *justice* but blandly accuses the Mytilenaeans of subordinating it to power (ἰσχύς, 3.39.3). By proposing to kill all their adult males and enslave the women and children, he claims to *reconcile justice* with *interest* (δίκαια with ξύμφορα, 40.4), since the Mytilenaeans have deserved their fate; but, even if it is wrong, he immediately continues, Athenian interest demands that they carry out the deed in defiance of decency (παρὰ τὸ εἰκός) unless they are willing to abandon their empire and turn philanthropists. He repeats that it is human *nature* to despise conciliators and admire the iron hand (39.5). The three things most fatal to an empire are pity, love of discussion, and humanity (fair-mindedness, decency: ἐπιείκεια, 40.2).

Diodotus, who opposed the atrocity, makes no more appeal to the finer feelings than Cleon. That would evidently not have served his case. He distinguishes *justice* and *interest*, and advocates consulting only the latter: this is not a law-court but a political assembly, and the sole point is how the Mytilenaeans may be best made use of (44.4). To take vengeance might be strictly *just*, but would not be in Athenian *interests*. Cleon misjudged when he thought the two coincided in the present case (47.5). It is the *nature* of everyone, state or individual, to do wrong, and no *law* can prevent it. Poverty induces recklessness, wealth leads to pride and lust for more (45.4). It would be simple-minded to deny that human *nature*, once set upon a certain course, will be deterred from it by force of *law* or any other threat (45.7).

The Mytilenaeans themselves, in appealing to Sparta for help, seem to know that appeals to justice or pity will not get them far. They begin (3.9.1) by saying that they well know what is the rule in

¹ 3.37.2. The same expression is taken off by Aristophanes, when his chorus of knights congratulate Demos (*Knights* 1111) because

καλὴν γ' ἔχεις
ἀρχήν, ὅτε πάντες ἀν-
θρώποι δεδίασι σ' ὡς-
περ ἄνδρα τύραννον.

The irony of a democracy which behaved like a τύραννος was not something which Aristophanes would miss.

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Greece when a subject state revolts in a war: the other side accept it in so far as it is useful to them, but think the worse of it for deserting its allies. They go on to say (unusually for speakers in Thucydides) that they will next speak of justice and honesty (10.1), but in fact they say little about them, and are soon remarking (11.2) that the only trustworthy basis for an alliance is an equality of mutual fear.

Other instances of the relation between justice and interest occur in the speech of the Corinthians at Athens (1.42.1: 'Do not suppose that though what we say is *just*, your *interest* points in another direction, should it come to war') and of the Plataeans to the Spartans after surrendering (3.56.3). If, they say, you are going to estimate what is just by the standard of your immediate *advantage* (χρήσιμον), you will show yourselves no true judges of *right* (τὸ ὀρθόν) but rather servants of *expediency* (τὸ ξυμφέρον).

(b) *Thrasymachus in the 'Republic'*¹

The theme of the *Republic* is the nature of justice or what is right. After some preliminary discussion of current definitions ('giving every man his due', 'benefiting friends and harming foes'), Thrasymachus bursts out that they are talking nonsense and, pressed to state his own opinion, asserts that 'Justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger'. Expanding this, he says that, whether a state is ruled by a tyrant, an aristocracy or a democracy, the ruling powers make laws with a view to their own benefit. By making these laws, they declare that to be right for their subjects which is beneficial to themselves, and punish whoever departs from them as a law-breaker and wrongdoer. Justice in all states is the same, namely what benefits the established government. Since the government holds the power, justice everywhere is what benefits the stronger.

In answer to questions from Socrates, Thrasymachus adds that, although he has said it is just for subjects to obey the laws laid down by their rulers, this does not imply that they should obey even if those in power happen, mistakenly, to ordain what is not in their interests. Like any other expert or craftsman, he claims, a ruler is not,

¹ *Rep.* 1.336b ff. The question whether the account in the *Republic* represents the views and character of the historical Thrasymachus is not raised here. For that see pp. 296ff. below.

strictly speaking, a ruler when he acts ignorantly or mistakenly, but only when he exercises his skill correctly. It is only then that he will command what is best for himself, and that the ruled should obey.

Socrates takes advantage of the fact that Thrasymachus has introduced the analogy between government and crafts like medicine, and, borrowing his phrase 'strictly speaking', claims that a craft as such does not seek its own advantage but that of the subject on which it is exercised (ἐκείνῳ οὐ τέχνη ἐστίν, 342b), which Socrates identifies as the body in the case of medicine, the horse in the case of horse-training and so forth. He concludes that the art of government, strictly conceived, legislates not for the advantage of those who practise it but for that of its subjects.¹

You might as well say, retorts Thrasymachus, that shepherds study only the well-being of their flocks, whereas, if they keep them healthy and fatten them up, it is for the ultimate benefit not of the sheep but of their masters or themselves.² Similarly justice means serving another man's good: for the obedient subject it is a *dis*advantage. Injustice is the opposite: it rules over the genuinely³ simple and just, who act for its benefit because it is the stronger. The just man always comes off worse than the unjust, both in private transactions and in his relations with the state (tax-paying, selfless service, incorruptibility). The advantage of injustice is best seen in its extreme and most successful form. When a tyrant has seized power he robs, plunders, and tramples on all that is sacred, but instead of being punished like the small-scale transgressor, he is congratulated and called happy by the people he has enslaved. Thus injustice is shown to be stronger, freer and more

¹ Joseph (*A. and M. Phil.* 24 and 22) notes that Socrates is right to claim that the purpose of an art as such is not to benefit its practitioner, even if he earns his living by it, but wrong in assuming that the purpose of all arts is to benefit others on whom it is practised. A hunter exercises his art on game, but not for its benefit, a dancer on his own body, which he may strain or injure to reach perfection.

² Cross and Woolley (*Comm. on Rep.* 48f.) say that, since Socrates's claim about government is deduced from a generalization based on an imperfect induction, Thrasymachus attacks it legitimately by producing a counter-instance. But it was Thrasymachus who introduced the notion of an art in the strict (that is, ideal) sense, to make his point that no ruler errs when acting as such; and Socrates is therefore entitled to retort that the work of a shepherd, *qua* shepherd, is concerned solely with the welfare of his flock. Cf. especially 345b-c. For a contrary view see also Kerferd, *D.U.J.* 1947, 22.

³ ὡς ἀληθῶς, 343c. Cornford strangely translates 'who are called just', and Lee omits the phrase.

powerful than justice and the original thesis is proved, that justice is what benefits the stronger.

Asked whether this means that he considers injustice a virtue¹ and justice a vice, he replies that he would rather call injustice good policy (or prudence, εὐβουλίᾳ) and justice 'a noble simplicity'.² Later he calls the just man 'a well-bred simpleton' and the unjust 'sensible and good'. This is a tougher proposition, says Socrates. He could understand Thrasymachus maintaining that injustice paid in spite of being discreditable, but evidently he will call it honourable and good and everything else that is usually associated with justice. If so, they cannot argue on any generally accepted grounds. Moreover, Thrasymachus now appears to be speaking his own mind and believing in the truth of what he says. Instead of simply agreeing to this, Thrasymachus replies, 'What does it matter to you whether I believe it or not? Just refute the doctrine'—words which acquire significance in the light of his later behaviour.

Socrates proceeds to do this by several arguments,³ and to determine Thrasymachus's position it is important to notice the nature of his responses to them. After the first proof that the just man is good and wise and the unjust stupid and bad, we have the following exchange (350d):

Th. I don't agree with what you say, and I could reply to it; but if I did, you would accuse me of claptrap. So either let me say what I wish, or if you prefer, question me, and I'll say 'all right' and nod and shake my head like someone listening to old wives' tales.

S. But not against your real opinion.

Th. Yes, to please you, since you won't let me speak. What else do you want?⁴

¹ ἀρετή, usually so translated, but not necessarily having the moral implications usually attached to 'virtue'. It means the characteristic excellence which enables any creature, organ or instrument to perform its specific function. (See p. 252 below.) At 353a-b Socrates speaks of the ἀρετή of eyes and ears: even a knife has it if it is well designed and sharp. Immediately after this, Thrasymachus agrees with Socrates that he would call the unjust tyrant 'sensible and good', using the adjective (ἀγαθός) which corresponds to ἀρετή. No moral judgment need be involved, though Socrates takes it into the moral sphere by adding words like καλόν and αἰσχρόν, and Thrasymachus incautiously agrees.

² Cf. Thuc. 3.82.4 on the way words changed their meaning (p. 84 above). 83.1 provides a striking parallel to the present passage: τὸ εὐθεῖς, οὐ τὸ γενναῖον πλείστον μετέχει, καταγελασθὲν ἠφανίσθη.

³ The first of which appeared to Joseph 'absolutely convincing' (*A. and M. Phil.* 31) and to Cross and Woosley 'almost embarrassingly bad' (*Rep.* 52).

⁴ Lee, by turning Socrates's words μηδαμῶς κτλ. into positive form ('please answer as you really think'), makes Thrasymachus's reply mean that he will act as Socrates wishes, instead of

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S. Nothing. If that's what you are going to do, do it. I'll get on with my questions.

It follows that neither the immediately preceding argument nor anything later can be said to have Thrasymachus's agreement,¹ except 351c1-3, where he distinguishes between 'If you are right' and 'If I am right', and Socrates thanks him for it; and the conclusion 'if I am right' is that a strong state owes its power to injustice. Contrast the following expressions of Thrasymachus: 'Let it be so,² since I don't want to contradict you' (351d); 'You may enjoy your argument without fear: I shan't oppose you for I don't want to offend the company' (352b); 'So it appears according to your argument' (353e); and his final words: 'Well, this can be your holiday treat.' Socrates, it is clear, is pursuing his own train of thought irrespective of whether Thrasymachus is following him, and Thrasymachus is not committed to any of it.

In discussing the view here attributed to Thrasymachus the most recent practice has been to consider all possible alternatives as they appear to a philosopher today, and by exhaustive examination of the dialogue endeavour to decide which of them is being maintained by Thrasymachus.³ Such clarification can be most valuable, yet may err by neglecting (as it is never wise to do with Plato) the dramatic situation and emotional tension between the speakers, and the fact that the driving-force behind Thrasymachus is passionate feeling rather than philosophical inquiry. None of this emerges from a summary of the argument, but it is emphasized by Plato at every

as he said he would act. Cornford's 'Anything to please you' is a little ambiguous but was probably intended to mean the same. Jowett and Shorey however translate in the sense given above, which is surely the obvious one. Thrasymachus will not speak his own mind, since he cannot do so by Socrates's method of question and answer. Socrates's οὐδὲν μὲν Δία amounts to 'Have it your own way'.

¹ For this reason I cannot agree with Cross and Woozley (*Rep.* 58) that 'Thrasymachus's mistake was to have agreed with Socrates that justice is the excellence of the soul', for he immediately withdraws his agreement (350d).

² ἴστω. Similarly ἔστω at 354a means 'Have it your own way' rather than 'I grant that' (Lee).

³ Thus Kerferd (*D.U.J.* 1947, 19) sees them as (1) Ethical Nihilism, (2) Legalism, (3) Natural Right, (4) Psychological egoism. To Cross and Woozley (*Rep.* 29) they present themselves as (1) Naturalistic Definition, (2) Nihilist View, (3) Incidental Comment, and (4) Essential Analysis. References for the most important earlier discussions may be found in Kerferd's article, except that he makes no mention of Max Salomon's acute analysis in *Ztschr. d. Savigny-Stiftung*, 1911.

turn. Under the stress of powerful emotion, Thrasymachus throws his challenge into deliberately, bitterly paradoxical form: 'Justice? It's nothing but the interest of the stronger!' This need not mean literally what it says, any more than a man does if, appalled at the success of wickedness and the wretchedness of many good men, he exclaims 'There is no justice, justice is non-existent'. What he in fact means is that there *is* such a thing as justice and he knows very well what it is, but in this life he has looked for it in vain. The shock of the paradox lies in the fact that to every Greek the words justice and just (*dikaion*) conveyed an impression of positive moral worth: indeed they embraced such a wide field that the conception of *dikaion* might almost be said to be co-extensive with that of moral worth.

Since *dikaion* is a word so strongly charged with moral approval, it was difficult for any Greek to say openly that he meant by it simply the interest of the stronger party. The critics of strong-arm tactics in Thucydides usually contrast the two in some such accusation as 'You follow your own interests while pretending to follow justice'. Yet, besides the accusation of putting power before justice (3.39.3), we actually hear, in a speech of Brasidas, of 'the justification that lies in superior power' (ισχύος δικαιοῦσαι, 4.86.6). In the Melian dialogue the Athenians accuse the Spartans of identifying justice with their own interest, but themselves come close to Thrasymachus when they claim (ch. 105): 'What we deem just (δικαιοῦμεν) is consistent with religious belief and human purpose: human and divine alike hold to a law, based on natural necessity, that the stronger subdues others.' Here we have the reversal of values, of which Thucydides speaks in book 3, in all its nakedness, though more often, as he says, the odious deed was cloaked under a fine phrase. Thrasymachus's purpose, as I see it,¹ is to unmask the hypocrisy and show how the meaning of justice is being perverted. Men and cities act as if it were just for the weak to be oppressed and the strong to have their way by no other

¹ It is necessary to be personal, since this is now a minority view and others have much to be said for them. Those who have in the past taken a view similar to that put forward here include, among others, Grote, Barker, Joseph, Burnet and Taylor. More recently Kerferd has maintained that Thrasymachus is preaching a doctrine of natural right, and Cross and Woodzley that he holds it to be the moral duty of the weaker to serve the stronger but then cynically recommends us not to behave in the way in which we ought to behave.

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right than their power to do so, while for the most part denying that this is true and accusing their opponents of acting as if it were.

This is the background against which the interplay of actual and ideal, 'is' and 'ought', in Thrasymachus's assertions must be seen. It accounts for a certain confusion which strikes a reader at once, though scholars have claimed to resolve it by subtle analysis. Thrasymachus begins by making, in scorn and anger, a factual statement: 'I maintain that justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger', later narrowed to 'the interest of the established government'. This could be called either a reversal of current morality—the word 'justice' still conveying approval, but standing for something that hitherto no one would admit to approving—or a draining away of moral content from the word itself: what goes by the name of justice nowadays has nothing to do with right or wrong; it is simply used to stand for the interest of whoever, at a particular moment, holds the reins of power. All governments make laws in their own interest, and call that justice. Those are the facts: praise or blame does not enter into it. One can fill in the rest from Thucydides: it is a matter of human nature, of necessity, so that, as Hermocrates said (p. 86 above), the strong are not to be blamed for seeking to rule, nor on the other hand is there anything morally praiseworthy in their action. To keep others under is simply profitable, and for a ruling power to indulge pity and humanity is dangerous. This is what Pericles and Cleon, and many others, were preaching in Thrasymachus's lifetime.

Justice, then, is the interest of the stronger, and the just subject will, to his own disadvantage, serve the ruler and obey his laws. Later, however, Thrasymachus says that to judge the advantages of injustice one should look at it in its most extreme form, that of the tyrant who has seized power by a combination of force and treachery. Wrongdoers on a small scale are punished and disgraced, but this man is fawned on and called happy and blessed. Yet 'he robs and plunders, not on a small scale but wholesale, respecting neither sacred nor profane, public nor private property'. His is 'the complete, the supreme example of injustice'¹ and this, concludes Thrasymachus, proves my point that injustice is 'stronger, freer and more lordly than justice,

¹ 344a τὴν τελιωτάτην ἀδικίαν, 344c τὴν ὄλην ἀδικίαν ἡδικηκότα.

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and the interest of the stronger is justice, whereas injustice is the profit and interest of oneself'.

All this illustrates the historical fact to which Thucydides is witness, that in the troubled circumstances of the late fifth century established moral canons were ignored and men altered the accepted meanings of moral terms to conform to their actions. Such alteration suits the rough-and-tumble of politics and war (e.g. the label of cowardice or weakness fastened on a man who opposes an act of unjustified aggression), but can hardly stand up to philosophical examination.¹ The moral associations of the word *dikaion*—right or justice—are too strong for its equation with 'the interest of the stronger' to be consistently maintained in the face of questioning. It has been argued² that Thrasymachus is looking at the matter only from the point of view of the ruled, that for him justice consists in the subject seeking the interest of the ruler or, as he puts it, 'another man's good' (343c); and that this rescues him from inconsistency and is indeed the key to understanding his thesis, which is a form of the doctrine of natural right. But what consistency, it may be asked, is there in contending that (a) justice is the interest of the ruling power (which Thrasymachus states simply and without qualification), but (b) it is not just for the ruler to seek his own interest, i.e. justice?³

Almost every commentator has noted the contrast in the discussion between the ideal and the actual, fact and value, 'is' and 'ought', but there has been disagreement about the places in which one or the other standard is introduced. In one of the most acute treatments of the question, M. Salomon noted that the difference between the descriptive and the normative was still *in nuce*. We find it obvious, but to maintain the distinction may not have been so easy for either Plato or the

¹ Though I do not agree altogether with Bignone's estimate of Thrasymachus, there is force in his remark (*Studi*, 38) about him and Callicles: 'But behind these two names one is more conscious of the politics than of the philosophy of the time.'

² By Kerferd in his article in *D.U.J.*

³ Both sides of the thesis are clearly stated by Adimantus at 367c, where he speaks of 'agreeing with Thrasymachus that justice is another man's good, being the advantage of the stronger, and injustice is the advantage and profit of oneself, but the disadvantage of the weaker'. Thus justice consists in obedience to laws which the ruling power (Thrasymachus's chosen example of 'the stronger') has laid down in his own interest, i.e. unjustly. A more consistent view is that referred to by Plato in *Laws* 10 (890a), of those (whoever they may be; not Thrasymachus apparently) who say εἶναι τὸ δικαιοτάτον ὅτι τις ἂν νικᾷ βιαζόμενος.

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historical Thrasymachus. Salomon himself saw Thrasymachus as engaged in purely descriptive sociology¹ down to the place (344a) where he comes to a change in the ruling power and characterizes the man who has successfully overturned the former laws as 'the greatest criminal'. 'Here Thrasymachus not only explains, he judges': an attentive reader cannot overlook the scorn and bitterness with which he speaks. As he sees life, the greatest possible reversal of values is going on before his eyes. The most unjust man becomes the justest; i.e. people will call him just when once he is in power.²

With this interpretation of the latter part of Thrasymachus's remarks we may agree, but in maintaining that up to then he has simply been giving 'sociological information', Salomon ignores the fact that Thrasymachus himself introduced the concept of the ruler 'in the strict sense', who is infallible, that is, an ideal, not an actual ruler. It was this which gave Socrates the opening for his argument that no practitioner *as such*, whether of the art of government or anything else, exercises his art in his own interests. In claiming that Socrates cannot refute Thrasymachus by speaking of what happens when a man rules *rightly* (καλῶς, 347a), since Thrasymachus was asking not how a man legislates when governing rightly but how in fact people do govern in this world, Salomon invited contradiction, for no government is in fact infallible. Nevertheless the infallible or ideal ruler is still for Thrasymachus the one who legislates unerringly *in his own interests*, and he did not intend his admission to lead to the moral conclusion in which the ingenuity of Socrates lands him. His rejection of the alternative offered him by Clitophon (that what he meant by the Interest of the stronger was what the stronger *thinks* to be his in-

¹ 'Sätze, die . . . Jediglich soziologische Erkenntnisse geben wollen' (*Savigny-Stift.* 1911, 143). A clarification of ideas is undertaken, but no norm set up such as, e.g.: 'Act justly, act according to the law.'

² In this last sentence Salomon goes beyond the text. In fairness to Kerferd's exposition it must be said that Thrasymachus nowhere calls the man or party in power 'just', or says that he is so called by others. (They call him 'happy' and 'blest'.) What he says is that justice 'is' their interest, and the just man is the subject who in his simple-heartedness is content to subordinate himself and serve that interest. Yet what Salomon says would seem to be only a legitimate inference from Thrasymachus's words, and helps to show up the inconsistency in Thrasymachus's emotionally charged assertions: justice is the interest of the stronger (equated with the established government), but for the stronger to seek his own interest is unjust. Glaucon in his reinforcement of Thrasymachus's argument does say (361a) that the perfectly unjust man will see to it that he acquires the best reputation for justice.

terest, whether rightly or wrongly) put him at the mercy of Socrates's dialectic.¹

On the interpretation here put forward Thrasymachus, exasperated by what he regards as the unreality and childishness of the discussion so far, bursts out with an angrily paradoxical statement of what he believes to be the facts of real life: 'There's your vaunted justice for you!' He is not prepared to see this somewhat rhetorical statement undergo a Socratic examination, to which he responds with insults (such as the suggestion that Socrates needs a nurse), outbursts of bad temper, and an unsuccessful attempt to escape (344d). In so far as he represents a doctrine, it is that called by Kerferd ethical nihilism. As Joseph wrote:

He holds, like Hobbes, that every man acts only with a view to his own private interest—if he makes laws, as thinking them in his own interest; if he obeys them, as thinking it is in his own interest rather to obey than to pay the penalty of disobedience, though the act itself required of him brings benefit not to him but to the ruler

to which may be added Taylor's remark that

unlike Hobbes, Thrasymachus feels no need to justify the absolutism of the 'sovereign' by appeal to the 'social contract' by which he has been invested with his sovereign powers; since he does not regard 'right' as having any meaning, he has not to show that the sovereign has any right to obedience;

¹ So Joseph, *A. and M. Phil.* 18: 'Thrasymachus' defence . . . introduces a contrast between the actual and the ideal which is ultimately fatal to his position.' Cross and Woosley also say (p. 46) that he 'might have done better to have accepted the suggestion' of Clitophon, though Kerferd denies this on the hypothesis (not very different from theirs) that Thrasymachus is preaching a doctrine of the natural right of the stronger.

Salomon should also have forestalled an objection that normative language is introduced at 339c and 341a, where Thrasymachus agrees that what the ruler decrees is not only 'just' (i.e. according to Socrates that that man is *called* just who obeys the law) but also ποιητέον τοῖς ἐρχομένοις. This, it might be argued, shows that in Thrasymachus's own view the subject *ought* to obey. In reply it might be said: (a) At this stage of thought, and in the absence of resources of vocabulary for making philosophical distinctions such as are available to twentieth-century philosophers, some confusion between descriptive and prescriptive language was unavoidable and the complete divorce from the word δικαίον of any suggestion of obligation impossible; (b) that the compulsion implied by verbal adjectives of this form was by no means exclusively moral: it could refer to force of circumstances or to what must be done to achieve a specified aim (what Aristotle was later to call hypothetical necessity: examples of this use appear at 361c).

E. L. Harrison, in his interesting article in *Phoenix*, 1967, expresses the opinion that this is one of the points at which Plato 'manipulates' Thrasymachus, that is, makes the Sophist speak out of character for the sake of his own artistic design in the *Republic*.

It is sufficient to observe that his *power* to enforce obedience is guaranteed by the simple fact that he *is* the sovereign.

The theory is also, as Grote perceived, essentially different from that of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, who preaches the right of the stronger to seek unlimited power and enjoyment for themselves as 'nature's law', which the strong and powerful not only do follow but ought to follow.¹

Finally, this interpretation of the Platonic Thrasymachus accords with one of the few pieces of independent testimony about the man himself. A scholiast to the *Phaedrus* says that he 'wrote in one of his own speeches something to this effect: The gods do not see what goes on among men. If they did, they would not neglect the greatest of human goods, namely justice, yet we see men making no use of it' (Hermias = Thrasymachus fr. 8 DK).² Here speaks the disillusioned moralist, who in Plato's dialogue, by his ill-judged, ill-tempered³ and paradoxical expression of what is essentially the same view lays himself open to the rigours of the Socratic elenchus. In the general neglect of justice, the man who tries to practise it can only be described as a 'noble simpleton' (348c).

(c) *Glaucon and Adimantus*

After the foregoing episode Glaucon (at the beginning of book 2) complains that Thrasymachus has been too easily put off. He himself wants to hear Socrates prove his contention, that justice is good both in itself and for its consequences. He wants an explanation of 'what justice and injustice *are*, and what effect each has in and by itself, by its presence in the soul', irrespective of rewards or other extraneous consequences. He wants to hear justice praised for its own sake, but in order to elicit this he must first face Socrates with the case against it in

¹ Joseph, *A. and M. Phil.* 17; Taylor, *Plato*, 268; Grote, *History*, ch. 67, 1888 ed. vol. VII, p. 72. Similar to Grote's is the more recent statement of J. P. Maguire, *Yale Class. Stud.* 1947, p. 164: 'Unlike Callicles, neither Thrasymachus nor Glauco admits the existence of a natural right at all.' For Popper both Thrasymachus and Callicles are 'ethical nihilists' (*Open Soc.* I, 116).

² Similarly Adimantus, a little later in the *Republic* (365d), represents the young as saying, 'Why should we bother about the gods, since they either don't exist or don't take any notice of human affairs?' It is difficult to detect in this statement of Thrasymachus the 'obvious exaggeration' and 'manifest hyperbole' which made H. Gomperz think it impossible to take it seriously, so that it must be assigned to a πατυνιον or agonistic speech (*S. u. Rh.* 50).

³ Thrasymachus's fiery temper is also independently attested, Arist. *Rhet.* 1400b19. For our knowledge of the historical Thrasymachus see further pp. 294ff. below.

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its full strength, putting before him all that 'people say' about its origin and nature.

They say that to do wrong is in itself desirable, but to suffer it is not, and the harm of suffering injury outweighs the advantage of doing it. Experience has proved the difficulty of seizing the fruits of wrongdoing and escaping the harm, so, as a compromise, men made laws and agreements binding themselves to do neither. What these prescribed they called lawful and just. This is the origin and nature of justice, and it is valued not as good in itself but through lack of the power to do wrong with impunity.¹ A man capable of practising injustice with consistent success would be mad to allow himself to be bound by such pacts. Imagine a man endowed with the fabled ring of Gyges, which by conferring invisibility on the wearer at his pleasure enabled him to escape the consequences of his acts. It would completely obliterate the distinction between the good and the wicked, for *no one* could resist the temptation to steal, commit adultery, and indulge in every sort of profitable or pleasurable wickedness. Goodness, or justice, is never practised from choice, but only from necessity, under the fear of suffering injury oneself.

Thus what matters is not in fact to be, but to appear, just. To compare the lives of the just and unjust man, we must look at them in their pure form, each perfect in his way. The one who has perfected his wickedness will obviously not be caught—that would brand him as a botcher—but will go through life with an untarnished reputation for integrity. Conversely the perfectly just man must not have the credit for his virtue: that would bring him honour and riches, and one could never be sure that he was not virtuous for the sake of these perquisites rather than of virtue itself. His virtue must be tested by suffering throughout life an undeserved reputation for wickedness. It is not hard to predict the fate of the two men. The perfectly just will be taught by prison, torture and execution that he has chosen the wrong path, while the perfectly unjust will be blessed with wealth, friends and prosperity of every kind, and even enjoy the favour of the gods through being able to offer them the most lavish sacrifices.

¹ For a comparison with Hobbes see Bignone, *Studi*, 41 f., especially the quotation from *De cive* 1.2: 'Statuendum igitur est originem magnarum et diuturnarum societatum non a mutua hominum benevolentia sed a mutuo metu exstitisse.'

Nature and Necessity

Here Adimantus joins in to add that Glaucon's case is only strengthened by the arguments of those who counsel justice, since they commend it not for its own sake but only for the reputation and rewards that it brings—honour from men and blessings from heaven in this world and the next—and deprecate injustice as leading to punishment and misery, including posthumous torments in Hades. Everyone pays lip-service to justice as a fine thing, but they add that it is hard and laborious, whereas self-indulgence and injustice are easy to practise and only apparently and by convention (*nomos*) disgraceful. Even the gods give a miserable life to many just men, and can be swayed by sacrifices, rites and incantations into condoning, and even assisting, the injuries inflicted by the wicked.

These views are offered as those of the ordinary run of mankind. We should not therefore expect to find any heroic Calliclean advocacy of the powerful and unscrupulous superman, nor do we. Instead we have a rather sordid mixture of greed, envy, pettiness and fear. Everyone would take an unjust advantage of his fellows if he could, but, though to live justly is an evil, it is a necessary one. True, the only important thing is to *appear* just, but, since the ring of Gyges is only a fairy-tale, this involves keeping on the whole within the bounds of law and conventional morality. The 'perfectly unjust man' is an unattainable ideal.

(d) Nature and necessity

Self-interest, says Glaucon (359c), is what every nature (*physis*) naturally pursues as a good, though law or convention (*nomos*) constrains it to diverge into respect for equality. This is the kind of realism or fact-facing which we meet in Thucydides, in the often-repeated statement that it is human nature to do wrong and dominate others wherever possible,¹ and in the Sophist Gorgias (*Hel.* 6, DK, II, 290): 'It is not in nature for the strong to be thwarted by the weaker, but for the weaker to be ruled and led by the stronger, for the strong to lead and the weak to follow.' The factual or amoral character of the current attitude to human behaviour is emphasized when, as often, we

¹ Ε.κ. 4.61.5 πέφυκε γὰρ τὸ ἀνθρώπειον διὰ παντὸς ἄρχειν; 3.45.3 πεφύκασι τε ἅπαντες. . . ἀμικρῶν (cf. the reference in §7 to ἡ ἀνθρώπεια φύσις); 3.39.5 πέφυκε. . . ἄνθρωπος τὸ μὲν θάρσιον ὑπερβῆναι τὸ δὲ μὴ ὑπέκτειν θαυμάζειν; 1.76.3, χρησάμενοι τῇ ἀνθρώπειᾳ φύσει ὡς τε ἰέλμων ἄρχειν.

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find nature coupled with the idea of necessity. In the Melian dialogue (Thuc. 5.105.2) the Athenians claim that the rule of the stronger occurs 'by natural necessity' (ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκάως), and this and similar phrases are a reminder of the influence on ethics of the natural science of the day. Necessity (*ananké*) as a cosmological force runs right through Presocratic thought, in the Western tradition (Parmenides, Empedocles, the Pythagoreans) with almost mystical or theological overtones, but in Ionian rationalism, which reached its culmination in Leucippus and Democritus, appearing as a mindless natural force equated with the chance collisions of the atoms and the cosmic vortices which they form.¹ Two passages in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes parody the jargon of the scientists and illustrate the way in which it was transferred to human life as a justification for immorality. *Ananké* fills the clouds with moisture and governs the motions by which they collide and cause thunder; and the author of this necessity is no longer a personal Zeus but 'the celestial whirl' (*Clouds* 376ff.). Later in the play (1075) the Unjust Argument speaks of 'the necessities of nature' with reference to adultery, and calls shamelessness and self-indulgence 'exercising one's nature'. Democritus himself made the transfer to human life in a less provocative way when he said (fr. 278) that the begetting of children is looked upon as one of the necessities arising from nature.²

This association of necessity with nature is used as an argument by the opponents of *nomos*, which they represent as an attempt to thwart natural forces that is rightly doomed to failure. Thus in Antiphon we read, in a passage setting forth the advantages of breaking the law if one can escape detection, that the dictates of law are artificially imposed by human agreement, whereas those of nature are necessary just because they have grown up naturally; and in emphasizing our common humanity against the artificiality of racial distinctions he speaks of breathing and eating as activities which are 'naturally necessary to all men'.³ In a fragment of Euripides 'the necessary'

¹ See vol. II, 415.

² References in the Hippocratic writers to the φύσις ἀνθρώπου no doubt also helped in the transfer of the word from the constitution of the universe to the nature of man, though they used it in a physiological rather than an ethical sense. For more on this topic see vol. II, 351-3.

³ Antiphon, fr. 44 A, col. 1, 23 ff. (DK II, 346f.) and 44 B, col. 2, 15 ff. (*ib.* p. 353). These are dealt with fully on pp. 107 ff. below.

Might is Right

Simply replaces *physis* as the contrary of *nomos*.¹ The conclusion to be drawn is that since the laws of nature are inexorable, and apply to humanity no less than to the world at large, men will inevitably follow them unless prevented by the intervention of *nomos*. For some, like Thucydides and (if I am right) Thrasymachus, this was simply a fact which had to be accepted. Others drew the positive and practical conclusion that to contravene 'nature's laws' must inevitably be harmful, and they ought to be actively followed whenever possible.²

(4) THE UPHOLDERS OF 'PHYSIS'

Those who attacked *nomos* as an unjustified curb on the operations of *physis* did so from two quite different points of view, which may be called the selfish or individualistic and the humanitarian.

(a) Selfish

Side by side with those who saw in history proof of the fact that it was human nature for both states and individuals to behave selfishly and tyrannically, if given the chance, were those to whom this seemed not only inevitable but right and proper. For them the tyrant was not only an inescapable fact but an ideal.

(1) *Callicles: 'physis' as the right of the stronger*. The outstanding exposition of this ethic is that presented by Plato in his *Gorgias* under the name of Callicles, and summarized in the *Laws* in the words (890a):

These views are held by men who in the eyes of the young appear wise, both prose-writers and poets, who say that the height of justice is a conquest won by force.³ Hence young men fall into irreligion, as if there were

¹ Fr. 433 Nauck,

ἔγωγε φημι καὶ νόμον γέ μὴ σέβειν
ἐν τοῖσι δεινοῖς τῶν ἀναγκαίων πλέον.

The quotation is from the earlier *Hippolytus*, and whoever speaks the words (see on this Heinemann, *N. u. Ph.* 126, n. 5), they no doubt refer to Phaedra's guilty passion, so that τὰ ἀναγκαῖα correspond to the φύσεως ἀνάγκαι of *Clouds* 1075.

² Cf. Heinemann, *N. u. Ph.* 125f. (though I cannot agree when he says (126, n. 4) that the use of ἀνάγκη as a cosmogonical force by Leucippus and Democritus is irrelevant to its employment by the Sophists). It should be noted that 'necessary' can be applied quite differently to *nomos* itself, the compulsion imposed by law and convention. This, says Glaucon in the *Republic*, is submitted to by most men as *necessary*, but not accepted as *good* (from the point of view of the individual's self-interest). The compulsion of nature is absolute, that of *nomos* contingent.

³ These, then, are men of a different stamp from Thrasymachus, for whom tyranny was ἡ τελευταῖα ἀδικία and the tyrant τὴν ὀλίαν ἀδικίαν ἡδικοῦσιν (p. 94, n. 3, above).

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no gods such as the law enjoins us to believe in. Hence, too, outbreaks of civil discord as men are attracted to the 'right life according to nature', which plainly expressed means a life of domination over one's fellows and refusal to serve others as law and custom (*nomos*) demand.

Callicles is a somewhat mysterious figure, for apart from his appearance as a character in Plato's dialogue he has left no trace in recorded history. Yet he is described with an amount of authentic detail which makes it difficult to believe that he is fictitious. Probably he existed, and was known to have held views of the kind which Plato ascribes to him, though, in his anxiety to present in all its brutality the case that he wishes to demolish, Plato may well have taken elements from different sources and built up in the person of Callicles a somewhat stylized presentation of the doctrine 'might is right' in its most extreme form.¹ He is a wealthy and aristocratic young man, just entering on public life (515a), and, though acting as host to Gorgias, no Sophist himself. He dismisses those 'who profess to educate men in *areté*'² as a worthless lot, and would certainly blush as hotly as young Hippocrates in the *Protagoras* at the thought of joining their profession. His aristocratic and oligarchic connexions are indicated by his liaison with Demos,³ the son of Plato's stepfather Pylampes, and friendship with Andron, who was one of the Four Hundred set up in the oligarchic revolution of 411,⁴ and his pride in his descent is mentioned at 512d.

¹ By 'authentic detail' I mean that he is assigned to a real deme and given historical characters as his friends and acquaintances. Three views are possible and have been held: (1) he is purely fictitious, (2) the name is a mask for a well-known character like Critias or Alcibiades, (3) he is a historical figure. The last is the most probable. See Dodds, *Gorgias*, 12f., and for various opinions also Untersteiner, *Sophists*, 344, n. 40. Dodds conjectures that a man 'so ambitious and so dangerously frank' may well have lost his life in the troubled years at the end of the fifth century, before he had time to make his mark on history.

² 520a. Gorgias himself, though certainly to be classed as a Sophist (p. 39, n. 1, above), laughed, it was said, at those who made this profession (*Meno* 95c). Callicles may have been thinking especially of Protagoras, who emphatically did so, and whose moderation and respect for *nomos* would not have commended themselves to him.

³ Most Greek names have a transparent meaning, and they can be very puzzling. Some seem too appropriate to be true, e.g. Thrasy-machus of a hot-tempered character (cf. *Ar. Rhet.* 1400b19), Aristo-teles of a teleological philosopher, Demo-sthenes of the most famous orator of his day, Dio-peithes of an atheist-hunter. Why, on the other hand, should a man of ancient and noble family call his son Demos?

⁴ Possibly also by his championship of *φύσις* itself. Dodds remarks (*Gorgias*, p. 13) that 'praise of *φύσις* is usually associated with an aristocratic bias, from Pindar onwards', but the situation was perhaps rather more complex. See ch. x below.

Callicles

Callicles takes up the argument with Socrates after the discomfiture of Gorgias's young and impetuous pupil Polus, who had tried to maintain the same thesis as Thrasymachus, that 'many achieve happiness through injustice' (470d). Like Thrasymachus also Polus chose tyrants (Archelaus of Macedon, the Great King of Persia) as his examples: they are without doubt evil-doers (ἄδικοί, 471a), but if the wicked can escape punishment they are prosperous and happy. By calling them wicked, as Callicles points out, he has played into Socrates's hands, for he has enough conventional morality left in him to agree that, whereas wickedness is a good thing for the wicked man, it is nevertheless dishonourable and blameworthy. Nonsense, says Callicles. Polus was wrong to grant Socrates his contention that to commit injustice was more blameworthy than to suffer it. That is the conventional view, but to put it forward as the true one is vulgar and mean. Nature and convention are generally in opposition, so that, if a man is prevented by shame from saying what he thinks, he is compelled to contradict himself. Those who establish the conventions and make the laws¹ are 'the weaker, that is, the majority'. It is they who say that self-advancement is disgraceful and unjust, and equate injustice with the wish to have more than others. Nature says it is *just* for the better to have more than the worse, and the more powerful than the less powerful.²

We may note here the formal contradiction of Thrasymachus, who said that those who make the laws are the stronger party, whether tyrant, oligarchy or democracy (*Rep.* 338e). Adimantus came nearer to Callicles when he argued that it is the weak who uphold justice (in the conventional sense of course) and censure injustice, not through conviction but because of their own impotence, and that the disgrace attached to injustice is only a matter of *nomos*. But both of these would earn Callicles's censure, as Polus did, for using justice and injustice

¹ of τοῦς νόμους τιθέμενοι. It must be remembered that Callicles is using the word *nomos* for both conventional behaviour and positive law. See pp. 56f. above.

² (At 488b-d, Callicles says he is using βελτίων, κρείττων and ἰσχυρότερος—better, superior and stronger—as synonymous.) This sentence and the next (483c-d) show clearly the influence of Callicles's association with Gorgias (if indeed at this point he is more than a mouthpiece through which Plato is reproducing the unscrupulous rhetoric of Gorgias himself). Cf. Gorg. *Hel.* ὁ πέρφικε γάρ οὐ τὸ κρείσσον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡσσονος κωλύεσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ ἡσσον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείσσονος ἀρχεῖσθαι καὶ ἀγισθαι.

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in their conventional senses.¹ Many things, he continues, point to the fact that the criterion of justice is for the stronger to get the better of the weaker, for example the behaviour of animals and of men collectively as states and races. Darius and Xerxes in invading other people's territory were acting according to the nature of justice—according to law too, if you mean the law of nature, though not according to the laws we men lay down. In this first appearance of the phrase 'law of nature', it is used as a deliberate paradox, and of course in neither of its later senses, neither the *lex naturae* which has had a long history in ethical and legal theory from the Stoics and Cicero down to modern times nor the scientists' laws of nature which are 'simply observed uniformities'.² But it epitomized an attitude current already in the late fifth century, and the Athenians in Thucydides's Melian dialogue came close to it even verbally, when they put forward the principle that he should rule who can as a matter of 'natural necessity' and at the same time an eternal law.³ The bestial criterion of natural behaviour (taking the animals as models) was also known in the fifth century. Herodotus in quoting an instance expressly excludes the Greeks (2.64), but it is parodied more than once in Aristophanes (*Clouds* 1427ff., *Birds* 753ff.).⁴

Our unnatural laws, Callicles goes on, mould our best men from their youth up, teaching them that equality is fine and just, but, if a character naturally strong enough were to arise, like a young lion he would shake off these fetters, break his cage and turn master instead of slave. Then nature's justice would shine forth in all its glory. Socrates tries to make him retreat at least to the position of the Platonic Thrasymachus by pointing out that in a democracy, since 'the many' make and enforce the laws, they are the stronger and better element (Callicles having equated these two epithets himself), and therefore on Callicles's argument what they decree is naturally right; but it is

¹ Thrasymachus, we may remember, would not admit that he deemed injustice not only profitable but also honourable and virtuous (p. 90 above). The very different views of someone who was prepared to apply the word 'just' to what the world considers unjust may be seen in additional evidence that his avoidance of committal was deliberate.

² See Dodds's note on *Gorgias* 483e3.

³ Thuc. 5.105.2, p. 86 above.

⁴ Here also the natural philosophers may have made a contribution. Compare Democritus's theory that men learned certain arts by imitation of the beasts (vol. II, 474).

the many who insist that justice means equal rights for all and to inflict injury is more dishonourable than to suffer it, therefore all this must be right according to nature and not only to *nomos*.

Callicles replies in a burst of anger that Socrates is talking nonsense and tripping him up over words. When he said that the stronger were the better he *meant* better—naturally better men (492a), not a non-descript and slavish rabble. Invited by Socrates to amend his statement of who should be master and get their own way he says he means the better and wiser, that is, those who display courage, and good practical sense in regard to the affairs of the state (491c). Such men should rule, and it is just that the rulers should be better off than the rest. The idea that they should ‘rule themselves’, that is, display self-control, is ridiculous. Natural goodness and justice decree that the man who would live rightly must not check his desires but let them grow as great as possible, and by his courage¹ and practical sense be capable of gratifying them to the full. The common run of men condemn this indulgence only out of shame at their own incapacity for it. For a man with power over others nothing could be worse or more disgraceful than self-control and respect for the laws, arguments and reproaches of others. The truth is this: luxury, wantonness and freedom from restraint, if backed by strength, constitute excellence (*areté*) and happiness; all the rest is fine talk, human agreements contrary to nature, worthless nonsense. We need not for the present concern ourselves with the rest of the discussion, in which Socrates first gets Callicles to agree that his doctrine is the extreme hedonism which actually identifies pleasure and the good, then drives him from his position by shock tactics until he makes a shameless volte-face and says he has not been in earnest: of course he believes that some pleasures are good and others bad.

Here then at last is the championship of *physis* against *nomos* in its extreme form, fervently and eloquently preached. There *is* such a thing as natural justice, and it consists simply in this, that the strong

¹ In the sense given to ἀνδρεία here Plato is again introducing an idea that was already current in the fifth century. Cf. Thuc. 3.82.4 τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐπιλοθῆ. . . τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, and the words of Eteocles in Euripides, *Phoen.* 509f. ἀναδρία γὰρ τὸ πλεον ὅστις ἀπολέσας τοῦλασσον ἔλαβε. It is referred to again by Plato at *Rep.* 560d σφραῦσύνην δὲ ἀναδρίαν καλοῦντες.

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man should live to the utmost of his powers and give free play to his desires. Might is right, and nature intends him to get all he wants. Existing human *nomoi* are utterly unnatural, because they represent the attempt of the weak and worthless many to thwart the purpose of nature that the strong man should prevail. The truly just man is not the democrat, nor the constitutional monarch, but the ruthless tyrant. This is the morality against which Plato resolutely and undeviatingly set his face, from the time when as an eager young follower of Socrates he learned from him that 'no man voluntarily does wrong' (in the ordinary sense) to the end of his life when he opposed it once again in the *Laws* and, since its roots were in the natural science of the time, turned cosmogonist himself in the *Timaeus* to undermine its deepest foundations. It is necessary to emphasize this because there is a curious theory that Plato felt a secret sympathy for Callicles, who stood for something deeply implanted in his own nature, which perhaps only his acquaintance with Socrates had repressed. Callicles is 'a portrait of Plato's rejected self'. 'Although he is fundamentally opposed to the views of Callicles, he states them with the ease and sympathy of a man who has suppressed them in himself, or has yet to suppress them', or as G. Renzi put it, 'the conflict Socrates-Callicles in the *Gorgias* is not a conflict between two individuals but one which occurs within a single mind'.¹ Dodds agrees with this to the extent that, because Plato felt 'a certain sympathy' for men of the Calliclean stamp, his portrait of Callicles 'not only has warmth and vitality but is tinged with a kind of regretful affection'.² One may more easily associate oneself with the mild protest of Levinson (*Defense of P.* 472) that 'it is not sound to identify Plato with those of his characters

¹ The quotations are from H. Kelsen as cited by Levinson, *Defense of P.* 471, and Highest and Renzi quoted by Untersteiner, *Sophists*, 344, n. 40.

² Dodds, *Gorgias*, 13f. The subjective character of such judgments may be shown by comparing the impressions made by the same passage on two critics, Dodds and Jaeger. At 486a b Dodds sees Callicles expressing a sincere concern for Socrates's safety, whereas to Jaeger the same words are 'a scarcely concealed threat of state sanctions against him' (*Paideia* II, 140). Dodds takes at its face value Socrates's praise of Callicles at 486d-487b as 'the true touchstone', honest and frank, and a man of culture: to Jaeger all this is 'bitter irony'. In contrast to the 'affection' in the portrait (which is indeed difficult to detect), Jaeger speaks of 'the brutally menacing tone of Callicles', which 'shows the seriousness of the situation here, and the irreconcilable spiritual enmity between the protagonists of each side' (*ibid.* 141). H. Neumann again sees Socrates's 'unfeigned affection for his young friend' in such expressions as ω φίλη κεφαλή in 513c2 (*TAPA*, 1965, 286, n. 9).

Callicles and Plato

whom he abhors'. It is instructive to compare the tone of the conversation here with that in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates is talking to a man for whom, though he disagrees with him on fundamentals, he has a real respect. When Protagoras occasionally, and justifiably, gets irritated, Socrates relaxes his pressure, and friends of both are at hand to put things right between them with soothing words. The criticism is good-humoured, the atmosphere one of friendliness and tolerance, and the dialogue ends with mutual expressions of esteem. Here on the other hand is unmistakable bitterness and ill-temper. Drivelling nonsense, mob-oratory, quibbling, small-mindedness, violence, and the cheap scoring of debating points are some of the accusations which Callicles hurls at Socrates, and Socrates returns as good as he gets. Psychologically considered, all this is no doubt compatible with the existence of a repressed Callicles in Plato himself, but seen in the context of his whole philosophy it appears highly improbable. Dodds sees even greater significance in 'the powerful and disturbing eloquence that Plato has bestowed on Callicles', but it should be no news to us that Plato was a superb dramatic artist. This eloquence, adds Dodds, convinced the young Nietzsche, while Socrates's reasoning left him cold. That is not surprising, but scarcely relevant. The apostle of the *Herrenmoral*, the *Wille zur Macht* and *Umwertung aller Werte* did not need much convincing, for he was blood-brother to Callicles, whereas Socrates became for him, to quote Dodds again, 'a fountain-head of false morality'.¹

(II) *Antiphon: 'physis' as enlightened self-interest.* We are not at the moment concerned with the question whether the following views, which occur in some papyrus fragments of Antiphon's *On Truth*, are his own, or whether he is simply setting forth for examination 'different

¹ Dodds, *Gorgias*, 388. What Nietzsche called the Sophist-culture was for him 'this priceless movement in the midst of the moral- and ideal-swindle of the Socratic schools'. 'The Sophists', he said, 'were Greeks: when Socrates and Plato took the side of virtue and justice, they were Jews or I do not know what.' No wonder it was Callicles who appealed to him. These passages are quoted on p. 146 of A. H. J. Knight's book, *Some aspects of the life and work of Nietzsche, and particularly of his connexion with Greek literature and thought*, which might perhaps have been mentioned by Dodds when, at the beginning of his informative appendix on Socrates, Callicles and Nietzsche (*Gorgias*, 387-91), he says that the link between Nietzsche and Callicles has received little attention from the exponents of Nietzsche. On pp. 147f. Knight quotes a long extract from Callicles's speech in the *Gorgias*. See also Nestle, *VMuL*, 341f.

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views of the just taken from tradition or contemporary polemics'. This has been argued because they seem to many scholars to contradict the more conventional morality advocated by Antiphon elsewhere. Alternatively it has been maintained that there is no contradiction, because the passages that we are about to consider do not reveal their author 'as the immoral foe of *nomos* and social control, but as its critic, a realistic but socially minded utilitarian'. The first question may be left because for the present discussion it is enough that they represent views current in the fifth century. Whether or not they are immoral and hostile to *nomos* should emerge as we look at them.¹ It may seem rather that hostility to *nomos* is their one constant feature, which in practice may lead sometimes to a selfish precept ('ignore *nomos* in your personal behaviour if you can avoid being found out'), sometimes to a large humanity ('the distinction between Greeks and barbarians is only a matter of *nomos*').

The following is a paraphrased version of the papyrus fragments.²

OP 1364, fr. 1 (Antiphon fr. 44 A DK):³ justice consists in not transgressing the laws and usages (νόμιμα) of one's state. Therefore the most profitable means of manipulating⁴ justice is to respect the laws when witnesses are present but otherwise to follow the precepts of nature. Laws are artificial compacts, they lack the inevitability of natural growth. Hence to break the laws without detection does one no harm, whereas any attempt to violate the inborn dictates of nature is harmful irrespective of discovery by others, for the hurt is not merely, as with the law-breaker, a matter of appearance or reputation but of reality. Justice in

¹ That the papyrus fragments are throughout discussing the views of others is argued by Kerferd in *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* 1956–7. That they contain nothing directly hostile to *nomos* is the opinion of, among others, Greene (*Moirā*, 240; for similar interpretations see *ibid.* n. 122). Antiphon himself will be considered in detail later (pp. 285 ff.).

² Omitting 1364 fr. 2, which is discussed on pp. 152 f. To translate in full Antiphon's spate of rhetorical antitheses, and his repetitions of a point in different words, would caricature rather than reproduce his style, and tend to obscure the argument. Tolerable in Greek, they can scarcely be rendered in anything like natural English. The papyri are translated into English by the editors of the *OP* and into Italian (with textual notes) by Bignone, *Studi*, 56 ff., 101 ff.

³ That *OP* 1364 is an extract from Antiphon's work *On Truth* is fortunately established by an attested quotation in Harpocration. See *OP*, xi, 92, or note at bottom of DK, II, 346.

⁴ χρῆσθαι. To call this inconsistent with the advice to follow nature (Kerferd, *loc. cit.* 27f., and cf. Havelock, *L.T.* 269) is surely hypercritical. If not strictly logical, it is at least natural and practical to advise overt conformity so long as one lives in a community governed by law, on nature's own principle of maximizing one's personal pleasure and comfort and minimizing pain and inconvenience. Cf. p. 290 below.

Antiphon: Follow Nature not Law

the legal sense is for the most part at odds with nature. The laws prescribe what we should see, hear or do, where we should go, even what we should desire [one thinks of the tenth commandment], but so far as conformity to nature is concerned what they forbid is as good as what they enjoin.

Life and death are both natural, the one beneficial to men, the other unprofitable.¹ But 'benefit' as the law understands it is a drag on nature; in its natural sense it means freedom. Pains do not assist nature more than pleasures, and what is truly beneficial ought to help, not harm. It cannot be said that what causes pain is more beneficial than what brings pleasure². . . [gap of seven lines in the papyrus]. . . those who, though they defend themselves, never take the offensive, those who cherish parents who have treated them ill,³ and those who give their opponents the opportunity to bind themselves with an oath while refraining from doing so themselves.⁴ Many of these actions are against nature, because they involve more pain than pleasure, and ill treatment when the reverse is possible. If the laws protected such behaviour and inflicted loss on those who did otherwise, it might be worth while to obey them; but as it is, legal justice is not strong enough for this. It does not prevent the attack nor the victim's suffering, and when redress is sought it favours the oppressor as much as the oppressed. A victim must persuade the court that he has been injured, and his attacker has equal facilities to deny it . . .

¹ Taking ἀπό as partitive in sense. (See LSJ, s.v. I 6.) Admittedly it is more usually understood as causative ('results from things beneficial . . .'). Kerferd notes (*loc. cit.* 31) that evidently not everything that is φύσει is advantageous, and Antiphon's norm must be restricted to τὰ φύσει συμφέροντα. (Cf. also Heinemann, *N. u. Ph.* 137.) This seems more reasonable than Stenzel's contention (*RE* Suppl. IV, 36) that all the emphasis is on life, and death is only introduced as a 'polar expression' and for the sake of rhetorical antithesis. The argument seems to be that both nature and law may produce harm or good (even an upholder of nature like Antiphon could hardly deny the occurrence of natural disasters like earthquakes and floods), but that they have different standards of what is good and bad, and nature's are to be preferred.

² A similarly hedonistic doctrine is criticized as Antiphon's in Xen. *Mem.* I. 6. As Croiset says, one can imagine what havoc Socrates would make with such imprecise language!

³ Kerferd (*loc. cit.* 29) says, with special reference to this clause, that what is mentioned here goes beyond what the laws require, and represents therefore a third standard of action distinct from both nature and the laws. But there would be no third standard in Antiphon's mind, for a socially recognized duty like that of adult sons and daughters to support their parents (one of the most deeply rooted of any in Greek society) was a *nomos* as much as any positively enacted law. (Cf. p. 56 above.)

Bignone, in his attempted demonstration that there is a close affinity between the doctrines of the two works *On Truth* and *On Concord*, both representing a 'philanthropic utilitarianism', completely ignores this passage. In the whole of his essay in *Studi sul pensiero antico* there is no mention of this statement that such behaviour as refusing to attack others except in self-defence, and treating undeserving parents well, is inimical to that 'nature' which was Antiphon's ideal.

⁴ For the procedure of oath-taking, and the advantages or disadvantages of adopting a particular course, see Arist. *Rhet.* 1377a8ff. (the relevance of which was brought to my notice by Mr J. S. Morrison).

The 'Nomos'-'Physis' Antithesis

OP 1797 (still a part of fr. 44 in DK, II, 353):¹ Justice is believed to be something good, and to bear true witness about each other is normally considered just, as well as helpful in human relations. But it will not be just, if² the criterion of justice is that one should inflict no injury on another unless first injured oneself. The witness, even if truthful, inflicts injury on the man against whom he testifies, though that man has not injured him, and may suffer injury in return. At least he will have to be on his guard against the hatred of the other, whom he has made his enemy. Thus wrong is involved on both sides, and to call such acts just cannot be reconciled with the principle that it is just neither to inflict nor to suffer injury.³ One must conclude that trial, judgment and arbitration are not just, whatever their outcome, for a decision which benefits one side injures the other...

These fragments are invaluable as a source for contemporary moral views, though their incompleteness makes it difficult to say how far they represent the opinions of Antiphon himself. One has only to think what impression we should have of Plato if our knowledge of the *Republic* were limited to some fragments of Glaucon's speech (for example, the sentence at 359c: 'It is natural for every man to pursue selfish ambition as a good, but *nomos* seduces us into a respect for equality') without the explanation that he is temporarily acting as devil's advocate in order to have the case demolished by Socrates. Here we are presented with three notions of justice, which have sometimes been thought to be irreconcilable and so necessarily of diverse origins.

¹ There is no conclusive external evidence for the authorship of this fragment, as there is for the previous one, and it is in a different hand, though it belonged to the same find and the editors suggest (*OP*, xv, 119f.) that the same hand may have added breathings, accents and marks of quantity in both, and that 1797 may even be a later part of the same roll as 1364. Its subject and style leave no reasonable doubt of the author, and very little of the work in which it occurred. Untersteiner (*Sophists*, 267, n. 127) thinks that the fragment came between the two fragments of 1364, but it is not clear to me how the cosmopolitanism of 1364 fr. 2 (for which see p. 153 below) 'represents the conclusion of the theory developed in *OP* 1797'. On the identification of the fragment see also Bignone, *Studi*, 98-100.

² (ἐπέπε)ρ Wilamowitz, Kranz. Diels and Bignone preferred (ἐπε)ρ as corresponding better to the space to be filled. (The original editors supplied (καὶ γὰρ). Sinclair wrote (*Gr. Pol. Th.* 72, n. 1): 'It makes all the difference to our knowledge of Antiphon's own doctrine whether the missing letters are to be restored ἐπε)ρ or ἐπέπε)ρ.' But either can equally well introduce the writer's own opinion, and if ἐπερ is correct I am sure it does so.

³ This, it will be remembered, is what Glaucon in the *Republic* (359a) describes as the ordinary man's view of the nature of justice, a compromise solution based on a 'social compact': συνθέσθαι ἀλλήλοις μήτ' ἀδικεῖν μήτ' ἀδικεῖσθαι (p. 98 above).

Antiphon: Three Views of Justice

1. Conformity to the laws and customs of one's state. These, as in Glaucon's account, are belittled as matters of human agreement. Self-interest demands that a man conform only when he would otherwise be found out and punished. Law and nature have different ideals. In nature, life, freedom and pleasures are beneficial, and death is not, but law enforces things that are painful and imposes artificial restraints on nature. These are not truly beneficial. In the view outlined by Glaucon, the accepted virtues should be practised for fear of worse, though given the ring of Gyges no one would or should be virtuous, but here it is obviously believed that opportunities for defying *nomos* undetected do occur and should be seized. This is supported by a further argument, that the law cannot protect its own. It only acts after the event, and the arrival of *pede Poena claudo* is of small use to a murdered man. Worse than that, the courts in fact give an equal chance to offender and victim.

The definition of justice here criticized sounds at first exactly like that quoted with strong approval by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (4.4.12-13), namely that 'lawful and just are the same thing'.¹ There too laws are admitted to be created simply by the citizens agreeing on what ought to be done and what not, yet the merits of this conception of justice are argued for at some length. Corporately, obedience to the laws makes for unity, strength and happiness, and for the individual it wins friendship and trust and (in direct contradiction to Antiphon) affords the best chance of victory in the courts. All this applies to positively enacted laws, but in contrast to Antiphon Socrates goes on to include the 'unwritten laws' which are of universal application and agreed by him and Hippias to be divinely ordained. These are certainly not Antiphon's 'dictates of nature', for they include the duty of honouring one's parents and the requiting of benefits, yet Socrates claims that obedience to them is profitable and rewarding to the individual, and (like Antiphon with *his* decrees of nature) that unlike human laws they cannot be flouted with impunity (p. 119 below).

¹ Cf. also Lysias, 2.19 ἀνθρώποις προσήκει νόμῳ ὄρῃσαι τὸ δίκαιον. The equation of νόμος and δίκαια by Protagoras (in Plato, *Theaet.* 172a) is rather different: the laws of a city are δίκαια for that city as long as they are in force, but are not necessarily συμφέροντα. Cf. 167c, and pp. 137, 172 below. Biggione (*Studi*, 74f.) thought Protagoras was the object of Antiphon's criticism.

2. To do no injury except in requital for an injury received.

3. Neither to do nor to suffer injury. It has been held¹ that these two definitions of justice conflict, and cannot therefore have been adhered to by the same people. But it cannot have seemed so to Antiphon, for the way in which he introduces them at the beginning and end of his argument that to testify against a man is 'not just' implies they are identical or closely similar. Complete freedom from wrongdoing, either as doer or sufferer, is the ideal, but it is not in anyone's power to ensure that no other man wrongs him, so the best practical expression of justice is never to take the initiative in wrongdoing; and obviously if this were universally observed the other would follow: if no one acted save in self-defence, there would be no attacks to make self-defence necessary. Very probably the third description of justice was in Antiphon's mind equivalent also to the first, since Plato makes Glaucon say that in the general opinion law was 'a mutual agreement neither to inflict nor to suffer injury'.

The general impression made by these fragments is of a single writer determined to show up the inadequacy of current conceptions of morality. His own consistent standpoint is that a morality enforced by law and custom is contrary to nature, and nature's way is to be preferred. In *OP* 1364, he claims that to refrain from doing an injury except in self-defence is against nature, but this does not prevent him from pointing out in 1797 that, if, like most people, you accept it as a principle of right action, you immediately find yourself in conflict with another generally accepted principle, that whoever has information that will cause a criminal to be brought to justice is in duty bound to produce it.

Bignone and Untersteiner both hold that the last definition ('neither to do nor to suffer injury') is 'the true definition of justice according to Antiphon'.² For Untersteiner the state in which injustice is neither inflicted nor suffered 'corresponds to the highest goal of the spirit', in support of which he refers to *Republic* 500c, where not men, but the objects of the philosopher's contemplation (i.e. the Forms), are said to be in this state. It might be more apt to compare 359a, where

¹ By Bignone and Untersteiner. See the latter's *Sof.* iv, 100 and *Sophs.* 251.

² Reference as in previous note.

'neither to inflict nor to suffer injustice' is the compact entered into by ordinary men as a second-best to having their own way individually. For men, the highest goal of the spirit is surely a conception of justice not mentioned here at all, namely to do no injury even in return for injury suffered. This brings us to the level of Socrates or Jesus, and Socrates argues for it explicitly more than once, e.g. in the *Republic* (335 d, 'Then it is not the part of a just man, Polemarchus, to harm either his friend or anyone else') and *Crito* (49 b, 'Then we must not inflict injury for injury, as most people believe', and c, 'Then one must not use any man unjustly in return, or harm him, whatever we may suffer at his hands').¹ The present fragments offer no evidence that Antiphon was a moralist of this calibre. He was clearly a serious thinker, and much of what he says here can be interpreted altruistically: the statement that pleasure is more beneficial than pain might represent a hedonistic utilitarianism of a universal kind, advocating conduct which will ensure the maximum of pleasure in the world at large. Elsewhere, however, as when he deprecates refraining from unprovoked aggression as contrary to that 'nature' which is his ideal, it appears that the hedonism is selfish and individualistic.²

(iii) *Other witnesses.* The antinomian view is reflected in many passages of contemporary literature. It is probably in the isolated line of Euripides (fr. 920):

'Twas Nature willed it, who cares nought for law,

and elsewhere in his plays an ostentatious reconciliation of the two itself bears witness to the existence of the view which he is contradicting. At *Ion* 642, Ion counts himself happy because both his own nature and *nomos* together make him good in the service of Apollo, and there is a similar union of the two at *Bacchae* 895 f., on which Dodds re-

¹ To appreciate the revolutionary character of the Socratic ethic, one must remember how deeply rooted in Greek morality was the doctrine that 'the doer shall suffer', which made the exacting of retribution or vengeance not only a right but often a religious duty. Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1563 f., *Cho.* 144, 306-14, Eur. *H.F.* 727 f. Other passages are quoted by Thomson, *Oresteia*, II, 185.

² So far as Antiphon is concerned these comments are of course made on the assumption that the views in question are his own. In spite of Bignone's and Kerferd's arguments, this is still my impression. Naturally, in dealing with such fragmentary extracts, accidentally preserved, conclusions can only be drawn with caution, and the purpose of the present chapter is only to show that such views were current in the fifth century.

The 'Nomos'—'Physis' Antithesis

marks that 'the chorus anticipate in principle Plato's solution of the *nomos-physis* controversy, viz. that when the two terms are properly understood *nomos* is seen to be founded upon *physis*'. It is the poet's privilege to *pronounce*, as an eternal truth, what the philosopher feels he has to *prove* by argument.¹

The new morality is a favourite butt of Aristophanes, especially in the *Clouds*. The Unjust Argument claims (1039 f.) that he was the first to bring counter-arguments against the *nomoi*, and declares self-control to be an evil, challenging the Just Argument to name anyone for whom it did any good (1060 ff.). It deprives one of the pleasures which make life worth living, and opposes 'the necessities of nature'. 'Indulging nature' should be the aim, and if caught in wrongdoing (e.g. adultery) there are always arguments to prove your innocence. The philosophy here pilloried is that of Callicles, and the argument of Antiphon is recalled that the law favours the guilty as much as the innocent. The whole plot of the *Clouds* turns on the claim of 'Socrates' to teach his pupils how to escape the legal penalties of wrongdoing. Instructed by him, Pheidippides defends father-beating: it is good 'to slight the established laws' (1400), and this, though 'nowhere *nomos*',² is 'just' (1405). (It is 'nature's justice' as upheld by Callicles.) The author of the *nomos* was only a man like you and me, so why shouldn't I make a new *nomos*, that sons may beat their fathers in return for the beatings they had from them? This is parody, but in Antiphon we found it maintained in all seriousness that the sacred duty to respect one's parents was 'against nature'.

Since 'nature' and 'natural necessity' figured so largely in these antinomian tirades, it is not surprising that, as we have already noted,³ they owed much to the professed writers 'On Nature', the Presocratic natural philosophers. Aristophanes caricatures the logic of this in an argument brought by Strepsiades against one of his creditors: 'How can you deserve to get your money back if you are so ignorant of meteorological phenomena?'⁴ One can hardly do better

¹ Dodds *ad loc.* 179. For the *nomos-physis* contrast cf. also fr. 433, quoted on p. 101, n. 1 above.

² οὐδαμοῦ νομίζεται (1420). Cf. *Birds* 757 f. εἰ γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχρὸν τὸν πατέρα τύπτειν νόμῳ, τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ καλὸν παρ' ἡμῖν.

³ Pp. 58 f., 100 above.

⁴ *Clouds*, 1283. The practice of taking the animals as our models has already been mentioned (p. 104 with n. 4 above), and Aristophanes has the answer to that too. When Pheidippides

The Opponents of 'Nomos'

than close this account of the immoralist champions of nature against law with Plato's summary of their arguments in the *Laws*.¹ The greatest and best things in the world are the work of nature, or chance (which is the same thing). The four elements, and the earth, sun, moon and stars which are made of them, are lifeless matter. Moving in accordance with their chance-got properties, the elements somehow came together suitably—hot with cold, dry with moist, soft with hard—and combining by the inevitability of chance² generated the whole cosmos and everything in it. Animals, plants and the seasons of the year all owe their existence to these causes, namely nature and chance: no god, intelligence or art had any part in it. Art, or design (*techné*),³ came later, a more insignificant force of purely human origin whose creations have little substance or reality in them. The only arts worth anything are those which, like medicine, agriculture and physical training, assist the forces of nature. Political skill has some slight connexion with nature, but is mostly a matter of art, and legislation has nothing to do with nature at all. It is entirely artificial, and its postulates are untrue.

The gods themselves have no existence in nature, but are a product of human artifice, and vary in different places according to local conventions. Goodness is one thing in nature and another by *nomos*, and as for justice, nature knows nothing of it. Men are for ever disputing about it and altering it, and every change is valid from the moment it is made, owing its existence to artificial conventions rather than to nature. It is by theories like these that agitators incite the young

justifies father-beating by reference to the unfilial habits of cocks, his father retorts: 'If you want to imitate the cocks, why not eat dirt and roost on a perch?' (*ibid.* 1430). It is only fair to add that stories of the gods (e.g. Zeus's frequent adultery) could be equally invoked on the side of the wicked (*ibid.* 1080). The crudity of popular religion, based on Homer, made its own contribution to the growth of irreligious humanism. (Cf. Plato, *Laws* 886b-d.) This will be discussed later (ch. ix below).

¹ 889a ff. The first part of the passage is translated in full in vol. 1, p. 144.

² κατὰ τύχην ἐξ ἀνάγκης. For the relationship between τύχη and ἀνάγκη, with special reference to the atomists, see vol. II, 417-19. Besides the atomists, the cosmogonical views here summarized recall in particular Empedocles, frs. 59 and 35, vv. 16f. (vol. II, 203).

³ No English word produces exactly the same effect as the Greek *techné*. 'Art' suffers from its aesthetic associations, and also from the opposition between 'the arts' and the natural sciences. Those who know no Greek may be helped by the word itself: its incorporation in our 'technical' and 'technology' is not fortuitous. It includes every branch of human or divine (cf. Plato, *Soph.* 265c) skill, or applied intelligence, as opposed to the unaided work of nature.

to irreligion and sedition, urging them to adopt the 'right life according to nature', by which they mean a life of selfish ambition instead of service to their fellow-men and to law.

I have cited this passage from Plato as the best account of the way in which selfish antinomianism of the Calliclean type was founded on, or at least appealed for confirmation to, contemporary natural science. The juxtaposition attributed to Archelaus ('living creatures first arose from slime, and justice and baseness exist not naturally but by convention', p. 58 above) was less incongruous than it sounds. The cosmogonic theories are described in general terms which apply to most of the Presocratic systems. Empedocles and the atomists¹ are perhaps most vividly recalled, but the undesigned mingling of the 'opposites' to produce first the framework of the cosmos and then the creatures within it is a common feature from Anaximander onwards. The general non-theistic foundations of Presocratic science were enough for Plato's humanistic opponents; they did not trouble to discriminate too nicely between them.

It would be equally misguided to look for a single author of the ethical views which are Plato's chief target. Protagoras, Critias, Prodicus, Antiphon and even the youthful Aristotle have all had their champions, and the variety of names put forward by reputable scholars is sufficient evidence of the futility of the search.² Plato is speaking of beliefs which, when he wrote, had long been current in influential and progressive Athenian circles. The Sophists had much to do with their promulgation, and were in general agreement with their scientific premises. The selfish ethical conclusions, however, which Plato found so shocking, were, as we have seen, neither common to all the Sophists nor exclusive to the profession.

¹ J. Tate (*CR*, 1951, 157) objected that since most of Plato's opponents in *Laws* 10 asserted that motion had a beginning they cannot have been atomists. Not all, however (895a 6-7). cf. also England's note on 889b 5.

² For a summary of the various attempts at identification, see Untersteiner, *Sof.* iv, 180f. He himself favours Antiphon, a view which is criticized by Burkert in *Gött. Gel. Anz.* 1964. The latest discussion of the passage (in date of publication) is Edelstein's in *The Idea of Progress* (1967), 27ff.

(b) *Humanitarian: written and unwritten law*

Criticism of law, and of a legal conception of justice and right, in favour of so-called 'nature' or 'freedom', nearly always has two sides. It can be selfish and brutal, as we have seen it in its Calliclean form, or on the other hand it can be wholly well-intentioned, for in the words of a modern authority who describes himself as a 'moralizing anarchist' (not a bad description of Antiphon?),

We cannot maintain the complacent positive belief that only the law of the State is law properly so-called . . . We know that the law can be used as an instrument of policy . . . We have heard of, we may have met, the victims of laws that are oppressive, brutal and degrading. We believe that . . . Human Rights may stand above positive law.¹

Similarly Antisthenes, the pupil of Gorgias (p. 306, n. 2, below), who became a devoted follower of Socrates, is said to have held that 'the wise man in his activity as a citizen will be guided not by the established laws but by the law of *areté*'.²

This altruistic championship of *physis* against *nomos* can have various applications. It can, and did, give birth to ideas of equality,

¹ A. H. Campbell, 'Obligation and Obedience to Law', in *Proc. Brit. Acad.* for 1965. Most of the questions he raises appear in the ethical debate of the fifth century, and it will be interesting to have them in mind while we are investigating it. He states as his main theme the question: Is there a moral obligation to obey every rule of the law, just because it is the law? Among the questions he asks are these:

1. Can security exist without a common morality? (He is arguing against Lord Devlin's negative answer, which was also that of Protagoras, p. 66 above.)

2. If so, does this mean that the existence of a common opinion, which is what those who advocate it seem to mean by 'morality' (it is one side of what a Greek meant by *nomos*), justifies its legal enforcement?

3. Can one discover a common stock of ideas of right and wrong, and, if one does, will it be coterminous with the jurisdiction of a legal system? (In Greek terms, does νόμιμον = δίκαιον?) And he lays it down that:

1. Disapproval of my conduct by others does not prove that I am wrong, still less that I deserve criminal punishment.

2. 'Morality' (= public opinion, i.e. *nomos*) may be different at different places and times. He instances the moral values of the West Highlands as compared with those of London, and the so-called 'new morality' of sex, current in the 1960s. (Cf. p. 16 with n. 1 above.)

3. Law may forbid what I think beneficial, and either allow or command what I think wrong. Campbell's lecture was prompted by Devlin's on 'The Enforcement of Morals', originally in *Proc. Brit. Acad.* for 1959. In the same year that it appeared, however, Devlin republished his own with six others, taking into account the criticisms which it had aroused and which he lists in a bibliography. (*The Enforcement of Morals*, 1965.)

¹ D.L. 6. 11. For Antisthenes see pp. 304 ff. below.

and of cosmopolitanism and the unity of mankind. There were now people (of whom Antiphon was one, see pp. 152ff. below) ready to declare that distinctions based on race, noble birth, social status or wealth, and institutions such as slavery, had no basis in nature but were only by *nomos*. These were revolutionary ideas of incalculable potency, and deserve to be treated independently. This chapter will conclude with a closer look at the concept of 'unwritten law' which has been mentioned earlier (pp. 22 f., 55 f.) and is an integral part of the general relationship between *nomos* and *physis* which is our present subject.¹

It is impracticable and artificial to make a break between the centuries, at 400 B.C. or the death of Socrates. When the same questions were being raised in the same terms over perhaps a hundred years, we cannot ignore the evidence of Aristotle or Demosthenes any more than that of Hippias or Euripides. What we are seeing in this period is the birth of the concept of natural law as it was later understood by thinkers ranging from the Stoics to Rousseau.² The first use of the actual term (by Plato's Callicles, p. 104 above) was perhaps unfortunate, and a verbal association of 'unwritten laws' with *physis* only occurs, among extant sources, in fourth-century authors. Speaking of the propriety of punishing deliberate crime but not involuntary error, Demosthenes says (*De cor.* 275): 'Not only will this be found in the [positive] laws, but *nature herself* has decreed it in the *unwritten laws* and in the hearts of men.'³ Aristotle first equates unwritten with universal laws, and then calls universal laws 'according to nature' (*Rhet.* 1368b7, 1373b6, 1375a32). But fifth-century supporters of the unwritten laws were themselves at the same time on the side of *physis* against the limitations and errors of positive *nomoi*.

Such a one was the Sophist Hippias, who according to Plato (*Hipp. Maj.* 285d) was an authority on 'ancient history in general, and in particular how cities were founded in the early days'. In Plato's

¹ On the 'unwritten laws' in general see Hirzel, "ἄγραφος νόμος; Cope, *Introd. to A.'s Rhet.*, App. E to book 1, pp. 239–44; Ehrenberg, *S. and P.* ch. 2 and App. 4.

² Cf. Salomon, *Savigny-Stift.* 1911, 129ff.; the historically important and influential formulation of the concept first appears in post-Aristotelian times, above all in the Stoa, but the age of the Sophists must be considered first because it was then that questions were first raised in a sharp and urgent form which concern natural law and prepare the way for its formulation.

³ For Demosthenes cf. also the contrast between written and universal law in *In Aristocr.* 61, and the use of ἄγραφα νόμιμα to describe the unwritten traditions of the Areopagus court (*Ibid.* 70, p. 78 above).

Protagoras he praises *physis* as destroyer of the barriers which *nomos* has erected between man and man (p. 162 below), and Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.4.14ff.) represents him as questioning the equation of justice with keeping the law, on the grounds that laws are no more than temporary agreements which cannot be taken seriously because they are often rejected and amended by the very men who made them. Socrates, having countered this argument, goes on to ask him whether he knows also of unwritten laws. He does, and designates them (like Aristotle after him) as those which are observed in every country. Since all who observe them cannot possibly have met, and would not speak the same language if they did, they must have been made by the gods. The first examples that occur to him and Socrates are to worship the gods and honour one's parents.¹ Concerning avoidance of incest and the duty to requite a benefit he is doubtful, since such laws are not universally observed,² but Socrates argues that to say that a law is sometimes broken is no disproof of its validity, and suggests a new criterion: transgression of man-made laws may escape punishment, but of the divine laws never. The two in question pass this test (he claims) because incest is dysgenic and ingratitude leads to loss of friends. It is noticeable that these arguments would apply equally to a world ruled not by gods but by an impersonal nature, and indeed Antiphon made the same point about punishment, that for a transgression of nature's decrees it is inevitable but not for an ordinary lawbreaker.³ However, this hardly justifies the surprising conclusion of Levi that 'it goes without saying that the unwritten laws of which

¹ This was traditional. See G. Thomson, *Oresteia*, I, 52, and II, 270. For universal laws as divine cf. also Eur. fr. 346.

² It is worth reminding ourselves that Hippias may have believed in the unity of mankind (p. 162 below). Incest was repugnant to the Greeks, and its practice among non-Greek peoples was considered evidence of their barbarity. Hermione intends a cruel taunt when she reminds Andromache of her race, a race among whom parents and children, brother and sister have intercourse, 'and no law prevents it' (Eur. *Andr.* 173-6). Socrates speaks as if it were only a question of occasional breaches of a law by individuals, but Hippias knew that there were whole societies where such a law did not exist.

³ Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.21 ἀλλὰ δίκην γέ τοι διδάσιν οἱ παραβαίνοντες τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κειμένους νόμους, ἦν οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ διαφυγεῖν, ὥσπερ τοὺς ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων κειμένους νόμους ἴνιοι παραβαίνοντες διαφεύγουσι τὸ δίκην δίδοναι, οἱ μὲν λαυθάνοντες οἱ δὲ βιαζόμενοι. Cf. Antiphon fr. 44 A, col. 2, τὰ οὖν νόμιμα παραβαίνων εἰάν λάθῃ τοὺς ὁμολογήσαντας, καὶ ἀτοχύνῃς καὶ ζημίας ἀπήλλακται, μὴ λαθῶν δ' οὐ. τῶν δὲ τῆ φύσει συμφύτων ἕάν τι παρὰ τὸ δυνατόν βιάζηται, ἕάν τε πάντα ἀνθρώπους λάθῃ, οὐδὲν ἔλαττον τὸ κακόν.

Hippias speaks are, because of their naturalistic, non-religious significance, utterly different from those mentioned by Sophocles in a famous text of the *Antigone*, 450 ff.¹ It is admittedly not clear how the denial of burial to a brother could be said to bring its own punishment in the natural course, as (according at least to Socrates) incest and ingratitude do, but this is also true of neglecting one's parents, which Hippias agrees is among the unwritten laws. There is no reason why he should not have believed what Xenophon puts into his mouth, that 'the gods made these laws for men' and 'this does suggest the work of gods, for the idea that laws should contain their own punishment for those who disobey them must, I think, come from a better legislator than man'. It is not easy for us, with a different theological tradition, to understand the place in Greek thought of divine powers, who might have personal names and characters or might equally well be what we should class as abstractions: Necessity, Persuasion, Justice. For many of their most thoughtful minds it was a matter of indifference whether some beneficent force was ascribed to a divinity or simply to natural processes. We have seen already how the same account of human progress was referred indifferently to the agency of Prometheus or of necessity, experience and time. Hippias therefore would see no inconsistency in contrasting positive with divine laws, and at another time saying that 'law is a tyrant which often does violence to nature' (Plato, *Prot.* 337d).²

In the tragic poets, as is appropriate, the unwritten laws are unequivocally of divine origin, the 'unwritten ordinances of the gods' in whose name Antigone defies the power of King Creon.³ In Sophocles

¹ Ad. Levi, *Sophia*, 1942, 450, n. 13, quoted by Untersteiner, *Sof.* III, 69. Levi also follows Dümmler (*Ak.* 255) and Bignone (*Studi*, 132, n. 1) in the curious view that Xenophon has put much of Hippias's doctrine into the mouth of Socrates. Dümmler's chapter is in parts a rather fantastic edifice of hypotheses built on hypotheses.

² For a good example of the equation of natural with divine laws see Hippocr. *De victu* 11 (VI, 486 L.): Men have laid down *nomos* for themselves but the *physis* of all things has been ordered by the gods. What men have laid down, be it right or wrong, is never constant, but what the gods have laid down is right for ever. (On the date of *De victu* see Kahn, *Anaximander*, 189, n. 2.)

This is not of course confined to the ancient world. Locke in his second treatise, §135, says that legislation 'must be conformable to the law of nature, i.e. to the will of God of which that is a declaration'.

³ P. 22 above. Leaving a body unburied is again said to flout the laws of the gods at *Ajax* 1343 and Eur. *Suppl.* 19.

again, a chorus of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (863 ff.) speaks of holiness in words and deeds 'for which laws are appointed on high, brought to life in the clear air of heaven, whose father is Olympus alone, for no mortal man¹ begat them, nor will forgetfulness ever put them to sleep'. Metaphorically, these unwritten laws may be said to have been 'written by the gods', as when Ion in Euripides's play rebukes Apollo for his sin against a mortal woman (440 ff.): how can it be right for the gods, who have written the laws for mortals, themselves to disobey them? In Aeschylus, respect for parents (cited as one of the unwritten laws in the conversation between Socrates and Hippias) is described by a chorus as 'written in the statutes (θεσμίῳις) of Diké (Justice) highest in honour'.²

In the famous funeral oration (Thuc. 2.37.3), Pericles, like Socrates, praises observance of both the positive and the unwritten laws: 'We Athenians obey the laws, especially those which are designed for the protection of the oppressed, and those which are unwritten but bring acknowledged shame on those who break them.'³ The generally acknowledged unwritten laws were those that enjoined reverence towards the gods, respect for parents, requital of benefactors, and also hospitality to strangers. Religious duty is particularly in question in another quotation from Pericles reported in the speech against Andocides attributed to Lysias (pseudo-Lys. *Or.* 6, 10):

Pericles, they say, once advised that in cases of impiety you should invoke not only the written laws about it but also the unwritten in accordance

¹ No special significance should be attached to the use of φύσις here. Θνατὰ φύσις ἀνέρων is simply a periphrasis for θνατός ἀνὴρ. See vol. II, 352. On this passage see also p. 77 above.

² *Suppl.* 707, on which George Thomson justly comments that 'written in the statutes of Justice' is only another way of saying that they are unwritten in the statutes of mortal legislators (*Oresteia*, II, 270). Cf. the δελτογράφος φρήν of Hades at *Eum.* 275. Thomson's long note on *Eum.* 269-72 is excellent, and I owe some of my own references to it. Note only (p. 269) that in the conversation between Socrates and Hippias it is Hippias, not Socrates, who argues that the unwritten laws could not have been made by men and must therefore be the work of gods.

³ Gomme (*Comm. on Thuc.* II, 113) mentions as a difference between Sophocles and Pericles that for the latter the unwritten law was hardly divine. But his audience would certainly believe it to be divine, and he was speaking in a way that they would understand. For a comparison between the *Antigone* and the *epitaphios* of Pericles, see Ehrenberg, *S. and P.* 28-44, and the criticism of it in Gomme, *loc. cit.* Another difference between Sophocles and Thucydides, says Gomme, is that for the former the unwritten law is universal, whereas Thucydides is 'probably' thinking of Greek νόμῳια only. To the Greeks this distinction was blurred: the same law, enjoining burial of the dead, is called τὸν Πανελλήνων νόμον and νόμῳια θεῶν in Eur. *Supplices* (516 and 19). The fact is that up to the fifth century the Greeks largely *ignored* the barbarian world: 'the world' was the Greek world and 'the gods' were the Greek gods.

with which the Eumolpidae [hereditary priests at Eleusis] give their decisions, laws which no one has been able to invalidate nor dared to contradict, nor do they know their author; for in this way they believe that an offender will pay the penalty not only to men but to the gods.

Thomson has noticed the striking parallel between the orator's 'nor do they know their author' and Antigone's words about unwritten laws, that 'no one knows from whence they come'.¹

Plato's opinion of a democracy, in the degenerate and extreme form in which it leads to tyranny, is that the people 'disregard all laws written or unwritten, in their determination to have no master over them'.² In the *Laws* he speaks again of the unwritten laws.

All that we are now discussing [says the Athenian (793a)] is what people in general call 'unwritten laws', and all such injunctions amount to what they call the 'laws of our ancestors'.³ And what we said recently, that one should neither call them laws nor yet pass them over, was well said. They are the bonds that hold a political society together,⁴ links between laws already on the statute book and those still to be enacted, in truth a body of ancestral and age-old precepts which if rightly conceived and put into practice protect and safeguard the written laws of the time, but if they swerve from the right path they cause everything to collapse like a building when the builders' supports give way. With this in mind we must bind your new city together with everything possible that goes by the name of law, custom or usage.

¹ I feel inclined to question Ehrenberg's view of this passage when it leads him to say that for Pericles 'even the sacred laws of Eleusis were not part of a divine world contrasted with a man-made order' (*S. and P.* 47).

² *Rep.* 563d, ἵνα δὴ μηδαμῆ μηδεὶς αὐτοῖς ἢ δεσπότης, probably a deliberate reminder of Demaratus's boast in the great days of Greece: ἔπεισι γὰρ σφι δεσπότης νόμος (p. 69 above). Hirzel pointed to this passage of Plato as a direct contradiction of Pericles's eulogy of Athenian democracy, but Plato is speaking of a state in which the democratic ideal of liberty has reached the stage of ἀπληστία which is its downfall. There is no hint that Athens had reached this stage in the days of Pericles, before Plato was born.

³ ἄγραφα νόμιμα and πατρίους νόμους. While νόμιμα could be a vaguer term than νόμος, it is obvious that they could sometimes be used interchangeably. Cf. νόμιμα θεῶν at *Eur. Suppl.* 19 with τοὺς θεῶν νόμους at *Soph. Aj.* 1343 (both referring to burial of the dead), and the variations in *Dem.* 23 (*In Aristocr.*), 61 and 70. In saying that they should not be called νόμοι Plato is recalling his remark at 788a that the education of children is a matter for instruction and admonition rather than law.

⁴ Cf. Devlin, *E. of M.* 10: 'Society is not something that is kept together physically; it is held by the invisible bonds of common thought. If the bonds were too far relaxed the members would drift apart. A common morality is part of the bondage. The bondage is part of the price of society; and mankind, which needs society, must pay its price.' (There is something of Protagoras here too.) To Plato δεσμοί were a necessity, to Antiphon an incubus (*fr.* 44 A, col. 4).

Written and Unwritten Law

Sexual indulgence in public is an example of the kind of thing which Plato suggests should be discouraged by 'unwritten law', habituating the citizens to a sense of shame, rather than by legal prohibition (*Laws* 841 b); and (like Xenophon's Socrates) he cites incest as a case where such unwritten law is already an adequate deterrent (*ibid.* 838a-b).

Aristotle attacks the subject with his characteristic zeal for classification. He first, in *Rhetoric* I, ch. 10 (1368b7), divides law into particular and universal: 'particular' is the written law of an individual state, 'universal' embraces everything that is unwritten but agreed upon by all. In ch. 13, however, after the same initial division (1373b4) into particular and universal (and an equation of 'universal' with 'natural' law), he proceeds to divide the law of particular states itself into written and unwritten. At this point it should be stated that the object of the chapter is to classify just and unjust actions. The division of the laws is subordinate to this end, because just and unjust acts 'have been defined relatively to two kinds of law'.¹ The law of nature exists because 'there really is a natural and universal right and wrong, apart from any association or covenant'; and he quotes as examples Antigone's famous claim and Empedocles fr. 135. There are then (1374a18) two kinds of right and wrong, the one laid down in writing and the other not, and the second is again divided into (a) virtue and vice in excess of that which the law takes note of, which are visited with praise, honours and gifts or reproach and dishonour respectively (i.e. non-legal rewards and penalties; examples of the former are gratitude for and requital of benefits and readiness to help friends), (b) acts which, though they might be the subject of positive law, are omitted by it owing to the impossibility of allowing for every variety of case within the framework of general rules: here what is not written is simply a supplement to what is. It is known as equity (τὸ ἐπιεικές).²

¹ In the *Ethics* (1134b18ff.) Aristotle argues that there is both a natural and a legal form of political justice. Some, he says, have doubted the existence of a φύσει δίκαιον, because what is natural is constant (fire burns everywhere and always), whereas τὰ δίκαια κινούμενα ἄρῳσι. These are the doubts of the sophistic age, questioning the certainties of a Solon or an Anachylus. Aristotle counters them by a somewhat obscure and unsatisfactory argument, reflecting the conflict between Platonist and sophist in his own mind and ending lamely with the statement that there is 'only one natural, universal constitution, namely the best'. Barker has an interesting but probably over-subtle commentary on this passage in his introduction to Gierke's *Natural Law*, xxxv.

² On the meaning of equity in Aristotle see also W. von Leyden in *Philosophy*, 1967, 6-8.

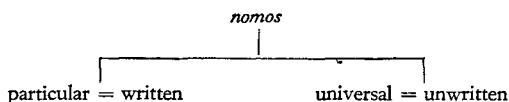
The 'Nomos'-'Physis' Antithesis

A passion for reducing everything to classified or tabulated form is always dangerous, and Aristotle has not escaped its snares. As Hirzel pointed out,¹ the divisions are inconsistent, and the passages in ch. 10 and chs. 13-14 probably belong to different discussions. Yet, although there are two kinds of unwritten law, they are not contradictory, and Aristotle held both views: (a) the *nomoi* of a particular community are both written and unwritten, the latter (based on its customs and traditions) not contradicting but supplementing the former; (b) 'unwritten laws' signifies also the universal, natural laws as in the *Antigone* and Demosthenes.

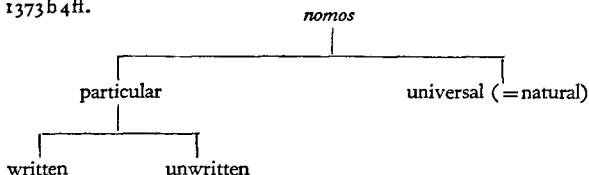
It must be remembered that Aristotle is writing a handbook of rhetoric, based on earlier handbooks. His object is not to see that the eternal law of nature prevails, but to show how a pleader can juggle with the notions of written and unwritten law as will best suit his case. So in ch. 15 he goes on to show how the theories which he has expounded may be applied in practice. If the written law is against him, the advocate must appeal to the universal law, insisting on its greater equity and justice. The words of the juror's oath, 'according to my honest opinion', mean that he will not slavishly follow the

¹ Hirzel, "Ayp. v6u. 10. Aristotle's classifications can be put in tabular form thus:

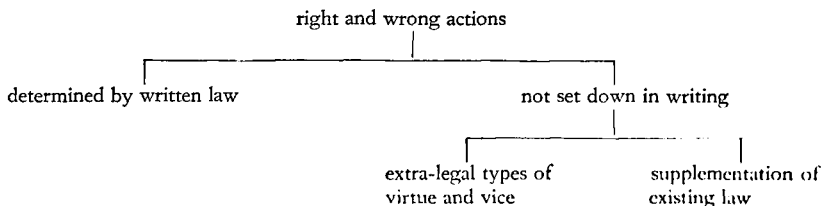
Rhet. A 10, 1368b7ff.



Rhet. A 13, 1373b4ff.



In addition the classification of right and wrong actions at 1374a18 can be shown thus:



Aristotle's Classification of Laws

written law. The universal law is the law of equity, the unchanging law of nature,¹ whereas written laws are unstable. He will quote the *Antigone*, and declare that the written laws do not fulfil the true purpose of law, and so on. If on the other hand the written law supports his case, he will explain that the juror's oath is not meant to absolve him from following the law, but only to save him from the guilt of perjury if he misunderstands it; that no one chooses absolute good, but only the good for himself;² that not to use the laws is as bad as not having any; and that it does not pay to try to be cleverer than the doctor.

These are the tricks that Gorgias and his like were already teaching their pupils and writing in their *technai*, and the passage shows how the growth of rhetoric and the passion for litigation among the Greeks contributed to the unscrupulous subordination of ethical concepts to the expediency of the moment. In itself, the doctrine of unwritten laws, valid at all times and for all men—*nomoi* which are rooted in *physis* and at the same time divinely ordained and of a lofty moral tone—stands for the archaic traditions, both philosophical and popular, which were now being challenged by the new morality.

For Hesiod justice rested on the law of Zeus, as for Heraclitus all human laws were emanations of the divine (p. 55 above), and Empedocles (fr. 135) could speak of a law for all, 'extending through the wide air and the immense light of heaven'. The religious background to this is seen at its best in the words of Solon at the end of the seventh century. What the immortal gods give, no man can escape. Prosperity based on evil conduct is inevitably insecure, for Zeus is guardian of the moral law. Soon or late the blow will fall, though Zeus may be slow to punish and the sufferers may be the offender's children. It is the old

¹ Bignone (*Studi*, 129, n. 1) sees in these words a clear reminiscence of Antiphon. It might well be Hippias or others, but at least his remark is further evidence, if that were necessary, that Aristotle is simply repeating notions already familiar in the heyday of the Sophists. Hirzel ('*Αγορ.* νόμ. 8) finds it difficult to understand how Aristotle could say here of τὸ ἐπιεικὲς that *it does not pay to try to be cleverer than the doctor* in view of the variety which he has earlier ascribed to it. It is astonishing how previous scholars seem to have solemnly analysed this passage as a serious statement of Aristotle's views, whereas it is one of a pair of contrasting ἀντιλογίαι to be used on occasion demands in the interests of victory in the courts. (Skemp is an exception, *Plato's Statesman*, 198.) On the notion of ἐπιεικὲς see Cope, *Introd. to Rhet.* 190-3.

² 'So, and our written laws, which were made for us, may not reach the abstract ideal of perfection, but they probably suit us better than if they did.' (Rhys Roberts, *Oxf. Trans. ad loc.*)

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doctrine, which we see also worked out in Aeschylus, that 'the doer shall suffer', *hybris* is inevitably followed by *até*, doom, under the authority of Zeus who 'watches over the end of everything'. In a striking simile Solon compares the judgment of Zeus to a spring gale which stirs the sea to its very bottom, ravages the crops on earth and at the same time sweeps the clouds from the sky so that the sun shines out once more in all its strength.

Several scholars have pointed out that in this passage 'the vengeance of Zeus falls with the weight and inevitability of a natural phenomenon', that 'Solon gives us our first intimation of the lawfulness of nature'¹—surely an additional reason against supposing that the 'naturalistic' unwritten laws of which Hippias speaks are necessarily different from those upheld as divine in the *Antigone* (pp. 119f. above).

Aristotle has shown how the unwritten laws could be invoked by an unscrupulous advocate in the interests of a particular case. There was indeed a danger of their abuse, especially when the ideal of a benevolent and paternal aristocracy had given place to the crowning achievement of Greek political genius, the *polis* or city-state, in which the written constitution was the guarantee of a citizen's rights and the bulwark against tyranny or oppression, and the watchword was *isonomia*, equality before the law.² Just as *physis* could be invoked either to uphold humanitarian ideals or in the interests of aggression and the overthrow of constitutional government, so the idea of unwritten law, which originally emphasized the moral government of the universe, could, in a more democratic society, appear simply as retrograde and a menace to the hard-won assurance of human rights that now was written into the statute-book. The restored democracy at the end of the fifth century decreed that 'the magistrate should in no case make use of unwritten law', that the laws should treat all citizens alike without distinction, and that they must be displayed in public for all to see (Andocides, *De mystt.* 85). Theseus, condemning tyranny in the *Supplikes* of Euripides (429 ff.), says that 'under written laws

¹ Lesky, *Hist. Gr. Lit.* 125; Snell, *Disc. of Mind*, 212. Solon, says Snell, is using the Homeric type of simile, but for a new purpose, to express 'not so much the individual explosions of energy but the necessity which prompts them, not the unique event, but the continuous condition'. This insight 'places him on the threshold of philosophy'. One might compare the cosmic *δίκη* of Anaximander. (The passages of Solon referred to occur in fr. 1 Diehl.)

² On *ισονομία* and democracy see p. 150, n. 2, below.

Importance of Written Laws

justice is meted out impartially to the feeble and the wealthy, the lesser man overcomes the greater if his cause is just'. This happens 'when the *demos* is master in the land'.

The difference between Sophocles and Euripides here is interesting. It would seem that Sophocles in the *Antigone* is a passionate upholder of the unwritten law, and Euripides of the written.¹ Yet both are equally opposing the tyrant, and Sophocles, who took his full share of public duties, was no less a champion of constitutional and legal safeguards. In the *Antigone* itself (367f.), the chorus declare that the amazing ingenuity of man will only lead to good if he remain within the framework of the *polis* and respect the laws of the land,² and in the *Oedipus at Colonus* Theseus rebukes Creon because, 'having come to a city which observes justice and determines nothing without law, you reject the legitimate authorities' (912ff.). We do not need the word 'written' here to tell us that Sophocles is thinking of positive, formulated law as it was understood in the Athens of his day. Conversely the Theseus of Euripides, in the very same play in which he insists on the need for written laws, is asserting the same sacred duty as Antigone, the duty of burying the dead. By doing this, he says, I shall preserve the common *nomos* of Greece (526f.), and his mother Aethra accuses Creon of 'flouting the *nomima* of the gods' (19).

That there is a difference of mood and emphasis between the two poets no one could deny. It cannot be explained on chronological grounds,³ yet in a way they do stand for two generations, because Euripides was so much more attracted than Sophocles to the modern, sophistic currents of thought. Like Protagoras, he knew that there were two sides to every question, and he enjoyed as much as Hippias the 'contest of words' in which his characters indulge.⁴ The debate

¹ So Hirzel, *Ἄγρ. νόμ.* 69-71, in an interesting discussion with which on some points I am venturing to disagree.

² Pohlenz (*Kl. Schr.* II, 352) likens Sophocles to Protagoras in his respect for law as man's highest cultural achievement.

³ So far as can be judged, the *Antigone* was produced about 440, the *Supplikes* of Euripides about 420, and the *Oedipus Coloneus* posthumously in 401.

⁴ Cf. fr. 189 (from the *Antiope*):

ἐκ παντός ἂν τις πράγματος δισσοῦν λόγων
ἀγῶνα θεῖτ' ἂν εἰ λέγειν εἴη σοφός.

For ἀμύλλα or ἀγῶνις λόγων see *Suppl.* 195, 427f., *Med.* 546, *Or.* 491. On the agonistic character of sophistic see p. 43 above.

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between Theseus and the herald as to whether the dead warriors should be buried develops into a set piece on absolute monarchy *versus* democracy. Although it is clear where Euripides's sympathies lie, the herald is no caricature of a bombastic tyrant's minion, but an accomplished sophist and orator. My city, he says, has no use for mob-rule. No one can sway it this way or that by playing on its vanity, pleasing it for the moment but in the long run harming it.¹ Since a whole *demos* cannot judge arguments correctly, how can it direct a city? Education takes time, and even if a labouring man is no fool, his work prevents him from giving proper attention to public affairs. (Why have these arguments a familiar ring? It is Socrates in the *Gorgias* who complains that orators in a democracy lay themselves out to flatter the *demos* rather than tell it what will be for its good, and Socrates again who said, like Hume, that 'poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people' and unfit them for politics, which was a matter for trained experts.)² Failure (continues the herald) to comply with Creon's demands means war. You may hope to win: hope has been the cause of many a conflict. Everyone thinks that its misfortunes will fall on others, not himself. (Just so did the Athenians warn the unfortunate Melians of the snares of hope in Thuc. 5.103.)³ If, when the vote is taken, each citizen could visualize his own death in battle, Greece would be safe from war-madness. We all know how much better peace is than war, yet we renounce it in our lust to enslave one another, as men and as cities. A wise man thinks of his children, his parents, and the safety of his country. A rash leader is a danger: true courage lies in forethought.⁴

Here is a man who has studied the *technai* of Gorgias and others and mastered all the rhetorical tricks. Any argument you like can be

¹ In similar vein Hippolytus—a very different character—says proudly (*Hipp.* 986): 'I have no skill to speak to the mob; my wisdom is rather for the few, my equals. And this is fitting. Those who in the eyes of the wise are of no account—it is they who are more accomplished in the art of mob-oratory.'

² Hume, *Essays and Treatises* (Edinburgh, 1825), p. 195. For Socrates see e.g. Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.9, *Oec.* 4.2-3, Plato, *Rep.* 495d-e, Arist. *Rhet.* 1393b3. More of this in *Socrates*, 89 ff.

³ It seems to have been a commonplace of the time. Antiphon wrote (fr. 58): 'Hopes are not always a good thing. They have brought many to irreparable disaster, who in the end have suffered themselves what they thought to inflict on their neighbours.'

⁴ Cf. Polynices (another unsympathetic character) at *Phoen.* 599:

ἀσφαλὴς γὰρ ἐστ' ἀμείνων ἢ θρασὺς στρατηλάτης.

Written and Unwritten Laws: Summary

subordinated to the opportunism of the moment. Even the case for pacifism (and no one surpassed Euripides in his horror of war; see for instance the chorus in the *Helen*, 1151 ff.) can be vividly presented in the interests of a ruthless ultimatum.

To sum up a complex situation, the term 'unwritten laws' was applied in the first place to certain moral principles believed to be universally valid, or alternatively valid all over the Greek world.¹ Their authors were the gods, and no breach of them could remain unpunished. They were already closely connected with the natural world, for to contrast man with nature instead of seeing him as a part of it is a modern rather than a Greek habit. So for instance Heraclitus, who spoke of all human laws being nourished by the one divine law, also said that if the sun left his course the Furies, agents of Diké, would find him out. In contrast to these ordinances of heaven, each country or city had its own *nomoi*. It made laws to suit its own beliefs and needs, laws which had no force elsewhere and in their own land might be altered to suit changed circumstances. In general it would be thought just or right to observe these laws, but they had not the scope or force of the divine or natural laws, and to the questioning minds of the sophistic age it was matter for debate how far *dikaion* and *nomimon* coincided, the answer depending very much on whether or not a speaker was prepared to include the divine *nomoi* under the latter head.

A second meaning of 'unwritten law' derived from the ambiguity of the word *nomos* (p. 56 above). Since it meant the customs of a country as well as its law, 'unwritten *nomoi*' stood for what was believed in that country to be right and equitable but could not in practice be included in a corpus of written law. Yet it would be taken into account in judging a particular case (*Ar. Rhet.* 1374a26 ff.).

By the middle of the fifth century a secular trend of thought is gaining ground at the expense of the theistic, which did not however by any means disappear completely. Side by side with it appears an

¹ See p. 121, n. 3, above. On the so-called 'Three Commandments' see Ehrenberg, *S. and P.* 167 72, who rightly claims that the situation was much more fluid than this phrase suggests. It is of some interest that three of Pericles's unwritten laws (to worship God, to obey parents, and to show gratitude to benefactors) recur in a modern writer's list of commands which 'Locke and most other theorists' would include in the law of nature (von Leyden, *Philosophy*, 1956, 27).

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impersonal 'nature', whose decrees are as absolute, and their neglect as inevitably punished, as those of the gods had been. But they do not necessarily follow the precepts of traditional morality, for under the influence of mechanistic scientific theories the natural world is no longer subject to moral government. The effect is seen in Antiphon, for whom pleasure is the natural goal and the old divine unwritten law that parents should be honoured is 'often contrary to nature'. For Callicles the 'law of nature', which every man should follow who has the strength and determination to do so, justified the crudest hedonism and the most outrageous tyranny.

The decline of religious sanctions coincided with the rise of democratic government, for which positive, written law appeared as a safeguard against the return of tyranny or oligarchy based on the new conception of 'nature's law'. The latter was perforce unwritten and so, finally, the concept of 'unwritten law' took on a sinister meaning and was banished from the modern, more nearly egalitarian society.

This was the state of the question when Plato took it over: at one extreme the equality of all citizens under a written and published code of law, at the other the ideal of the strong man, nature's hero, who spurns the law in his march to absolute and selfishly exercised power. To both of these Plato opposed first his conception of nature itself as an intelligent and moral force, and secondly (*Politicus* 292 ff.) his vision of the wise, enlightened and trained ruler, master of the science of government, whose rule would inevitably benefit his people. Such a one would do better without written laws, imposing the fruits of his scientific understanding on subjects willing or unwilling, killing or banishing when necessary for the health of the city as a whole. (Even the docile Young Socrates is moved to a protest at this point.) Codified law is only a set of clumsy rules of thumb, which cannot allow for the infinite variety of particular cases. A magistrate who governs by it, as compared with the true statesman, will be like a layman trying to cure a patient by looking up the disease in a book compared to a skilled and experienced physician using his expert judgment. This drastic conclusion is considerably modified when Plato goes on to admit that in the absence of the ideal statesman a good code of laws

provides the best 'imitation' of his rule and in all ordinary states must be drawn up and enforced with the utmost rigour.

Finally, to remind ourselves how lasting has been this dilemma which the Greeks were the first to face, we have only to look again at the passages from Rousseau and Locke quoted earlier (p. 23), and the twentieth-century judgment of Mr Campbell, to which may be appended as a comment what Ernest Barker wrote of the Natural Law school of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

To begin with, there was the current conception that Natural Law somehow overbore law positive, so that enactments and acts of State which ran contrary to its prescriptions were strictly null and void, even if in actual practice, owing to the absence of any machinery for their disallowance, these acts and enactments retained their validity. Such a conception—applied in various forms, sometimes with a greater and sometimes with a less degree of reverence for actual law—was a ready solvent of political obligation. The rebel against constituted authority could easily plead obedience to the higher law, and could readily allege that he was only exerting, or defending, the natural rights which he enjoyed under that law . . . An English judge had uttered the *obiter dictum*, in 1614, that 'even an Act of Parliament made against natural equity . . . is void in itself; for *jura naturae sunt immutabilia*, and they are *leges legum*'.

This concept was invoked indifferently in the cause of popularism and of absolutism, for 'nature could be used to consecrate the monarch as well as the people'. In the American War of Independence, 'it was the *Law of Nature* which, more than any other force, exploded the authority of the British Parliament and the British connexion'.¹

APPENDIX

Pindar on 'nomos'

No discussion of the *nomos-physis* antithesis would be complete without a mention of Pindar's famous allusion to 'nomos king of all, mortals and immortals alike', but there is no agreement as to its meaning. I can only set out the alternatives and indicate what appears to me to be most probably its purport.

The relevant passage is fr. 152 Bowra, 169 Schr. Plato at *Gorg.* 484b quotes the first 4½ lines and gives the sense down to v. 7; vv. 1-4 occur also

¹ Barker, introduction to Gierke's *Natural Law*, pp. xlvi-xlviii.

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in schol. Pind. *Nem.* 9. 35, and 5–7 in schol. on Ael. Aristides (III, 408, 19 Dindorf). A great gain has been the publication in 1961 of a papyrus (*OP* xxxvi, 2450) of the greater part of the poem from ν. 6 onwards.¹ I quote νν. 1–8:

νόμος ὁ πάντων βασιλεύς
θνατῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων
ἄγει δικαίων τὸ βιαιότατον²
ὑπερτάτα χεῖρί. τεκμαίρομαι
ἔργοισιν Ἑρακλῆος
ἐπεὶ Γηρυόνα βόας
Κυκλώπειον ἐπὶ πρόθυρον Εὐρυσθέος
αἰτητάς³ τε καὶ ἀπριάτας ἔλασεν.

The poem continues with Heracles's theft of the horses of Diomedes, including a gruesome description of a man's bones being crunched by the horses.

Plato's Callicles quotes the passage in support of his own doctrine that might is right: Pindar's *nomos* is not man-made law but the supreme law of nature which justifies the most extreme violence (or alternatively does violence to accepted notions of justice). The irony of this interpretation is apparent, but it still remains a question whether *nomos* has its usual meaning of ordinarily accepted custom or stands for a higher law of the gods. Herodotus (3.38) associates Pindar's words with his own view of the relativity of *nomos* as illustrated by the experiment of Darius (p. 16 above). This is certainly the sense of fr. 203 B (215 Schr.).

ἄλλο δ' ἄλλοισι νόμισμα, σφετέραν δ' αἰνεῖ δίκαν
ἕκαστος,

which is in keeping with Herodotus's remark that each would choose his own *nomoi* as the finest, and shows that Pindar certainly could, on occasion, speak of *nomos* as human and relative.⁴ Wilamowitz and Theiler both give *nomos* in our passage the sense of ordinary custom or usage (*Brauch*):

¹ See also Page in *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* 1962 and Theiler in *Mus. Helv.* 1965.

² This is universally agreed to be correct, though the manuscripts of Plato have βιαιῶν (for βιαιῶν) τὸ δικαιότατον. We need not here consider whether this is a copyist's error or a deliberately ironic misquotation on Plato's part. See on that Dodds, *Gorg.* 270–2, and Theiler, *Mus. Helv.* 1965, 68f.

³ αἰτητάς Theiler, comparing Plato's paraphrase οὔτε πριάμενος οὔτε δόντος τοῦ Γ. and Sophr. *O.T.* 384 δωρητὸν οὐκ αἰτητὸν. Aristides's paraphrase (II, 68 Dind.) is οὔτε αἰτήσας whence Boeckh's ἀκαιήτας which Schr. and Bowra follow. ἀνατεῖ ('unpunished') Page *loc. cit.*

⁴ Few, I imagine, will wish to follow Heinimann (*N. u. Ph.* 71) in arguing that even this does not imply the relative (and hence not universally obligatory) character of laws and customs because each is an expression of the will of Zeus and therefore binding.

it is *customary* to accept the violence of Heracles without comment or criticism, and though Pindar has a higher ethical insight he prefers to say no more, as he makes clear in fr. 70 B. (quoted below: see Theiler, *loc. cit.* 75). According to Aelius Aristides (II, 70 Dind.) Pindar's lines are an indignant protest (σχετλιαζων) against a *nomos* which approves such violent deeds as those of Heracles; and he confirms this by quoting another passage (fr. 70 B., 81 Schr.) in which Pindar says: 'I am on your side, Geryones, but I will never say what is displeasing to Zeus.' The continuation of the present poem is in the same sense, for Pindar says that Diomedes in trying to save his horses acted 'bravely, not wantonly, for it is better to die protecting one's own than to be a coward' (γν. 14-17).

The fullest discussion is that of M. Gigante.¹ He believes Herodotus willfully misrepresents the quotation in the sense of fr. 203 B., and that to translate *nomos* here by custom closes the way to correct understanding. *Nomos* is 'the absolute principle of divinity'. Pindar intuits 'God as the Absolute': to quote his own words, God becomes 'idea e forza del mondo, non piú ideale della purezza e della pietà, ma ideale della giustizia che nel suo compiersi si servi della forza'. Pindar admits the right of the stronger, but only as the law and will of Zeus, not for human and contingent interests. The most violent action is justified because, being realized by the will of Zeus, it leads to justice and well-being. Gigante quotes fr. 48 B. (57 Schr.), in which Zeus is addressed as δαμοργὸς εὐνομίας καὶ δίκας. (But why should not fr. 203 B., ἄλλο δ' ἄλλοισι νόμισμα, be equally apt?)

Untersteiner and Ehrenberg, though they eschew mention of the Absolute, come to not dissimilar conclusions in their own ways. Untersteiner agrees that in Pindar *nomos* is 'an inviolable and sacred order',² and Ehrenberg says (*Rechtsidee*, 119f.) that, though not a 'Schicksalsgotttheit' as Schroeder thought, it is 'ancient and sacred custom', a usage which can turn violence itself to justice, making holy even what is opposed to the human sentiment of what is right. Dodds too thinks it unlikely that by *nomos* Pindar meant merely custom. It is 'the law of Fate, which for him is identical with the will of Zeus', and he too compares fr. 70 B.: 'I will never say what is displeasing to Zeus.'

All these interpretations seem to ignore what Pindar plainly says: not that *nomos* is the will of Zeus but that even Zeus is subject to *nomos*, which lords it over gods as well as men. Fr. 70 is capable of a less lofty reference than to 'the law of fate'. Heracles was Zeus's son, so naturally

¹ *Nomos Basileus*, chs. 5-7, pp. 72-108. On pp. 79-92 he gives a useful review of previous discussions of the fragment, to which H. Volkmann, in *Gnomon*, 1958, 474f., adds E. Wolf, *Gr. Rechtsdenken*, II (1952), 190ff.

² *Sophs.* 297, n. 30. He puts the words between quotes.

Zeus favoured him, and (gods being the jealous creatures they are) it would be unwise for a mortal to take his victim's side too openly. A similar reply may be made to Heinemann's comment on *Pyth.* 2.86, where *nomos* = form of government. The changes between tyranny, democracy and aristocracy (for Pindar 'the rule of the wise') are enumerated, and it is said that 'the god' favours now this one, now that. This, Heinemann thinks, shows that although *nomos* changes it depends not on human caprice but on Zeus (*N. u. Ph.* 71). What it does show is that a god can be as capricious as a man. Pindar was pious in the sense that he thought mortals must submit to the will of the gods, but his religion retains much of the Homeric. He was defender rather than critic of the Olympians. The more slanderous stories about them must be rejected and their honour upheld (*Ol.* 1. 28f., 52), but they were still the wilful, amorous, powerful beings who fathered mortal heroes and must have their way. In general he holds to the traditionally prudent attitude of the Greeks that the gods are jealous and 'mortal things befit mortals'. 'It is meet that a man speak fair things of the gods, for so the blame is less.'¹

To know what was in Pindar's mind in this poem is obviously very difficult, but I would venture the following: Recognized custom (usage, tradition) has immense power. Both gods and men conform to it, and any act, however wrong or terrible it may seem in itself, will, if only it becomes sanctioned by *nomos*, appear to be justified. What could be more violent and seemingly unjust and cruel than the theft of Geryon's cattle or the horses of Diomedes? Yet the power of *nomos* makes both men and gods accept it.² Pindar may well be shaking his head over this state of affairs, as Pohlenz said (*Kl. Schr.* 11, 337), but more probably he prefers to make no judgment. That is the prudent course.

¹ *Isth.* 5. 16, *Ol.* 1. 35. There are similar sentiments in *Ol.* 5. 27, *Pyth.* 2. 34 and 3. 39.

² Dodds's comment (*Gorg.* 270) that 'the deeds of Heracles are no apt symbol of the customary' is beside the point. What custom has done is to *justify* them (δικαιῶν τὸ βιαιότατον). To illustrate the universal truth expressed in the first three lines the most appropriate act was one that was (a) extremely violent, and (b) perpetrated by a divine being, the son of Zeus who became a god himself.

V

THE SOCIAL COMPACT¹

Opinions differ as to how far the theory of the social contract, or compact, as understood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries A.D., was anticipated in our period of Greek thought, and the differences spring largely from the different meanings which scholars have given to the phrase. We shall look at the evidence first (briefly in some cases where it has already been touched on), and may then, if we wish, see how close the Greek conceptions were to those of later Europe.

One ancient belief about law attributed it ultimately to the gods. The human lawgiver or constitution-maker (whose existence was not denied) was only the channel through which the commands of heaven became known and effective. In Tyrtaeus's poem (seventh century, fr. 3 Diehl) Lycurgus's constitution for Sparta is actually dictated in detail by Apollo at Delphi. Later, men tended to say that Lycurgus drew up the constitution himself but went to Delphi for assurance that it had the god's approval (Xen. *Rep. Lac.* 8.5). Herodotus (1.65) finds two versions side by side, the traditional one

¹ More usually known as the 'social contract theory', largely through the influence of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, though Hume also wrote on *The Original Contract*. But both Rousseau and Hume use more general terms like 'compact' and 'pact' indifferently, and as Peter Laslett has pointed out (*Locke's Two Treatises*, 112), Locke scarcely applies the word 'contract' to political matters at all; it is 'compact' or 'agreement' which creates a society. In speaking of the Greeks at least, the less specific and legal term is probably to be preferred.

It goes without saying that there were differences in the concept and its application arising out of differences in historical situation. The people who were discovering their identity and determining the place of monarchy after the wars of religion and the Reformation were in a very different position from the Sophists. One thing that both have in common is the transition from a religious to a secular view of law, from the agency of God to that of man. Kaerst rightly pointed out (*Ztschr. f. Pol.* 1909, 506) that the contract theory has two elements which must be kept distinct, though they are combined in some modern formulations. These are (a) the doctrine of a social contract or compact proper, i.e. an agreement of association between equals, (b) the *pactum subiectionis*, whereby the ordinary citizen is bound in subjection to a higher authority or sovereign. Only the former has its origin in Greek speculation. (For the history of the concept from the ancient world onward see Kaerst's article; M. D'Addio, *L'idea del contratto sociale dai Sofisti alla Riforma*; and J. W. Gough, *The Social Contract*.)

of a religious origin for the laws, and a rationalistic—based on the similarity of Spartan and Cretan laws—that Lycurgus copied the constitution of Crete. The Cretan laws in their turn were said to have been the work of Zeus (Plato, *Laws*, *ad init.*). Even Cleisthenes, making his democratic reforms at the end of the sixth century, received the names for his new tribes from the Pythia (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21–6), and probably therefore sought the oracle's ratification of his whole scheme.¹

By the fifth century an impersonal nature had in some men's minds replaced the gods as the worldwide power that produced the whole order of which men are a part. For others, like Hippias, the two can exist comfortably side by side, and Euripides, when he speaks in 'Presocratic' language of the 'ageless order of immortal nature',² and elsewhere in his poetry, shows a desire to keep them united. When therefore, as we have seen, the view was gaining ground that law is a purely human institution designed to meet particular needs, with nothing permanent or sacred about it, it could be contrasted with either a divine or a natural order or both. In drawing this contrast the act of legislation is usually said to be the outcome of an agreement or compact (συνθήκη) between the members of a community, who have 'put together', composed, or agreed upon certain articles.³

The records of Protagoras do not contain the actual word 'compact', but when the gods are removed from his parable (as in view of his agnosticism they must be), we have a picture of men perishing for lack of the art of living together in cities and by hard experience learning to act justly and respect the rights of others and so founding

¹ See further Guthrie, *Gks. and their Gods*, 184–9.

² ἀθανάτου φύσεως κόσμον ἀγήρω, fr. 910 N. Burnet (*EGP*, 10, n. 3) says that ἀγήρω is genitive, which, though it sounds tautologous, could be right. Anaximander B 2 has ἀίδιον καὶ ἀγήρω, which, while it suggests that the tautology could go back to Anaximander himself, also shows that the form ἀγήρω could be used for the accusative, as appears also from examples in LSJ. Nauck arbitrarily alters it to ἀγήρων to settle the matter.

³ The prefix συν- in compound verbs has two uses: (a) objective, as in συντίθημι (act.), to put two or more things together, thus constructing a composite whole; (b) subjective, to do something conjointly or in harmony with someone else, as in σύμφημι, which does not mean to say two or more things together or at the same time, but to say something in unison with another person, i.e. to agree with him. The middle voice of συντίθημι was used in both ways. It meant, first, 'to put together for oneself', or organize, and also to hear and understand ('put two and two together'); secondly to agree with others, and (with an infinitive) to agree to do something. When the object was laws, a treaty or the like, it is probable that both meanings were present: the constituent articles are composed or put together, and they are mutually agreed upon (the reflexive force of the middle assisting).

political communities. This is a matter of 'self-control and justice' (*Prot.* 322e). Protagoras, said Ernest Barker, was 'no believer in the doctrine of a social contract'. This is partly because of Barker's mistaken conviction that he 'conceived the state as an ordinance of God, as existing *jure divino*, rather than as a creation of man, existing *ex contractu*', partly because 'a contract issuing in an artificial unity maintained by artificial laws would be no sooner formed than broken. What is needed and what is everything, is . . . a common mind to pursue a common purpose of good life.' That is true, but is such artificiality implied by the contract theory? Is not Popper right when he claims that 'the word "contract" suggests . . . perhaps more than any other theory, that the strength of the laws lies in the individual's readiness to accept and obey them'?¹ The moral virtues which made a common life possible (αἰδώς, δίκη, σωφροσύνη) were necessary preconditions for the founding of a *polis*, but since Protagoras did not believe that laws were the work of nature or gods he must have believed, like other contemporary progressive thinkers, that they were formulated as the result of a consensus of opinion between the citizens who henceforth considered themselves bound by them.

In the 'defence of Protagoras' undertaken by Socrates in the *Theaetetus* (167c) we find a theory which refers only to present conditions, though it is not inconsistent with a belief in an original contract in the past. 'Whatever acts appear just and fine to a particular state *are* so for that state so long as it believes in them; but when in a particular case they are burdensome for the citizens, the wise man substitutes others that appear and are beneficial.' This dictum follows from Protagoras's doctrine of 'man the measure' (pp. 183 ff. below), and, as Salomon said, it is factual, not normative: what is agreed upon by a city is just for that city so long as it continues to regard it as valid (νομίση—hold it as *nomos*). The compact has made it just and right for the citizens to keep the laws until they are altered, even though the

¹ The quotations are from Barker's *Gr. Pol. Theory* (first published 1918), 63, and *Pol. Thought of P. and A.* (first published 1906), 73; and Popper, *Open Soc.* 115. Barker's censure might be valid against Hobbes, but not against Rousseau or others who spoke of a social contract. Here too one sees how misleading it is to speak of 'the Social Contract theory' (p. 142, n. 1, below). What I have said of Barker applies equally to a number of critics who have started from the assumption that Protagoras believed political institutions and laws to be gifts of God or 'nature', e.g. Loenen, *P. and Gk. Comm.* 50f., 65 ff.; Mewaldt, *Kulturkampf*, 11.

city might prosper better under different laws. Similarly Aristotle later, in distinguishing between natural and legal justice, equates the latter with 'justice by agreement'.¹ The first words of Antiphon fr. 44 A ('I say that justice consists in not transgressing the laws and usages of one's own state') and the identification of just with lawful by Socrates in Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.4.12, p. 111 above) suggest that this legal conception of justice was in vogue among the advanced thinkers of the time, and the various conclusions to be drawn from it were under lively discussion. It left open the question whether justice so defined was 'beneficial' (συμφέρον) or not. At any rate we may safely include Protagoras among those who explained the rise of political communities in terms of a contract or agreement.

Hippias, for whom law and nature were strongly contrasted (Plato, *Prot.* 337d), defined laws explicitly as 'covenants made by the citizens whereby they have enacted in writing what ought to be done and what not' (language reminiscent of Antiphon, pp. 108f. above), and pointed to the rapidity with which they may be changed as a reason for not taking them very seriously (p. 119). Antiphon, in the same context of opposition between nature and law, also calls laws the result of agreement, which for him (unlike Protagoras) justifies ignoring them in favour of the commands of nature. Untersteiner perceived the idea of the social contract again in the words 'neither to inflict nor to suffer injury', which formed the content of the compact according to Glaucon in the *Republic*.² Something like it is also, as Dodds said (*Gorg.* 266), implicit in the *Sisyphus* of Critias, where laws and their sanctions are instituted by men to check the savagery of the state of nature.

Of slightly later writers, we have seen (p. 76 above) how the author of the speech against Aristogeiton combines, in a way natural at the time though impossible before or since, the conceptions of law as a

¹ *EN* 1134b32, νομικὸν καὶ συνθήκη. The *Theaetetus* passage is dealt with more fully on pp. 172 ff. below.

² Antiphon, fr. 44, DK, II, 347 and 355 (pp. 108, 110 above); Untersteiner *Sof.* IV, 100. Heinemann (*N. u. Ph.* 139) says that since Antiphon speaks of transgression bringing ἀσχῶνη as well as ζημία, he must be including the 'unwritten laws' and so his doctrine is not only one of the social contract as origin of law, but also of morality as originating in deliberate agreement. But (a) I do not feel so certain that Antiphon would not associate disgrace with purely legal punishment; (b) it is a question whether Antiphon intended his words in a historical sense. (See pp. 143, 145 below.)

human compact and a gift of divine providence. But for some reason pride of place is always given to Lycophron, known to Aristotle as a Sophist and thought to have been a pupil of Gorgias. He is even claimed as the founder of the social contract theory in its earliest form, though, since he was probably not writing until the fourth century, the evidence already reviewed makes this impossible.¹ Our authority is Aristotle in his *Politics* (1280b 10). Discussing the perennial question of the relation between law and morals, he claims that the end and aim of a state is to promote the good life and therefore it has a right and a duty to concern itself with the moral goodness of its citizens. 'Otherwise', he goes on, 'the political society becomes a mere alliance, differing only in respect of locality from alliances between distant countries; and law becomes a compact, and as Lycophron the Sophist said, a guarantor of men's rights against one another, not a means of making the citizens good and just.'

The only words which Aristotle here ascribes to Lycophron as a description of law are 'a guarantor of men's rights against one another',² not the actual noun 'compact', though no doubt their contractual nature follows and his definition comes close to that mentioned by Glaucon in the *Republic* as one commonly held. The limitation of law to the negative role of protecting the citizens against each other had been put forward earlier as an ideal by Hippodamus, the remarkable town-planner and political theorist who lived in Athens in the middle of the fifth century, rebuilt the Piraeus on a grid plan and laid out the new colonial city of Thurii for Pericles. In his ideal state he would allow three indictable offences only, which may be translated as insult, injury (to person or property) and murder.³ He was moreover the first to propose a supreme court of appeal against wrong judgments. The passages are chiefly interesting as showing how lively in the Greek world was a controversy that is receiving so much attention from leading authorities on jurisprudence at the present day, namely

¹ For Lycophron see pp. 313f. below. As founder of the social contract theory, Popper *O.S.* 114.

² ἑγγυητῆς ἀλλήλοις τῶν δικαίων. The brevity and neatness of Lycophron's definition, rather than any originality, may have been what caused Aristotle to single it out for quotation.

³ ὄβρις βλάβη θάνατος. Our authority is again Aristotle, *Pol.* 1267b 37ff. On Hippodamus see the references in Bignone, *Studi*, 43, and the brief but lucid account of him in Barker, *Pol. Theory of P. and A.* 44-6.

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that concerning the degree to which morality should be enforced by law. Lycophron and Hippodamus would have agreed with J. S. Mill that the only purpose for which law could rightly be enforced against a member of the community was to prevent harm to others; his own good, physical or moral, was not sufficient warrant. In Aristotle's eyes this ignores the real purpose of political association, which is to ensure not simply life but the good life. He would have sided with Lord Simonds, who in 1962 pronounced it 'the supreme and fundamental purpose of the law to conserve not only the safety and order but also the moral welfare of the State', and his general conception would be close to that of Lord Devlin, that 'what makes a society is a community of ideas, not political ideas alone but also ideas about the way its members should behave and govern their lives'.¹

In Plato's *Crito* Socrates expounds in his prison cell the doctrine of an agreement between himself and the laws of his city as an argument against attempting to evade the judgment which those laws have passed upon him. He says nothing about the origin of law, but there is no suggestion that it was divine. The argument is that, since the time when his parents were married under the laws of Athens, Socrates has owed his birth, education and livelihood to those laws. Moreover they gave him freedom, should he find anything objectionable in them, to leave Athens with all his property and settle elsewhere. Since he had not chosen to do so, he should consider himself their child and their servant. It was 'just' for him to abide by their decisions, and as he had risked his life in battle at their commands so he should give it up now that they demanded it from him. That was the agreement between them (50c, 52d), and it was necessary to the very existence of the state. If private individuals could set aside the law's judgments at their own caprice, the whole foundation of the city's life would crumble.

In Plato's works we have also seen the conception of law as a compact put forward by witnesses hostile to it, Callicles and the 'they' of

¹ See Devlin, *Enforcement of Morals*, 86 and 88, and cf. p. 117, n. 1, above. On Aristotle's side is also pseudo-Dem. 25 (*In Aristot.*), 16-17: the laws aim not only at τὸ δίκαιον but also at τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ συμφέρον. They have a twofold purpose, to prevent injustice and by the punishment of transgressors 'to make the others better'. For Democritus's view see vol. II, 496 (fr. 245).

Glaucon (pp. 103ff., 98 above). Those who laid down the laws, said Callicles, are the weak majority; and again, justice and self-control and everything that militates against a life of wantonness and licence are 'human agreements contrary to nature'. Against them Callicles exalts the superman who will burst their bonds and live the life of a self-indulgent tyrant. 'They', on the other hand—the mass of mankind as depicted by Glaucon—entertain no such heroic ideas. They accept the existence of the compact as a second-best to being able to do exactly what one likes, since for everyone to behave so is a practical impossibility. Selfish behaviour is limited to evading of the law when it can be done without fear of detection. Plato himself is of course an advocate of *nomos*, as the *Crito* shows, and in his later years mounted a powerful attack against those who maintained that it could be in any way opposed to *physis*. He therefore opposes both the ideal of the superman who by being a law to himself is following 'nature's justice', and the more commonplace idea that the laws should be accepted as a necessary evil but broken whenever it is safe to do so.¹

Can we say how far the theory in Greece was a 'historicist' one, asserting or implying that in the remote past the first laws took shape in something like a formal contract between members of an original political community? Barker wrote that the social contract theory, 'which is not only that of Glaucon but also that of modern writers such as Hobbes, has been met by modern thinkers point by point. In the first place, there never *was* any actual or explicit "contract": there *is* and always will be a condition of things, which is a condition of tacit and implied contract.'² Popper on the other hand claims that

¹ It will be seen that I do not follow Popper when he sees 'a complete change of front' in Plato between the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. See Popper, *O.S.* 116.

² *G.P.T.* 160. It may be relevant to mention Barker's own position, which is a reconciliation of *physis* and *nomos*, at least on the human plane. Government is for him 'an essential attribute of political society, which is itself in turn an essential attribute of human nature'.

In fairness to Barker it must be added that in his introduction to Gierke's *Nat. Law* (1934) he was more cautious in his expression. He said there (p. xlix): 'Natural-law thinkers were apt to talk of an unhistorical "state of nature" and of an unhistorical act of contract by which men issued from it. . . . On the other hand . . . the natural-law thinkers were not really dealing with the historical antecedents of the State: they were concerned with its logical presuppositions; and there is still a case to be made for the view that the State, as distinct from society, is a legal association which fundamentally rests on the presupposition of contract.'

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this objection is not applicable to Lycophron's theory because it did not take a historicist form. The theories mentioned in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* are to be identified with Lycophron's, but have been given this form by Plato.

Cross and Woosley, whose criterion for a theory of social contract is that it must express a moral obligation to obey the laws consequent on the individual's own undertaking to do so, and that any supposedly historical fact about the origin of law is irrelevant to it, insist that what Glaucon propounds is not 'the Social Contract theory' for the very reason which made Barker assert that it was, namely that 'the emphasis is entirely on the factual, or would-be historical, proposition supposedly giving an account of what induced men to emerge from a state of nature into the organization of a social community'.¹

Perhaps the first thing to note is the widespread acceptance at this time of the historical theory of the evolution of society from a primitive state in which everyone was for himself alone, until the fatal consequences of such an 'unordered and brutish life' compelled men to subdue their savage instincts in the interests of a common defence against hostile nature. This we have already looked at, and *prima facie* it would seem, if not to necessitate a theory of a historical social contract, at least to provide a setting highly conducive to it.² As we noted, it went with Presocratic scientific theories about the origin of physical life, and constituted a reaction against earlier mythical accounts of human degeneration. Protagoras and Critias both held this theory, and both believed in the social compact as a historical

¹ *Comm. on Rep.* 71 ff. As there defined, the theory would certainly exclude Glaucon's account, but is it not misleading to speak of 'the Social Contract theory'? (The capitals but not the italics are theirs.) What the authors themselves say of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, all of whom they admit as contractualists, shows that it is rather a question of this or that philosopher's theory of a social contract, each one holding it in a somewhat different form; and it can hardly be denied that Glaucon's *is* a contractualist theory (359a συνθέσθαι ἀλλήλοις... νόμους τίθεσθαι καὶ συνθήκας). To say that the only social contract theory is one that does not rely on a historical statement, and is therefore immune from the objections brought against it in that form, is surely to beg a big question. It seems more helpful to start with the fact that there are two main forms of the theory, as Popper does when he distinguishes the theoretical form, concerned solely with the end of the state (which he himself sees in Lycophron), from the 'traditional historicist theory of the social contract' (*O.S.* 114).

² For this theory see pp. 60 ff. and Appendix (79 ff.) above. Even Sophocles in the *Antigone* chorus (355) mentions the legal regulation of social life as something which man 'developed for his own benefit, by his own efforts'. (So Jebb explains εἰδόμενον.)

fact. The views of Antiphon and (as reported) of Hippias make no explicit reference to historical origins, but neither do they fulfil the Cross-Woozley conditions for 'the Social Contract theory' by affirming a moral obligation to obey the law. In their eyes the fact that laws are not natural but *merely* agreements releases the citizen from a duty to obey them in all circumstances. In the fourth century the author of the speech against Aristogeiton drew the opposite moral: laws were instituted against nature because nature is 'disorderly' and law introduces impartiality and equal justice for all. As the decisions of wise men guided by the gods, they have been accepted by common agreement and must be obeyed. The evidence for Lycophron is slight, but in calling the laws 'a guarantor of mutual rights' he must have had a similar view in mind.

If one accepts as essential marks of a social contract theory that it should make no historical statement about the origin of law but hold that every member of a state has a moral obligation to obey its laws because he himself has contracted or undertaken, at least implicitly, to do so, then the one unmistakable adherent of it at this period is Socrates.¹ It can hardly be doubted that the *Crito* is true to his convictions, which Plato shared when he wrote it. He held that his whole life, like that of every other citizen, had been the acting-out of a contract and agreement according to which, in return for their benefits, he was under obligation to regard the laws as masters to be obeyed. Infringement of this principle would tear apart the whole fabric of society.

There is another possibility to be considered, that a philosopher may put his theory in historical form without intending it to be literally so understood. He may intend only a 'genetic definition', an analysis of a state of things into its constituent elements, believing that the best way to make its structure clear is to represent it as being built up bit by bit out of the elements without implying that such a

¹ Hume noted this, calling the *Crito* 'the only passage I meet with in antiquity, where the obligation of obedience to government is ascribed to a promise'. 'Thus', he comments, 'he [Socrates] builds a *Tory* consequence of passive obedience on a *Whig* foundation of the original contract.' (*Of the Original Contract, ad fin.* W.C. ed. p. 236.) The attribution to Socrates is undoubtedly historical. As De Strycker has justly pointed out (*Mélanges Grégoires*, 208), his attitude is confirmed not only by the manner of his death but by his solitary championship of the law against an infuriated *demos* in the case of the generals after Arginusae (*Socrates*, pp. 59 f.).

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process of construction ever took temporal form.¹ A geometrician may explain the structure of a cube in terms of *constructing* a square out of four equal straight lines and then a cube out of six squares without meaning that straight lines existed prior in time to plane figures, nor plane figures to solids. From Plato's immediate pupils onwards, commentators have disputed whether he intended his cosmogony to be understood in this way, or whether he believed in a literal process of creation. The idea of genetic definition was extended from physics to political theory by Hobbes. In general, 'if one wants to "know" something, he must constitute it himself; he must cause it to develop from its individual elements'. *Ubi generatio nulla . . . ibi nulla philosophia intelligitur*.²

Yet as we read the writings of the social-contract theorists we find that the distinction between literal and instructional use of genetic exposition is by no means clear-cut. While claiming on the one hand that the historical proposition, that before the contract men lived in a state of nature, is irrelevant to their theory, they seem anxious to give it all the historical foundation they can. Thus Hobbes himself: 'It may peradventure be thought there never was such a time nor condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so all over the world, but there are many places where they live so now'; and he proceeds to give examples. Rousseau in the preface to the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* calls the state of nature a state which 'perhaps never did exist, and probably never will exist; and of which it is nevertheless necessary to have true ideas, in order to form a proper judgment of our present state'. He says that facts do not affect the question, and that his investigations 'must not be considered as historical truths, but only as mere conditional and hypothetical reasonings, rather calculated to explain the nature of things than to ascertain their actual origin'. This seems a perfect example of a genetic definition, and in the *Social Contract* we find: 'I assume, for the sake of argument, that point was reached in the history of mankind . . .' and 'by the social compact *we have given* life and existence to the body politic' (my italics). Yet later in the *Origin of Inequality* he writes:

¹ The nature and value of genetic definitions is lucidly set forth by Cassirer in *P. of E.* 253 ff.

² Hobbes, *De corpore*, pt. 1, ch. 1, §8, as paraphrased and quoted by Cassirer, *loc. cit.*

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'Such was, or may well have been, the origin of society', and on the next page, after repeating that the actual originating cause of political societies is indifferent to his argument, he proceeds to give reasons why the one he has put forward is 'the most natural' and to defend it against others. Similarly with Locke, Cross and Wozzley say (with no reference given) that 'as Locke saw more clearly than Hobbes, the factual proposition, even if it were true, would provide no support for the theory'. Yet §§99-100 of the *Second Treatise* show plainly that for Locke it *was* a historical fact. He not only makes the unequivocal statement: 'This is that, and that only, which did or could give beginning to any lawful government in the world', but goes on to state and rebut the objection that no historical instances can be quoted of the setting up of a government in this way. Recorded history, he points out, can only begin when civil society has already been in existence long enough to allow the development of lettered leisure.¹

Of the Greek theorists, Protagoras seems the most likely to be giving a genetic definition. His aim is not a historical account of the origin of civilization but an answer to Socrates's question, whether political virtue can be taught; and it is a matter of indifference to him whether he conveys this answer in the form of a reasoned argument or of a narrative. Moreover the narrative, when it comes, has a fairy-tale flavour² and many mythical elements. Yet it takes so much from seriously held theories of history that, like his post-Renaissance successors, he probably kept a foot in both camps.³ Of the others whom we have considered, Hippias, Antiphon and Lycophron, so far as our evidence goes, give no sign of propounding a historical theory of the origin of law, nor is it apparent in the speech against Aristogeiton or in Plato's Callicles.⁴ Socrates's is emphatically not a

¹ References for this paragraph: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 13 (ed. Waller, p. 85); Rousseau, *Origin of Inequality*, trans. Cole (Everyman), 169, 175 f., 221 f., S.C. (W.C. ed.), 254. Cross and Wozzley, *P.'s Rep.* 72.

² The beginning, ἦν γὰρ ποτὲ χρόνος (once upon a time), echoes the legendary poets Linus and Orpheus and was used again in verse by Critias and Moschion. (References in Kern, *Orph. Fr.* p. 303.)

³ All that he says on the subject in the *logos* that follows the *mythos* is: 'The State sets up the laws, which are the inventions of good lawgivers of ancient times, and compels the citizens to rule and be ruled in accordance with them' (326d).

⁴ Popper (*O.S.* 116) says that Plato here puts the theory in historicist form, but I do not find it so. At *Gorg.* 483 b the present tense is used throughout.

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historicist doctrine.¹ Only Glaucon in *Rep.* 2 claims to be giving a historical account.

Finally, in asking whether the Greeks believed in the social contract theory, we are putting to them a question which they did not ask themselves. The question they did ask was whether 'just' was the same as 'lawful'. The answers were of two types, normative and factual. Either justice retained its meaning of an ethical ideal, and this ideal was equated with keeping the laws, or it was claimed that when men used the high-sounding word 'justice' all they meant by it was observance of the existing laws, which could in fact be an unwise or harmful course. Protagoras is represented in the *Protagoras* as taking the first line: justice, which is an essential element in 'human excellence' as a whole (325a), is identified with 'political excellence', the respect for law which has raised man from a state of savagery and without which society would collapse. In the *Theaetetus* he appears to adopt the second, factual interpretation, as his theory of 'man the measure' demands: what is just is only what one's state declares to be just. The state may be persuaded that it was at fault and amend its laws, whereby the content of just action in that state will be altered. But he would still hold that observance of those faulty laws, until they were altered by proper constitutional processes, was morally right as an alternative to the chaos which would ensue if every citizen felt free to disregard them. Antiphon and Hippias on the other hand maintained that, because all that was meant by justice was conformity to *nomos*, it carried no moral obligation and one might do better to follow the contrary precepts of *physis*. Such a belief could, though it need not, lead to the brutal selfishness exemplified by Callicles.

Socrates agreed with Protagoras that it was just (in the sense of morally obligatory) to obey the laws or else get them changed by peaceful persuasion (this alternative is mentioned in the *Crito*), and that failure to do so would disrupt society. But two further points may be noted. First, there is a hint in the *Crito* of something which does not occur elsewhere, namely a distinction between the laws themselves and their administration. In Socrates's imaginary conversation with the laws of Athens, they say that, if he abides by the decision of the court and agrees to be executed instead of trying to escape, 'you

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will be the victim of a wrong done to you not by us, the laws, but by your fellow men'. If on the other hand he runs away, he will be behaving dishonourably by breaking his agreements and contracts with the laws themselves. In other words, once a verdict has been legally given there is no legal alternative to its execution. Socrates saw nothing wrong with this even in the case of his own death-sentence, but it seems that there was room for Hippodamus's proposal for a court of appeal. Secondly, in saying that 'just' was identical with 'lawful', Socrates was including the universal and divine unwritten laws and taking into account judgment in a future life as well as in this. For the unwritten laws we have the evidence of Xenophon, and in the *Crito* the laws go on immediately from the point just mentioned to say that the laws in the next world will not receive him kindly if they know that he has tried to destroy their brothers in this.¹

¹ That Socrates believed in a future life is disputed (see *Socrates*, pp. 156 ff. below). For the idea of judgment pursuing a man from this world to the next cf. Aesch. *Suppl.* 228-31.

VI

EQUALITY

(I) POLITICAL EQUALITY

In the fifth century democracy, both as an established political constitution and as an ideal, reached its climax in Athens and some other Greek cities. Against it stood oligarchy, by no means a spent force, and whether in power or in opposition always a foe to be reckoned with. Naturally therefore an ideological conflict developed¹ which led men on beyond constitutional questions to larger problems of human nature and human relations. Democracy was part of a general movement towards equality, and the need to defend democracy was a spur to further arguments in its favour. Thucydides provides some of the best examples of this, for instance in the speech of Athenagoras, democratic leader of Syracuse, who says to the young oligarchs of his city (6.38.5):

Do you dislike being politically on an equality with a large number? But how is it just for members of the same state to be denied the same rights? I shall be told that democracy is neither sensible nor fair [literally 'equal'], and that the wealthy are also the best fitted to rule; but I reply, first, that *demos* means the whole state, oligarchy only a part; secondly, that the wealthy may be the best guardians of property, but the best counsellors are the intelligent, and the best at listening to and judging arguments are the many. And in a democracy all these, whether acting separately or together, have an equal share.

Here we have the ideal of a democracy, in which the rich have their place, but it is for the most intelligent to give counsel—possibly conflicting counsel, for there are two sides to every question—and the decision is in the hands of the whole people, when they have listened to the arguments and sized them up. In practice it did not

¹ A classic statement of it is the debate which Herodotus somewhat incongruously represents as taking place between the three Persian usurpers on the respective merits of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy. So far as the latter two are concerned, it is cast in an entirely Greek mould. (Hdt. 3.80-2.)

always work out like that, for *demos* no less than *oligoi* could be applied to a section only of the population—could mean *plebs* as well as *populus*¹—and as such could be ruthless in its treatment of the rich or intellectual.

More even than democracy, the concept most closely connected with equality was perhaps *homonoia*, concord (literally 'being of one mind'). In the thought of this period, the notions of justice, concord, friendship² and equality were seen as interdependent if not identical, and essential to the preservation of the political order. Euripides (to be quoted in context shortly) sees equality as a bond of union, uniting friend to friend, city to city, ally to ally. For Protagoras, it is justice that 'brings order into our cities and creates a bond of friendship and union' (Plato, *Prot.* 322c), and Socrates in the course of demonstrating that the just is coextensive with the lawful says that concord is the best of all things for a city and its object is to secure obedience to the laws (Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.16). In the *Republic* (351d) the pursuit of justice leads to concord and friendship, and Aristotle says that if the citizens are friends justice may wither away. Legislators are even more concerned with friendship than with justice, for their aim is to replace faction by concord, and concord resembles friendship. Elsewhere he defines concord as 'friendship in the political sphere'. To inculcate friendship is the statesman's chief end, for friends do not commit injustice against each other. Indeed, 'justice and friendship are either the same or nearly so'. Concord does not mean simply community of beliefs. That could exist between strangers, or merely on an academic subject like astronomy. No, concord is a word applied to cities when the citizens agree about their common interests, make

¹ Cf. Vlastos, *ισ. πολ.* 8, n. 1: 'The ambiguity in *δημος* (*plebs* or *populus*) is all to the good. Opponents of democracy can take it in the first sense... while thoughtful democrats can invoke the second.'

² *Philia*, a word of remarkably wide application. Among human beings it is friendship or affection, but it extends beyond the human sphere. Aristotle (*EN* 1155a18) saw it among birds and animals as well, in the relation between parents and offspring, and Theophrastus even among plants. In the earlier and more mythical cosmogony of Pherecydes (fr. 3) the world was created by a conflation of the opposites through *philia*, and in Plato (*Tim.* 32c) cosmic *philia* resulted from the geometric structure of the world. Similarly in the *Gorgias* (508a) 'the wise' say that heaven and earth and gods and men are all held together by community, *philia*, orderliness, temperance and justice. It is connected with the old doctrine of 'like to like', for 'the wise men who have written about nature and the whole say that like must always be *philon* to like' (*Lyais* 214b). In Empedocles the cosmic spirit of *philia* unites unlikes, but only because it has the power of *assimilating* them to each other (fr. 22. 5), as the opposites were made to blend in Pherecydes.

the same practical choices and carry them out.¹ Down to the time of Plato and Aristotle, *homonoia* was mainly conceived as confined within the *polis*, being in fact the virtue by which it kept its unity and maintained itself against outsiders, a preventive of that *stasis* (faction, civil strife) which so bedevilled the life of the Greek city states. 'Waging war' is for Democritus (fr. 250) among the 'great deeds' which concord alone makes possible for a city. Gorgias however seems to have used it in a pan-Hellenic sense, when he chose it as the subject of his oration to the inter-state assembly at Olympia (fr. 8a), and this accords with his declaration that victories of Greeks over Greeks were matter for sorrow (p. 162 below).

At a time when democracy might in practice mean not the equal participation of the whole city in government but the seizing of power by the hitherto poor and underprivileged at the expense of the rich and well-born, the ideal of *homonoia*, of a *concordia ordinum*, might well seem to offer a better and truer conception of equality. *Equal* or *equality* itself is the most frequent catchword in the middle and late fifth century, and the ideal is equal political and judicial rights.² Pericles puts it (Thuc. 2. 37. 1) that in the Athenian democracy power is in the hands of the people, in private disputes everyone is equal before the law, and public responsibilities are allotted not according to

¹ Ar. *EN* 1155a22ff., *EE* 1241a32ff., 1234b22ff., *EN* 1167a22. For references to *δμόνοια* see further Schmid, *Gesch.* 163. Bignone (*Studi*, 87ff.) argued for a close relation between the moral doctrine of concord in Antiphon's π. *δμόνοιας* and his doctrine of justice as developed in the 'Ἀλήθεια. In the *Clitopho*, he noted, one of Socrates's pupils is said to have maintained that *φιλία* was the product of *δικαιοσύνη* and *δμόνοια* the truest manifestation of *φιλία* (409a-e, adding that it is not *δμοδοξία*, so that the whole passage stands in a very close relation to Aristotle, especially *EN* 1167a22ff.). Bignone might have added *Rep.* 351d, where Socrates tells Thrasymachus that injustice leads to hatred and fighting but justice to *δμόνοια* and *φιλία*. In spite of the interesting passages which he adduces for comparison, Bignone hardly makes his point. Unfortunately, the extant fragments of the π. *δμ.* make no reference to *δμόνοια* at all, so we are quite in the dark as to what Antiphon said about it. Moreover, in reconciling 'Ἄλ. and π. *δμ.* he completely ignores col. 5 of *OP* 1364 fr. 1 (DK, II, 349f.), where Antiphon says that people who do not attack others unless provoked, and who return the bad treatment of their parents with kindness, are acting contrary to nature.

² *ἴσος, ἰσότης, ἰσονομία, ἰσονομιεσθαι*. For the meaning of *ἰσονομία* see Ehrenberg s.v. in *RE*, Suppl. VII, 293ff. Vlastos has argued against Gomme that, although not synonymous with democracy, it was always identified with it in the fifth century. (Vlastos, 'ἴσον. πολιτική. Jaeger agreed, *Paid.* I, 101, n. 1.) This seems to be in general true, though I cannot go all the way with Vlastos when he claims that the mention of *δλιγαρχία ἰσώνομος* at Thuc. 3.62.3 fits his theories perfectly. If, as he says, the connotations of the two words are different, it is not surprising if their denotations too should occasionally differ, if only to gain a special effect. Cf. Ehrenberg, *loc. cit.* 296.

any class system but solely on merit, nor is poverty ever a bar to office. The new emphasis on equality as an ideal is perhaps best seen in the plays of Euripides. On democracy itself his Theseus echoes the sentiments of Athenagoras and Pericles (*Suppl.* 404): 'The city is free, the people rule in yearly turns of office, and the poor man is given an equal share with the rich.' For the praise of equality as such we have the *Phoenissae* (531 ff.), where Jocasta pleads with her son to renounce the pernicious *daimon* Ambition, and honour instead Equality, who unites friend to friend, city to city and allies to their allies. What is equal is a stable element in human life, but the less is always foe to the greater and ushers in the day of hatred. Equality it is who established measures and weights for men and delimited number. Equal in the year's circuit are the path of dark night and of the sun's light, and neither grudges the other his victory. Shall day and night serve mortals and you not brook to give your brother equal share in the dynasty with yourself? Where in this is justice?

One notices again the readiness with which the Greek calls on nature at large to endorse a course of human action; and as a reminder that we are in the age of ferment where every argument has two sides we may notice that in the *Ajax* of Sophocles (668 ff.) the yielding of winter to summer and night to day is used to support the contrary moral that everywhere there are rulers and subjects, and submission of one to the other is necessary. (Shakespeare too thought that the course of nature confirmed the indispensability of 'degree'.) Interesting also is the connexion in thought between equality in the social and political field and in the field of metrical standards and mathematical calculation. Evidently it was in the air before Archytas the Pythagorean made his claim that the art of calculation 'ends faction and promotes unanimity' (see vol. I, 336), and (as we see from Plato and Isocrates) led to a controversy between the 'two equalities', the geometrical (anti-tyrannical but aristocratic) and the arithmetical (democratic).¹

¹ *Isoc. Areop.* 21, Plato, *Gorg.* 508a, *Laws* 757a-758a. It is interesting that to describe democratic equality in the *Laws* Plato uses the same three words as Euripides in the same order: it is τῆν μέρων ἰσὴν καὶ σταθμῶν καὶ ἀριθμῶν, and in her praise of 'ἰσότης Jocasta says (541 f.):

καὶ γὰρ μέτρ' ἀνθρώποισι καὶ μέρη σταθμῶν
'ἰσότης ἔταξε κἀριθμὸν διώρισε.

See also Soph. fr. 399 N. The phrase οὐτ' ἀριθμῶν οὐτε σταθμῶν at Xen. *Symp.* 4.43 suggests a proverbial element.

(2) EQUALITY OF WEALTH

As to wealth there is, in its context, something almost Christian in Jocasta's designation of it as a trust from heaven (555): 'We mortals do not hold our wealth as a private possession; it is the gods', and we have the care of it, but when they wish they take it back again.' Actual redistribution of wealth on an egalitarian basis, even if in a, to us, imperfect form, was first proposed by a certain Phaleas of Chalcedon, probably about the end of the fifth century. (On his date see Gomperz, *Gr. Th.* 1, 578.) Aristotle (*Pol.* 1266a39ff., our only source) says he was the first to affirm that the citizens of a state ought to have equal possessions.¹ By abolishing want he hoped to abolish crime, but Aristotle comments that cold and hunger are not the sole incentives to crime, and in fact the greatest crimes are caused by excess and not by necessity: it is not men's possessions but their desires and ambitions that must be equalized, and this needs suitable education. Phaleas had thought of this too, and was modern enough to propose that not only wealth but also education should be provided 'equally' by the state: but, says Aristotle, it is no use everyone having the same education if it is of the wrong sort, and Phaleas should tell us what *kind* of education he proposes.

(3) SOCIAL EQUALITY

The spirit of egalitarianism led to a questioning of distinctions based not only on wealth but on birth or race, and even to that between master and slave, which hitherto had seemed to most Greeks natural and fundamental. Antiphon, the opponent of *nomos* in all its forms, issued his challenge on both noble birth and race in an important paragraph so far omitted from our summary of the papyrus fragments.² It runs thus:

¹ ἴσας εἶναι τὰς κτήσεις τῶν πολιτῶν. Later however (1267b9) Aristotle says that he limited this to the possession of land. Of course the equality, as would be expected at this time, applied only between citizens, and Phaleas even proposed that all artisans should be publicly owned slaves (1267b15).

² *OP* 1364, fr. 2, DK, fr. 44 B. It is thus from the fragment whose authenticity is guaranteed, though its relation to fr. 1 is unknown. (See *OP*, vol. XI, 93.) Considerable restoration has been necessary in the first few lines, but their sense can be taken as certain.

Antiphon on Birth and Race

The sons of noble fathers we respect and look up to, but those from humble homes we neither respect nor look up to. In this we behave to one another like barbarians,¹ since by nature we are all made to be alike in all respects, both barbarians and Greeks.² This can be seen from the needs which all men have. [They can all be provided in the same way by all men, and in all this]³ none of us is marked off as either barbarian or Greek; for we all breathe the air with our mouth and nostrils and [eat with our hands?]. . .

If the logic of this passage appears strange ('We pay great attention to high birth, but this is to behave like barbarians, for (ἐπει) in reality there is no difference between barbarians and Greeks'), that may be due to the fragmentary state of the text,⁴ and at least Antiphon's message is plain, that in nature there is no essential distinction either between high and low birth or between different races.⁵ Another who at about the same time or rather later (there is much uncertainty about his date) castigated distinctions based on birth was the Sophist Lycophron. We know of this from Aristotle,⁶ who in a dialogue *On Nobility of Birth* made one of the speakers confess his bewilderment as to the application of the term. His companion replies that this is very natural, for there is much division and obscurity about its significance, even more among philosophers than among ordinary men.

¹ *Barbaroi* strictly means all non-Greek-speaking people, and is often used to make this factual distinction with no derogatory implication. Nevertheless the Greeks had a strong sense of their superiority to other men, and more often the derogatory implication was prominent. In ordinary speech the word carried an imputation of ignorance, stupidity, or lack of moral sense. It is an insult when Tyndareus says to Menelaus (Eur. *Or.* 485) βεβαρβάρωσαι, χρόνιος ὦν ἢ βαρβάρους.

² If this is the translation, the Greek is rather unusual. Grenfell and Hunt render: 'we are all by nature alike fully adapted to be either barbarians or Hellenes', which is probably more accurate. Nevertheless the following sentences show that the intention is in fact to obliterate the distinction between the two. The double emphasis in φύσει πεφύκαμεν is lost in English.

³ Of the words in square brackets little is left in the Greek, and the translation follows Bignone's restoration in *Studi*, p. 65, for which he finds hints in a passage of Porphyry's *De abstinentia* (3.25, p. 221 Nauck).

⁴ And no doubt also to a sophistic straining after rhetorical effect by means of the double (factual and pejorative) significance of βάρβαρος. The whole argument may have been something like this: 'We pay too much attention to a man's race or, within our own race, to his descent. We call the rest of mankind *barbaroi*, and use the term to mean ignorant or uncivilized; and at the same time we respect or despise people according to their ancestry. If *barbaros* means stupid, are we not the real *barbaroi* here? In point of fact there is no difference in nature between Greeks and non-Greeks. All men are the same at bottom, with the same needs and means of satisfying them. Nor is there an essential difference between high and low born.'

⁵ Tarn's point that only biological equality is in question has been adequately dealt with by Merlan, *CP* (1950), 164, and Baldry, *Unity*, 43 ff.

⁶ Fr. 91 Rose, p. 59 Ross (Oxf. trans.). For Lycophron see pp. 313f. below.

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Is it a precious and good thing, or as Lycophron the Sophist wrote, something altogether empty? Comparing it with other goods, he says that its splendour is not apparent, and its dignity lies in words, maintaining that to prefer it is a matter of opinion, whereas in truth there is no difference between low born and high born.

Similar sentiments on the subject of noble birth are frequently on the lips of the characters in Euripides, and it is typical of him that in his *Electra* he marries the daughter of Agamemnon to a poor peasant remarkable for the courtesy and nobility of his character.¹ His virtues provoke Orestes to reflections like these (367ff.): 'About manly virtue nothing is clear, for there is confusion in the natures of men. I have seen a worthless son of a noble father, and fine children sprung from the unworthy, poverty in the wit of a rich man and a great mind in a poor man's body.' More outspoken is an unidentified character in the *Dictys* (fr. 336): 'Of high birth I have little good to say. In my eyes the good man is the noble, and the unjust base-born though his father be a greater than Zeus.' In keeping with this are several passages on bastardy which insist that the bastard is by nature the equal of the legitimate, and only inferior by *nomos*, or in name.² The subject of the *Alexander* (Prince Priam disguised as a slave-herdsman) gave Euripides an opportunity of raising the questions of birth and of slavery from both sides.³ On birth the chorus sing (fr. 52):

We go too far if we praise noble birth among mortals. When first, long ago, the human race was born, and Earth our mother brought them forth,⁴

¹ In the interests of accuracy it must be said that in the prologue the peasant proclaims himself the descendant of a noble line, who has come down in the world, but as he says, 'poverty wipes out nobility', and in view of Orestes's remarks it seems that little significance is to be attached to the fact. In Greece, even in Euripides's time, noble lineage and material possessions still went together more than they do with us (Nestle, *Euripides*, 323), and the helplessness of the first without the second is emphasized elsewhere in Euripides (frs. 22, 95, 326). For his attitude to money in general, see Nestle, *Eur.* 334ff. That poverty need not destroy inherited nobility of character is repeated in a fragment of his *Archelaus* (fr. 232). But one must never forget that his lines are spoken in character. Fr. 235 expresses utter contempt for wealth, but fr. 248 appears to revile poverty, and all three fragments are from the same play.

² *Androm.* 638, frs. 141, 168, 377. That the well-born are the virtuous is said to have been maintained by Antisthenes (DL, 6.10).

³ For the plot of the play and context of fragments see Vogt, *Sklaverei*, 16f.

⁴ The choice of verb here (διέκρινε) betrays the poet's interest in natural science, for to his contemporary Anaxagoras and other philosophers the process which gave birth to the cosmos and all living creatures in it was one of continuous 'separation'. This primal uniformity of mankind appears also in Sophocles's *Tereus* (fr. 532).

Noble Birth: Slavery

the land engendered all to look alike. We have no peculiar traits, high and low born are the same stock, but time through *nomos* has made birth a matter of pride.

The obscurity and confusion which Euripides and Lycophron found in this topic were natural enough at a time when the division aristocrat—commoner by no means necessarily coincided with the political division oligarch—democrat. 'The whole development shows that up to the end of the fifth century in Athens the nobility formed a power which could make its influence strongly felt as much on the side of the democratic constitution as occasionally in vehement opposition to it.'¹ For Euripides the test is moral. No longer can noble and good, base-born and bad, be interchangeable terms as they were for a Theognis, whose words are obviously adapted to a moral sense in the lines 'Nobility consorts not with the bad, but with the good' (*Alex. fr.* 53).

(4) SLAVERY

For most Greeks society without slavery was unthinkable. The treatment of slaves, and the work they were given to do, varied widely.² At Athens they were employed in domestic service, in privately owned factories, in mines (where the conditions might be hard indeed), and to a smaller extent on the land,³ which in Attica was mostly cultivated by small peasant holders. The lot of domestic slaves naturally varied, but Aristophanes depicts them as speaking freely, and sometimes impudently, to their masters. The intelligent were given posts of responsibility as secretaries or bank-managers, and might ultimately be freed by their owners. In the fourth century Arcestratus bequeathed his bank to his former slave Pasion, who in turn leased it to his own freed slave. A common practice was for owners of industrial slaves to allow them to work independently, paying a fixed sum from their earnings and keeping the rest, and these might save enough to buy

¹ Nestle, *Euripides*, 324. Cf. p. 38, n. 1, above.

² For authorities see A. H. M. Jones in *Slavery*, ed. Finley. The other essays in this collection are also to be recommended; also Nestle, *Euripides*, 348 ff., and J. Vogt, *Sklaverei und Humanität*, 1-19. V. Cuffley in *JHI*, 1966, deals with it under four heads: (1) as an imposition of fate, (2) as the justifiable position of inferiors, (3) communal slavery, with, as a fourth, metaphorical slavery of a man to his own base desires.

³ But see Finley in *Slavery*, 148 f.

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their freedom. The complaint of the 'Old Oligarch' (pseudo-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1. 10) is well known: slaves at Athens are an insolent lot who will not get out of your way in the street, and you are not allowed to strike them for the simple reason that there is nothing in their dress and general appearance to distinguish them from free Athenians. Demosthenes too says that slaves at Athens have greater rights of free speech than the citizens of other states, and there was a law under which anyone could be prosecuted for an act of *hybris* against slave as well as citizen.¹ In spite of all this the hard fact remained that the slave was a chattel to be bought and sold. Some wealthy men bought large numbers and made a good income by leasing them out as labourers.

If slavery as an institution was accepted, there was a general feeling against enslaving Greeks,² and most slaves were obtained, by war or raids, from non-Greek countries. In this way the question of slavery was connected in the Greek mind, as in the American, with that of racial inferiority. As Iphigenia says in Euripides (*I.A.* 1400): 'It is right for Greeks to rule over barbarians, but not barbarians over Greeks, for they are slaves, but we are free.' It is likely therefore that Antiphon, who denied any natural distinction between Greek and barbarian, also opposed the doctrine of 'natural slaves' which predominated at the time and was later defended by Aristotle;³ but the fact is not explicitly recorded. Colour was given to the idea of barbarian inferiority by the Greek victory over the Persians and by the tendency of other peoples to be despotically ruled, for submission to a human despot rather than to law was in Greek eyes equivalent to slavery. Moreover the moral and intellectual inferiority of their slaves was a fact, the inevitable effect, not of nature, but of the complete deprivation of initiative through being employed as 'living tools', a life of 'always appeasing the masters, for this is best for slaves, and to please their lords in whatever task is assigned them'.⁴

¹ Demosth. *Phil.* 3. 3, *In Meid.* 46-8. Cf. Eur. *Hec.* 291 f. On the laws of slavery at Athens see Harrison, *The Laws of Athens* (1968), pt. 1, ch. 6.

² For further information, see Newman, *Politics*, vol. 1, 142 f.

³ So Nestle, *VMZuL*, 377. But on Aristotle's description of the slave as a 'living tool', see Harrison, *The Laws of Athens*, 163, n. 2.

⁴ Eur. fr. 93. This enforced deterioration was already recognized in Homer. See *Od.* 17. 322 f.: slavery robs a man of half his ἀρετή.

Criticisms of Slavery

According to R. Schlaifer, of all criticism of slavery as an institution (as distinct from errors and abuses in its application) 'there are only three surviving scraps: a sentence of Alcidas, a reference in Aristotle, and an echo in Philemon'. None of these belongs to the fifth century. Schlaifer however has excluded Euripides on the ground that, though he proclaims that the slave may be better than his master and therefore wrongly enslaved, he shared the common belief that some were by nature fitted only for slavery.¹ To isolate his own views is difficult, since he was a dramatist and his characters utter opposing sentiments, but at the very least he provides evidence of a mounting tide of protest against slavery in his lifetime. The theme of the *Alexandros*, as we have seen, made it a natural forum of opposing views, on the one hand the splendid affirmation of the equality of all men (pp. 154f. above), and on the other sentiments like these:

fr. 48: 'There is no greater burden, no more worthless and useless possession in a house than a slave with thoughts above his station' (cf. fr. 216).

fr. 49: 'So evil is the race of slaves, all belly, never looking to the future.'

fr. 50: 'Slaves who are well disposed towards their master's house incur great hostility from their equals.'

fr. 51: 'It is a bad thing to have slaves who are too good for their masters.' (Cf. fr. 251.)

Fr. 86, from the *Alcmaeon*, says that anyone who trusts a slave is a fool.

From other passages we can be sure that these words were uttered by unsympathetic characters. The frequency with which a slave is shown as sympathetic, and the relationship between slaves and their masters described in favourable, even touching, terms, does not of itself prove an antipathy to slavery as such,² but is nevertheless striking. The wretchedness of a slave's lot was alluded to in the *Archelaus* (fr. 245): 'One thing I advise: never let yourself be taken alive into slavery if you have a chance of dying as a free man.' But it need not always be so: 'How pleasant it is for slaves to find good masters, and for the

¹ See Schlaifer's informative essay in Finley, p. 127. But for Euripides's belief in natural slavery he relies entirely on fr. 57, whereas (a) it is completely without context, and sounds as if it were spoken by a tyrant or other unpleasant character, (b) the text itself is uncertain and the word φῶσι an emendation.

² Plato, who was no abolitionist, says that slaves have often proved better than brothers or sons, and have saved their masters' lives, property and whole families (*Laws* 776d).

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masters to have a well disposed slave in the home' (fr. 529). The slaves of Alcestis are distraught with grief at the death of her who was a mother to them (*Alc.* 192 ff., 769 f.), though they admit it is not everywhere thus (*ibid.* 210 f.), and there are many other passages in the same strain.¹ Hippolytus listens and replies seriously when his slave offers advice, and the same slave does not shrink from defending him against his father's anger (*Hipp.* 88 ff., 1249 ff.). Both the faithfulness and the pathos of a slave are reflected in the words of Andromache's handmaid agreeing to go on a dangerous mission for her mistress (*Andr.* 89): 'I will go, and if anything happens to me—well, the life of a slave-woman is of little worth'; and in the *Helena* (1639) another handmaid defends her mistress with the words: 'Kill not your sister but me, for to noble slaves it is a glory to die for their lords.' The freedom of speech allowed to slaves in Euripides was brought against him by Aristophanes (*Frogs* 949), and the general lack of it is repeatedly mentioned in his plays as a feature of the slave's hard lot.²

If in these passages Euripides does no more than show sympathy for slaves, and perhaps reflect an actually existing relationship when at its best, elsewhere he goes further in claiming that a slave may be the equal or superior of the free. At *Helena* 730 a slave claims to have 'the mind, though not the name, of a free man',³ just as in a fragment from the *Melanippe* (511) it is said that 'the name of slave will not corrupt a good man, and many slaves are better than the free', and from the *Phrixus* (831): 'to many slaves the name brings disgrace though in heart they belong more to the free than those who are not slaves'.⁴ In the *Ion* the statement is given universal form. The old slave-tutor of Creusa's father, whom she hails as a friend and well-wisher and promises to cherish as her own father (730 ff.), after de-

¹ *Ion* 725–34, 566; *Med.* 54, *Bacch.* 1027. Slaves share the joys and sorrows of the household.

² *Phoen.* 392, *Ion* 674, fr. 313.

³ Even Sophocles was prepared to let a character go as far as this. See fr. 854 εἰ σῶμα δοῦλον, ἀλλ' ὁ νοῦς ἐλεύθερος; and the accidental character of slavery, at least in a special case, is brought out by the chorus in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (1084), when they say of Cassandra's gift of prophecy μένει τὸ θεῖον δοῦλα πρὸς ἐν φρενί.

⁴ Fr. 495 .41 ff., seems to mean that the brave and just, even if of slave stock, are nobler than others who are full of vain fancies; but I do not find the text altogether clear, nor does the literal translation in Nestle's note (*Eur.* p. 546) seem to correspond very well with his version in the text (p. 358). Contrast fr. 976 ἀκόλασθ' ὀμιλεῖν γίγνεται δούλων τέκνα.

Euripides and Alcidas on Slavery

claring that he is ready to die in her service adds (854): 'One thing alone brings shame upon slaves, the name. In all else the slave, if he be a good man, is no worse than the free.' In these passages, taken with fr. 52, or a line like fr. 336, 2—'the well-born man is the good man'—it would be perverse not to recognize an outright denial of natural divisions within the human race whereby one can be born to serve and another to rule, with the corollary that slavery is wrong in itself. A slave as such is of no less worth than a free man. If he is morally inferior, that is due either to his own individual character or to slavery itself, which has ruined an originally good man.¹

Apart from Euripides (who died in 406), the only surviving affirmation of this before the time of Aristotle is a quotation from a pupil of Gorgias named Alcidas: 'God has set all men free; nature has made no man a slave.' This occurred in a speech to the Spartans recommending them to liberate Messene, whose inhabitants had been serfs of theirs for centuries, but no reference to the historical context can weaken the universality of the principle as enunciated. That is guaranteed by the words 'God', 'all' and 'nature'.² Slavery was already, as Newman pointed out (*Politics*, I, 143), 'undergoing a rigorous examination, in the course of which one form of it after another was being weighed in the balance and found wanting, and first enslavement for debt, then the enslavement of Greeks, then enslavement through war, were successively being eliminated, so that a total condemnation of the institution might well seem to be at hand'. Now it has been

¹ This is well and forcefully put by Nestle, *Eur.* 359.

² I therefore confine such reference to a footnote. The actual words (ἐλευθέρους ἔφηκε πάντας θεός· οὐδένα δούλον ἢ φύσις πεποίηκεν) are quoted by a scholiast on *Ar. Rhet.* 1373b, where Aristotle is arguing for the existence of a natural as distinct from a merely legal justice. After quoting the familiar lines of the *Antigone* about the eternal unwritten laws, and a passage in the same strain from Empedocles, he adds: 'and so also Alcidas in his Messenian speech'. Thus Aristotle himself had no doubt that Alcidas was speaking of a universal law of nature. Zeller however (quoted by Newman, *Politics*, I, 141, n. 1) thought that to have attacked the whole institution of slavery would not have served the purpose of his speech, therefore he would not have done so, and Levinson agrees (*D. of P.* 142): it is 'extremely unlikely that he would have been led on to make a universal application of his principle' (an excellent example of the textbook rhetorical argument ἐκ τοῦ εἰκότος. See pp. 178 f. below). But the fact is that the statement is universal, and no conjectures about what was prudent or tactful can stand up against the words themselves. The Sophist's sincerity, or his capacity for double-think, do not enter the question. Brzoska (*RE*, I, 1536) supposed that the work was not a genuine speech for the occasion but only a 'Schulstück'. The scholiast's use of the verb μελετᾶν (ὅτι ἐρ Μισσηνίων μελετᾷ καὶ λέγει) supports this. For Alcidas see pp. 311 ff. below.

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uttered, and surely a great step forward in the history of human relations has been taken. Of course men's exasperating ability to keep their thoughts in separate compartments persisted. Levinson points out that the Justinian code, after laying down as a principle that 'slavery is contrary to natural law', proceeds to expound the rights of the slave-owner in minute detail; and in the nineteenth century an American slave-owner could happily acquiesce in the words of the Declaration of Independence, 'that all men are created equal'. The struggle was destined to be long, but it had begun, and a powerful weapon for the opponents of slavery had been forged, when the assertion that it had no foundation in nature was first openly made.

Alcidamas wrote his Messenian speech about 360. Late in the same century the affirmation recurs in a play of Philemon (fr. 95 Kock): 'Even if a man be a slave, he has the same flesh; no one was ever a slave by nature, though chance enslaves the body.' The currency of the idea in the second half of the fourth century is also attested by Aristotle, who writes in the *Politics* (1253b20): 'Some however hold that slave-ownership is unnatural. It is only by *nomos* that one is slave and another free, for in nature there is no difference. Neither, then, is it just, for it is based on force.' By this time, then (probably after 335), these liberal sentiments were well known, but it is a matter of lively controversy whether they were already current in the time with which we are now chiefly concerned, in the Athens of Euripides and Socrates, and are to be attributed to an earlier generation of Sophists than Alcidamas. How true is the claim of Nestle in 1901 that 'it will redound for all time to the glory of Greek sophistic that, starting from the conception of natural law, it opposed the existence of slavery on theoretical grounds, and the Socratic school, Plato and Aristotle, represent on this point a decidedly retrograde step'?

(5) RACIAL EQUALITY

The answer lies in the growth of the cosmopolitan idea, for, since the enslavement of Greek by Greek was generally unpopular, slavery could only be theoretically defended on the ground that barbarians (non-Greeks) were naturally inferior. This was the view of Plato,

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who would only admit the enslavement of barbarians (*Rep.* 469b-c).¹ He was prepared to be more specific: only Greeks were characterized by good intellect and love of learning, northerners like Thracians and Scythians were bold and irascible by nature, Phoenicians and Egyptians avaricious (435e-436a). All this had a basis in contemporary science, for the fifth-century Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters and Places* gives a detailed account of the effects of climate on character and intellect as well as physique. Conditions in Asia Minor produce people of good physique but pleasure-loving and lacking in courage and industry, dwellers in the hot marshes of the Phasis region are fat, sluggish and unfit for work, and so on. Greeks, living in an intermediate geographical position, possess both intelligence and courage, which makes them a natural master-race.² When, in spite of this scientific veneer, it began to be claimed that racial distinctions were unnatural, existing only by *nomos*, the last theoretical prop of slavery was removed, and this claim, as we have seen, was already made by Antiphon. Some more general statements may also be noticed which tend in the same direction. In a fragment of Euripides (902) we find: 'The good [in some authorities "wise"] man, even if he live in a far-off land, even if my eyes never light on him, I judge my friend', and there seems to have been a proverbial expression to the effect that a good man's fatherland was the whole world.³

It is important to distinguish between pan-Hellenism and a wider cosmopolitanism which embraced the barbarians.⁴ The relations be-

¹ Plato defended slavery to the end of his life, in *Laws* as well as *Rep.* The passage in the *Politicus* (262c-e) where he gives Greeks and barbarians as an example of a faulty classification, because one non-Greek race differs from another as much as either from the Greek, has been cited as evidence of a temporary change of mind (Schlaifer, *op. cit.* 98). Whether the illustration is meant to have more than formal logical significance is perhaps doubtful. In spite of Skemp *ad loc.* it is difficult to fit 'biting sarcasm' here into Plato's general view, which lasted until the *Laws*, and Plato's point involves no necessary denial that all the different barbarian races are in some respects inferior to the Greek. It is noteworthy however that in the *Phaedo* (78a) he recommends searching not only the whole of Greece but also the barbarian nations to find a cure for the fear of death.

² Hippocr. *A.W.P.* chs. 12 ff. (II, 52 L.) The last point, about the Greeks, is added by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1327b29), but obviously in dependence on earlier sources.

³ Eur. fr. 1047, Democr. fr. 247 (again in the form of an iambic trimeter, on which DK¹⁰ II, *Nacht.* p. 424, is inadequate), Lysias *Or.* 31.6. It is adapted in Aristoph. *Plut.* 1151 and *Thuc.* 2.43.3.

⁴ For a brief account of the growth of the Greek sense of unity and superiority to other races, see Schlaifer, *op. cit.* 93 ff. On the pan-Hellenic outlook of the Sophists, pp. 43 f. above.

tween the Greek city-states were paradoxical. Independent and jealous, they made constant war on one another, yet the sense of Hellenic unity was strong, and fostered by the great pan-Hellenic festivals at Olympia, Delphi and the Isthmus, for which quarrels were temporarily set aside and a sacred truce proclaimed. At these times the ties of a common language (even if split into dialects), religion and culture (typified by the Homeric poems) overruled the differences between the states. In the fifth and fourth centuries the fragmentation of the Greek-speaking world came more and more to be regarded as folly, and writers who use the language of cosmopolitanism may mean only to commend pan-Hellenism, which in itself accentuated rather than softened the distinction between Greek and barbarian. The ideal was the union of Greeks against the non-Greek world which had been achieved with such success in the Persian wars. Gorgias wrote (fr. 5 b) that victories over barbarians called for hymns of thanksgiving, but those over fellow-Greeks for dirges. Hippias in the *Protagoras* (337c) calls the whole company, from different states, 'my kinsmen and family and fellow-citizens—by nature, not by *nomos*, for by nature like is kin to like, but *nomos*, tyrant of mankind, violates nature in many ways'. It would therefore be scandalous if they, the wisest of the Greeks, fell out among themselves. Here opinions have differed on the question whether Hippias is preaching the unity of mankind or simply of Greeks, or indeed of philosophers, for it could well be they whom he means to call 'naturally alike' (ὄμοιοι).¹ Does Hippias here 'recognize', as Untersteiner thinks, 'as friends and kinsmen the men of all cities and all nations'? His actual words are the same as those of Plato's Socrates at *Rep.* 470c when he says that the Greek race is 'one family and one kin', but immediately adds that Greeks and barbarians are not only alien but natural enemies.² The fact that Hippias, like Antiphon, distinguished *nomos* from *physis* and rejected the former does not, of itself, prove that he would have joined him in assigning distinctions of race and class to it, nor does his acquiescence in the existence of certain universal unwritten laws in Xenophon.

¹ For various opinions see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 283f., *Sof.* III, 104f.; Bignone, *Studi*, 29; Baldry, *Unity*, 43; Strauss, *J. of Metaph.* 1959, 433.

² συγγενεῖς τε καὶ οἰκείους Hippias in *Prot.* of the assembled (Greek) company; τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν γένος αὐτὸ αὐτῶ οἰκείον καὶ συγγενές *Rep.*

Greeks and Barbarians

The relations between Greeks and barbarians were complex, and cannot be adequately discussed here.¹ Plato might in one place dismiss the Egyptians as avaricious, but in the *Timaeus* he makes them the repositories of ancient wisdom in contrast to the 'childlike' Greeks. The debt of Greek science and mathematics to non-Greek peoples was freely acknowledged by Herodotus and others. Hippias himself said that in writing a work of his own he had made use of the poets 'and the prose-writers both Greek and barbarian' (fr. 6). Here we are simply concerned with the question whether the idea later known as the unity of mankind or the brotherhood of man was already mooted in the fifth century. It was, by Antiphon, and probably by Hippias and others too. Though our knowledge is lamentably scanty, it would be strange if belief in universal, 'natural' laws of human behaviour were not accompanied by a conviction that the human race is fundamentally akin. The idea of the basic equality of mankind was firmly rooted in anthropological theory. Since all men originally came from the earth, a by-product of the fermentation of mud or slime, nature gave no one the right to vaunt himself as sprung from better stock than anyone else.² That sort of distinction came on the scene later as a product of *nomos* only. This anthropological basis for the *nomos-physis* antithesis means that its justification of equality is universal, and it is reasonable to suppose that a man with any pretensions to philosophy who found it relevant to one distinction would apply it to all—high and low born, master and slave, Athenian and Spartan, Greek and non-Greek.

¹ Volume VIII of the *Entretiens Hardt (Grecs et Barbares)* is devoted to a discussion of them.

² We have just seen this applied to distinctions of birth in Euripides (fr. 52, pp. 154 f. above). See also p. 58 (Archelaus) and vol. II, pp. 207, 315 with n. 4, 343, 472.

VII

THE RELATIVITY OF VALUES AND ITS EFFECTS ON ETHICAL THEORY¹

If physical philosophy begins in wonder, ethics may be said to have begun in scepticism.

Grant, *Ethics*, I, 155.

The chapter on the Sophists (p. 49) mentioned Sir Alexander Grant's division of morality into three stages, corresponding in a nation to childhood, adolescence and maturity in the individual. In one respect his division would not pass unchallenged today. He calls the second, sceptical or sophistic era 'transitional', and implies that only the third, that is, a return to earlier beliefs more deeply held because attained by independent thought, represents maturity. In Greek thought the transition was to the idealism of Plato, a philosophical reaffirmation and defence of those absolute values which are accepted by the 'simplicity and trust' of childhood as they are in the pre-critical stage of society. The second or sceptical stage might equally well be called positivist, and it is by no means generally accepted that belief in absolute values is more mature than positivism. Not every adult recovers the convictions of his childhood. The positivist rejects the view that positive law must set out from the ideal of a natural, i.e. universally valid, standard of right: there is only a relative right or goodness, which is derived from the positive law prevailing at a particular time. The positivist knows that the search for goodness is a chimaera-hunt. Similarly beauty, as it was for Hume, is 'no quality in things themselves, it exists merely in the minds which contemplate them, and each mind perceives a different beauty'.² In statements like these the modern positivist would not wish to be told that his standpoint was either pre-Platonic or adolescent, but he is in fact repeating the Sophists' assertions in the controversy of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

¹ Cf. pp. 59 f.

² See Cassirer, *Phil. of Enlightenment*, 307.

Value for him, as for Archelaus, exists by *nomos* only, not by *physis*. For Ayer there is not even a controversy:

Talking about values is not a matter of describing what may or may not be there, the problem being whether or not it really is there. There is no such problem. The moral problem is: What am I to do? What attitude am I to take? And moral judgments are directives in this sense. We can now see that the whole dispute about the objectivity of values, as it is ordinarily conducted, is pointless and idle.¹

Pointless and idle though it may be, the dispute has reappeared many times, and in speaking of the positivism of fifth-century Greece one can hardly claim that it was rendered obsolete by Plato. In Euripides a character asks rhetorically, 'What action is shameful if it seem not so to the actor?', which drew from Aristophanes the parody, 'What action is shameful if it seem not so to the audience?', and both Plato and Antisthenes were credited with the retort: 'Shameful is shameful, seeming or no seeming'.² Eteocles in the *Phoenissae*, asserting his lust for power in truly sophistic terms, says (499 ff.):

'If the same thing were to all men by nature fair and wise, there would be no disputes or quarrels among us. But as it is there is no consistency or impartiality where mortals are concerned: it is all names, without reality', and when Hippias claims to know what justice is, Socrates congratulates him ironically on a discovery which will cause juries to cease differing over their verdicts and put an end to litigation, rebellion and war (Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.8). Again, in Plato he remarks that when we utter words like 'iron' or 'silver' we all know what we mean, but when we say 'just' or 'good' we disagree with one another and even in our own minds.³ These quotations give an idea of the sceptical atmosphere of the time, to which Socrates himself was so strongly opposed, holding that agreement on the meaning of moral terms was an essential preliminary to morality in practice.

The most distinguished advocate of the relativity of values (though, as inevitably happens, his thought was often distorted as it filtered

¹ Ayer, *Philosophical Essays*, 242.

² Eur. fr. 19, Ar. *Frogs* 1475. The retort is attributed to Antisthenes by Plutarch, *De aud. just.* 33c, and to Plato in Stobaeus, *Flor.* 5.82 (both quoted by Nauck on the fr.).

³ *Phaedr.* 263a. Cf. *Euthyphro* 7c-d, *Alc. I* 111e-112a. Nestle (*VML*, 271) says that the lines from the *Phoenissae* 'unmistakably reproduce the doctrine of Protagoras', but are we not rather reminded of Socrates?

through other, less gifted minds) was Protagoras, and his philosophical challenge to traditionally accepted norms was in its turn based on relative and subjective theories of ontology and epistemology. As applied to values, relativity may mean one of two things. (a) There is nothing to which the epithets good, bad or the like can be applied absolutely and without qualification, because the effect of everything is different according to the object on which it is exercised, the circumstances of its application and so on. What is good for A may be bad for B, what is good for A in certain circumstances may be bad for him in others, and so on. The objectivity of the good effect is not denied, but it varies in individual cases. (b) When a speaker says that good and bad are only relative, he may mean that 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so'. Any investigation of the *nomos-physis* antithesis turns up plenty of examples of this: incest abominable in Greek eyes, normal in Egyptian and so on. With aesthetic values the case is even more obvious.

Heraclitus had earlier adduced the first type of relativity as one justification of his paradox of the identity of opposites: 'Sea water', he said, 'is at the same time purest and most polluted, being drinkable and salutary for fishes, undrinkable and deadly to men.'¹ Protagoras develops the theme in answer to a suggestion of Socrates that 'good' may be equated with 'beneficial to men':²

Even if things are not beneficial to men, I still call them good . . . I know plenty of things—foods, drinks, drugs and many others—which are harmful to men, and others which are beneficial; and others again which, so far as men are concerned, are neither, but are harmful or beneficial to horses, and others only to cattle or dogs. Some have no effect on animals, but only

¹ Fr. 61; see vol. 1, 445.

² Plato, *Prot.* 333e–334c. The utilitarian equation of ἀγαθόν with ὠφέλιμον was a favourite one with Socrates. (See *Socrates*, ch. III, §8.) Nor can it be doubted that the speech of Protagoras represents his actual view. Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.8.7), shows Socrates saying something similar (what is good for a hungry man is bad for one in a fever, etc.), and on this account has been accused of fathering on him the ideas of Antisthenes (Caizzi, *Stud. Urbin.* 1964, 65; not, oddly enough, of Protagoras). What Socrates is arguing there, however, is that the goodness of anything lies in its fitness to perform its proper function—an unimpeachably Socratic tenet (cf. *Rep.* 352e–353d). His thought was intensely practical: what is good must be *useful*, and the same thing can be useful or harmful according to circumstances (*Meno* 87c–88c and *Xen. Mem.* 4.6.8). Precisely how his thought differed from that of a Sophist like Protagoras is a large question, but it is not correct to say as Caizzi does that the passage in Xenophon is 'fortemente antiplatonico' (by which he means against the Platonic Socrates).

on trees, and some again are good for the roots of trees but injurious to the young growths. Manure, for instance, is good for all plants when applied to their roots, but utterly destructive if put on the shoots or young branches. Or take olive oil. It is very bad for plants, and most inimical to the hair of all animals except man, whereas men find it of service both to the hair and to the rest of the body. So diverse and multiform is goodness that even with us the same thing is good when applied externally but deadly when taken internally. All doctors forbid the sick to use oil in preparing their food, except in the smallest quantities.

This able little speech has come in for a surprising amount of criticism on the ground of irrelevance.¹ Since Socrates has virtually asked Protagoras what he means by the concept 'good', it is hardly irrelevant for him to reply with his own theory of its diversity. That a Sophist should at the same time show off his miscellaneous knowledge is only in character. Hackforth² objected that, the point being ethical, the irrelevance lies in taking the meanings of 'good' beyond the ethical sphere. But not only was Socrates's question purely general, concerning the equation of 'good' with 'beneficial to men'; for the Sophists the connexion between ethics, politics and rhetoric on the one hand and hygiene or medicine on the other was important, as two branches of the art of improving human nature, moral and physical. In the *Theaetetus* (167b-c) Protagoras says, 'When men exercise their skill on bodies I call them physicians, when on plants, husbandmen. These too, if a plant is sick, give it sound, healthy and true sensations instead of bad; and similarly good and skilful orators make good instead of evil courses appear just to cities.' Versényi has pointed out the close parallels that exist between Protagoras and the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine*:³

Both stress the facts that their arts are human inventions rather than original endowments, that their arts are necessary because of the difference between one man and another and between men and animals, and that there is a resulting relativity of what is good for each. Both hold that 'our present

¹ Adam and Grube both call it irrelevant. To H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 162) it was a 'disturbing interruption', and he took its intrusiveness to be evidence that it was an extract from one of Protagoras's own books. That it may well be, but Plato is not the sort of writer to push something in where it is not wanted simply in order to introduce a verbatim quotation.

² In an unpublished lecture.

³ *FM* 3 (quoted in part on p. 83 above): Versényi, *Soc. Hum.* 33-5, 43.

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way of life' (laws, customs, regimen) is not by nature but 'has been discovered and elaborated during a long period of time'.

The aim of both [*sc.* the political and the medical arts] is to find what is useful, appropriate, fitting, or due to the nature of what each has in his care so as to promote healthy, harmonious and undisturbed life. This similarity of aim, method, and (almost) subject not only leads to constant association of the two, but at times makes it exceedingly difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between them.

'Speech', said Gorgias (*Hel.* 14), 'bears the same relation to the mind as drugs to the body. As drugs draw off different humours from the body, and some put an end to disease and others to life, so words can induce joy or grief, fear or confidence, or by evil persuasion drug and bewitch the mind.' This theory was actually put into practice by Antiphon in his 'psychiatric clinic' as reported in the *Lives of the Ten Orators*: hiring a special room in Corinth, he 'developed an "art of consolation" parallel to the therapy of the body by physicians'.¹

Protagoras sees a close parallel not only, like Gorgias, between medicine and oratory, improving respectively the physical and moral conditions of men, but also between both and husbandry, the care of men and that of plants. This reappears in Antiphon (fr. 60):

Primary among human concerns is education, for in any enterprise when the beginning is right, the outcome is likely to be right too. As is the seed that is ploughed into the ground, so must one expect the harvest to be, and similarly when good education is ploughed into young persons, its effect lives and burgeons throughout their lives, and neither rain nor drought can destroy it.

This analogy is applied specifically to the teaching of medicine in the Hippocratic *Law*:²

The learning of medicine may be likened to the growth of plants. Our natural ability is the soil. The views of our teachers are as it were the seeds.

¹ [Plut.] *Vitae* 833c, Antiphon A 6. On this and the identity of Antiphon see further below, pp. 290f. Psychological insight is also suggested by his dictum (fr. 57) that illness is a holiday for the work-shy, for then they do not have to go out to work. I have assumed here that the story in the *Vitae* is true, but see p. 290, with notes.

² Ch. 3, trans. Jones. Jones (Loeb ed. 257f.) cites D.L. 7.40 as evidence that the *Law* is late enough to have been written under Stoic influence. But, apart from the fact that, as he says, 'the resemblance may not appear striking', he seems to have overlooked the extract from Antiphon.

The Medical and Agricultural Analogies

Learning from childhood is analogous to the seeds' falling betimes upon the prepared ground. The place of instruction is as it were the nutriment that comes from the surrounding air to the things sown. Diligence is the working of the soil. Time strengthens all these things, so that their nurture is perfected.

These passages should increase our insight into the mind of a Sophist and assist an understanding of Protagoras's use of medical and agricultural examples in answering Socrates's question. It was the medical writers above all who insisted (as success in their craft demanded) on the relativity of 'good' and 'bad' to the individual. Comparison between what is good for man in health and man in sickness, and between man and animals, is made in *Ancient Medicine* (ch. 8), and in ch. 20 it is argued that, far from a knowledge of the whole nature of man being a prerequisite of the medical art (as certain philosophers maintained), a knowledge of medicine is necessary to the knowledge of man and indeed of nature in general. What the physician needs to answer is not a general question like 'what man is', but what man is in relation to different foods, drinks and ways of life, and what will be the effect of each on each individual.¹

We have already seen how widespread was the tendency to substitute the concepts of interest and advantage, the useful or the beneficial (συμφέρον, χρησιμον, ὠφέλιμον), with which goes naturally the appropriate or fitting (ἐπιτήδειον), for the universal standard of 'justice' or 'right'. As 'the interest of the stronger' (Thucydides, Thrasymachus) it became a doctrine of self-aggrandizement and neglect of the rights of others, but in itself it was simply utilitarian and practical. Bound up with it was the notion of necessity (*ananké*), and to the examples already cited (pp. 100f. above) may be added another extract from *Ancient Medicine*, ch. 3, which emphasizes the connexion

¹ It is sometimes supposed that *VM* was written under the influence of Protagoras (e.g. Versényi, *Socr. Hum.* 11, but denied by Longrigg in *HSCP*, 1963). Its date is uncertain. If Foucault were right in putting it anywhere between 450 and 420, Protagoras might have been acquainted with it, but it was probably later (Lloyd in *Phronesis*, 1963). Even so, its conclusions spring more from the exigencies of medical practice than from the influence of any non-medical thinker, and that Protagoras himself was influenced by the more empirical of contemporary physicians seems to me beyond doubt. That according to Sextus he 'introduced' the 'man-measure' doctrine (Versényi, *op. cit.* 11, n. 9) is no evidence against this. Perhaps a more accurate way of putting it would be that Protagoras's own empirical turn of mind led him to take an interest in medicine and similarly practical subjects.

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between practical activity and a relative conception of values: 'The fact is that sheer necessity caused men to seek and discover medicine, because sick men did not, and do not, profit by the same regimen as do men in health.' This again is bound up with the whole evolutionary view of human progress (p. 83 above).

In all this it is not easy to find references to specifically aesthetic values, though in any discussion of the relativity of values these might be the first to occur to us. Needless to say, the Greeks were not insensitive to beauty, but as the ambiguity of their word for it, *kalon*, suggests, did not speak much of it in isolation. One reason for this was the close association in their minds of beauty with appropriateness and fitness for function.¹ C. T. Seltman put the point well (*Approach to Greek Art*, 29):

Beautiful is a misrendering of *kalos*. We can perhaps get nearest to the meaning by using Fine and Fineness, for these may be employed in most of the senses of the Greek words. To say that for the Greeks Beauty and Goodness were one and the same is an error. But put it, that to the Greeks Fineness automatically included excellence, because what is fine must be fitted to its purpose and therefore good, and we are on the right track. Fineness could become the ultimate Value by which all other Values could be measured.

A delightful illustration of this association in the Greek mind is the 'beauty contest' in Xenophon's *Symposium* (ch. 5). Socrates undertakes to prove to the company that he is more beautiful than the young and handsome Critobulus. Critobulus gives his case away at the outset by saying that anything is beautiful (*kalon*) if it is well constructed for the purpose for which we have acquired it, or is adapted by nature for our wants. Then, replies Socrates, if we have eyes for seeing, mine are more beautiful than yours, since being prominent and bulging they can see far to the side and not simply straight in front of them; and so on. (The passage is fully translated in *Socrates*, pp. 67 f.)

Did Protagoras also believe in the relativity of values in the second sense, i.e. that all value-judgments are purely subjective? At first sight

¹ According to Aristotle, the difference between *ἀγαθόν* and *καλόν* is that *καλόν* is the more inclusive term. *ἀγαθόν* refers to actions only, but *καλόν* is used *also* where no action or movement is involved. (See *Metaph.* 1078a 31.)

Beauty and Function: 'Man the Measure'

at least this would seem an inevitable conclusion from his famous saying that man is the measure:¹

'Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of the things that are not that they are not.' In the *Theaetetus* (152a), Socrates asks Theaetetus if he has read this. 'Often', is the reply. 'Then you know that he puts it something like this, that as every single thing appears to me, so it *is* to me, and as it appears to you, so it *is* to you—you and I being men.' Since this addition is made in practically the same words in the *Cratylus* (386a), it too must be a part of Protagoras's own argument, and this is borne out by Aristotle, who adds the information that the 'things' in question include values (*Metaph.* 1062b13):

Protagoras said that man is the measure of all things, meaning simply and solely that what appears to each man assuredly also *is*. If this is so, it follows that the same thing both is and is not, and is both bad and good, and whatever else is asserted in contrary statements, since often a particular thing appears good (or beautiful, *kalon*) to some and the opposite to others; and the criterion (*μέτρον*) is what appears to each individual.²

All the direct sources agree on the general meaning of Protagoras's saying, namely that what appears to each individual is the only reality and therefore the real world differs for each; and this is all the more likely because he would find similar ideas in contemporary natural philosophers. Anaxagoras told his pupils that 'things would be for them such as they supposed them to be', and Empedocles and Parmenides emphasized the connexion between a man's physical condition and his thoughts.³

So far so good, but now there comes a remarkable development. As Socrates says (*Theaet.* 161 cff.), on the thesis as so far propounded no man can be wiser than another, and there could be no sense in Protagoras or anyone else setting himself up as a teacher. Socrates therefore offers a defence which he says Protagoras would have given

¹ Fr. 1. A detailed interpretation is reserved for the discussion of its epistemological implications, pp. 183 ff. below.

² If it is admitted that the 'Double Arguments' (pp. 316 ff. below) reflect Protagoras's teaching, they provide further evidence that his relativity included such concepts as good and bad, right and wrong, laudable and blameworthy.

³ Aristotle has collected the passages in *Metaph.* 1009b15 ff. See on them vol. II, 319, 229, 67. The use of *ἀνθρώπος* is discussed more fully on pp. 188 ff. below.

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if he were alive.¹ It consists in maintaining that, though all beliefs are equally true, not all are equally good (*agatha*).² The wise (*sophos*) man is he who can change what appears and is bad (*kakon*) to any one of us and make it be and appear good. (a) A sick man's food is bitter (for him): he cannot be called mistaken when he says it is, nor more ignorant than the healthy. But the doctor, the *sophos* in the healing art, can so change his condition that it both appears and is sweet and pleasant. (b) In education, the Sophist does with words what the doctor does with drugs (compare Gorgias, p. 168 above), namely change the pupil to a better state. He does not make him exchange false beliefs for true, for false beliefs are impossible; but, when a man has a depraved (*ponēron*) state of mind and corresponding thoughts, he makes his mind sound and so gives him sound (*chresta*) thoughts—not truer but better. (c) Such things as a whole city thinks just and honourable (*kala*) are so for it as long as it thinks they are; but in each case where they are injurious (*ponēra*), the wise man substitutes others which are and appear sound (*chresta*). In this way it is allowed that some men are wiser than others, although no man thinks falsely.

Here is a paradox: two men's beliefs can be equally true, but not equally valuable, *even though* they are beliefs about the goodness or badness of something. In the case of physical sensations, at least with Plato's example, there is no difficulty. The sick man dislikes what he tastes, and will be glad when the doctor, as we should say, restores his normal appreciation of good food or, as Protagoras would have it,

¹ Evidently what follows was not to be found in Protagoras's writings, but it is unlikely that it departs from the sense of what he taught. As Cornford says, he must have reconciled his profession as a Sophist with his claim that all beliefs are equally true, and there is no other way in which he could have done it. The point is argued fully by H. Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 263ff., and for other references see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 70f. (n. 1). S. Moser and G. L. Kustas, in *Phoenix*, 1966, claim that 'reading the *Protagoras* in the light of the *Theaetetus*' has been a prime cause of misinterpretation of the earlier dialogue. This claim depends on accepting Th. Gomperz's assumption (*Gk. Th.* 1, 457f.) that the one presents a 'genuine', the other a 'sham' Protagoras—a highly arbitrary procedure.

² Plato uses a variety of words in this passage, all of which are sometimes simply translated 'bad' or 'good'. I have inserted them in Roman letters and append a rough approximation to the different senses which they conveyed to a Greek. *Kakon*: the most general word for *bad*; *agathon*: the most general word for *good*, with the overtone of *conducive to efficient performance of function* which was commonly present in Greek terms of approbation; *ponēron*: causing toil, distress, pain or grief (from noun *ponos*, labour, trouble, suffering); *chreston*: useful, serviceable, effective, wholesome (coupled with *hygieinon*, healthy, at 167c1); *kalon*: fine, beautiful, of good quality, laudable, honourable.

Protagoras on Truth and Value

makes his unpleasant food both seem and be pleasant to him. But with moral values the case is different. If what a city thinks just and fine *is* just and fine for it so long as it thinks so, it will not want its views or its laws changed nor, one would have thought, ought they to be changed. They should be like the olive oil of the *Protagoras* speech, good for that city though not perhaps for others. It seems however that the city may not be *wise*, nor its judgments sound and profitable, but useless and likely to cause harm. How then can they be, as well as seem, both just and fine (*kala*) for the city?

Protagoras is seeking his own solution to that burning question of the day, the relation between *nomimon* and *dikaion*, positive law and morality. It was said:

(1) That the two were identical by definition, and the statement of their identity simply analytic. This might be (a) the old religious idea, going back to tribal days, that laws came from the gods, and so could not err and must be obeyed ('all human laws are nourished by the one divine law'); or (b) a criticism consequent on the equation of the two: given the definition, that 'justice' includes only what is enjoined or sanctioned by the laws, then, as Antiphon pointed out, a man has a right to observe it only in so far as it coincides with his own interests, and a duty to ignore it when it conflicts with a fact of nature like the equality of Greek and barbarian, noble and commoner, rich and poor.

(2) As a result of (b), the identity of just and legal was denied. 'Just' and 'right' represented moral values, which could not be equated with the dictates of positive law, for the law might be unjust and conversely what was just extended beyond the field of legal enactment.

(3) There was the doctrine of the social compact as held by Socrates, according to which, though the legal machinery might lead to an unjust judgment in an individual case, it was still right for the citizen to accept it because his membership of the state implied a promise to obey the laws in return for the many legal benefits of citizenship.

The topicality of the controversy, and the still fluid state of opinion, led to a certain amount of confusion, which is reflected in *Protagoras*. He held that, though laws were not 'by nature', their institution and observance were necessary for the preservation of society. The whole function of our sense of justice (*diké*) is 'to make political order

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possible' (p. 66 above). Naturally therefore he inclines to those who equate *dikaion* with *nomimon*. Yet in the middle of the fifth century it was impossible for a thinking man to ignore the existence of bad laws, and he has attempted a solution which will take account of them. If the result is an inconsistent or circular argument,¹ its interest lies in the state of the question at the time, which led Protagoras to take such a tortuous course. It is, after all, a question which has not even now been resolved.

Since Protagoras was famous for his claim to 'make the weaker argument the stronger', H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 269) suggested that he may have used these epithets here, rather than 'worse' and 'better' which Plato uses in his defence and which make the circularity particularly glaring. They would not essentially alter the case, but give the appearance of a more objective standard. Gomperz's explanation of the paradox is that each man is right because each sees one facet of the truth, that which his disposition allows him to see, but (as with bodily health) there are normal and abnormal dispositions, and the most normal man, whom Protagoras calls the wise, has the most normal, strongest and best belief. His theory corresponds to his rhetorical practice, is in fact an epistemological justification of the importance of rhetoric. The rhetor must be able to defend opposing points of view with equal success but finally to bring one to victory as the 'stronger'. Just so the epistemologist proves that all views are equally true because each grasps one facet of the truth, then decides for one as the 'better'. For Protagoras, the rhetor is identical with the wise man because he has been trained to see both sides, whereas the layman sees only one—truth but partial truth (p. 275).²

What this amounts to is that Protagoras's criterion is quantitative: all judgments are equally true, but not equally valuable because, according as they grasp more or less of reality, so they are more or less normal or abnormal and thus stronger or weaker. The explanation

¹ 'That there is a logical circle here cannot be denied. . . . If value judgments are only valid for the individual, how can a judgment that two beliefs are of unequal value be valid for more than the individual who makes it?' (Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 269.) As von Fritz remarks (*RE*, xxiii, 917), if Protagoras's moral doctrine contains an inconsistency and contradiction of his fundamental premise, he shares this inconsistency with most modern relativists, who like him try to combine their relativism with positive doctrines and precepts for human action.

² For a criticism of Gomperz's interpretation of Protagoras see ZN, 1357, n. 1.

What Protagoras Meant

has its attractions, but is weakened by its reliance on the concepts of 'normal' and 'abnormal', for as Cornford said (*PTK*, 73) 'sunder' for Protagoras 'does not mean "normal", for that would set up the majority as a norm or measure for the minority'. It can only mean more useful or expedient, a belief that *will* produce better effects in the future; that is, for the individual, effects that will both be and seem better to the Sophist's pupil after his training. He will then prefer his new beliefs. For a state, its laws and customs are right and laudable so long as they are enforced or socially approved, but a statesman may persuade it that others would be of greater advantage to it. (The point is made explicitly at 172a.) Capital punishment, we may say, is right and proper so long as it has the backing of public opinion and is legally enforced. If these conditions are altered, it is likely to be because in the first place a few advanced thinkers (*sophistai* as a Greek might call them) succeed in initiating the diffusion of different ideas; and this they can only do (according to the theory) by convincing the citizens that the alteration will be of practical advantage (*chreston*)—that, for instance, crimes of violence will diminish rather than increase. Behind this tortuous argument is Protagoras's conviction that *diké* exists for the preservation of social order, and that therefore the maintenance of existing laws, even though they are not the best, is just and laudable because the alternatives of disobedience or subversion would destroy the 'bond of friendship and union' on which our very life depends (*Prot.* 322c4). Only if new laws are enacted by common consent and constitutional processes can the change be for the better.¹

¹ Cf. p. 146 above. By thinking out this matter on independent lines, I hope I have resolved the difficulty felt and expressed by A. T. Cole in *Yale C.S.* 1966, which led him to the conclusion that Plato's 'Apology of Protagoras' was in fact 'not one Apology but two', containing respectively 'a "subjectivist" conception compatible with the man-measure principle as stated in 166d and a "utilitarian" one not so compatible' (pp. 112 and 114f.). In particular I do not agree that Plato has misinterpreted or misunderstood the doctrine of 167a-b (p. 116). The contention that 169d is inconsistent with it is untrue. All that Plato says there is that, according to Protagoras, 'some men are superior in the matter of what is better or worse, and these, he said, were wise' (Cornford's translation). He does not say that these better judges are the healthy as opposed to the sick. They are of course the doctors (or in their respective spheres the husbandmen, orators or Sophists).

VIII

RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY

(Seeming and being, believing and knowing, persuading and proving)

(I) GENERAL

Rhetoric has already been mentioned in these pages (20, 50f.), but demands a closer look. Obviously we are not here concerned with appraisal of the works of Lysias, Andocides or other Attic orators, nor with questions of manner and style;¹ but the theory behind Greek rhetoric had philosophical implications, with which not only the Sophists but Plato himself felt that they had to come to grips. Plato could even describe his own dialectical philosophy as the substitution of good rhetoric for bad, and it has been contended that rhetoric alone was the distinguishing mark of a Sophist.² That this is an exaggeration will have already appeared, but all the leading Sophists were deeply concerned with it, in its forensic, political and epideictic branches, both as active practitioners and as teachers, systematizers and writers of rhetorical handbooks.³ Plato, who knew his Sophists, distinguishes sophistic and rhetoric by an elaborate analogy, designed to show how 'though they differ in nature, yet they are so closely related that Sophists and orators, working in the same sphere and on the same subject-matter, are confused, and know not what to make of themselves, nor others of them'. It must be read in the light of his own doctrine of the superiority of knowledge, reality and teaching to belief, appearance and persuasion. As gymnastic keeps the body fit, so legislation keeps a state sound and healthy. If the body falls

¹ Which may be studied in such works as Blass's *Attische Beredsamkeit*, Norden's *Antike Kunstprosa* and Dobson's *Greek Orators*. One should also mention Kroll's article in *RE*, Suppl. vii, 1039-1138, and G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*.

² By H. Gomperz in his *Sophistik u. Rhetorik*. The thesis is denied in the *Prodikos* of H. Mayer, who refers to the rebuttals of Wendland in *Göt. Gel. Anz.* (1913), no. 1, and Drerup, *Lit. Zentralbl.* (1913), Sp. 681f.

³ τὰ βιβλία τὰ περὶ τῆς τῶν λόγων τέχνης γεγραμμένα (Pl. *Phaedr.* 266d) or simply τέχνηαι (p. 44, n. 4, above).

sick, medicine will cure it, and the corresponding art in the state is the execution of justice. All these arts have their counterfeits. To gymnastic corresponds make-up, giving the appearance of health, and to legislation sophistic, claiming to impart what keeps a state sound, but without real knowledge. The counterfeit of the doctor is the chef, who claims to know the best diet for the body but in fact aims only at pleasing the palate, and similarly rhetoric corresponds to the due execution of justice in that it aims at cajoling an audience and producing the semblance, not the reality, of justice. It can be said, then, that sophistic and rhetoric are 'pretty nearly the same thing', but, for what the difference is worth, sophistic is superior in so far as the art which it imitates is superior, that is, in so far as prevention is better than cure.¹

The rhetorical art was also known as 'the art of *logoi*', and the wide meaning of this word (from talking or speech-making to argument, reason, thought) made possible very different conceptions of the art of which it was the subject. Plato's aim was to get it out of the hands of superficial persuaders and special pleaders, and show that, properly applied and based on knowledge of the truth, it was coextensive with philosophy. This is the lesson of the *Phaedrus* (see especially 278 b-d), and in the *Phaedo* (90 b ff.) Socrates attributes the evil of 'misology'—an aversion from *logoi* of every kind—to lack of proper training in 'the art of *logoi*'. Without it a man believes whatever he is told, then later discovers it is false, and in his disillusionment falls to abusing, not his own lack of experience, but *logoi* themselves, and so misses the path to knowledge and truth. The worst offenders are the men who deal in contradictions (*ἀντιλογικοί*) and think it the height of cleverness to have discerned that there is no soundness or certainty in anything or any argument, but everything goes up and down like the current in the Euripus and never stays the same for a moment. Plato may have had Protagoras and his *Antilogiai* (p. 182 with n. 1 below) particularly in mind, but his censure extends to all rhetoricians and Sophists, the 'uncultured' whose desire is not for wisdom but for scoring off an opponent' (91 a), the very people, in fact, who considered

¹ *Gorg.* 465 c, 520 a. The comparison between mind and body, rhetoric and medicine or *δρῦμα*, as we have seen (pp. 167 ff.), was not new. Plato refines on it.

Rhetoric and Philosophy

themselves masters of 'the art of *logoi*' and the best teachers of it to others.¹ In Plato's eyes, as in actual fact, Socrates was the real master of this art. He put it to a different use from the Sophists, but, although he was no rhetorician, if Critias in making it illegal to teach the art of *logoi* had Socrates particularly in mind,² this was not altogether unreasonable. He was convinced that if one understood a thing one could 'give a *logos* of it', and his demand for definitions was a demand that people should prove that they understood the essence of courage, justice or whatever else was under discussion by finding a verbal formula which would cover all cases of it. 'He held that those who know what any given thing is must also be able to expound it to others' (Xen. *Mem.* 4. 6. 1). The following words which Xenophon puts into his mouth are characteristic (*Mem.* 3. 3. 11; he is arguing that a good cavalry commander must be a good speaker):

Has it not occurred to you that all the best things that we learned according to custom, by which we know how to live, we learned through speech, that any other good lesson that may be learned is learned through speech, and that the best teachers make the greatest use of speech and those with the deepest knowledge of the most important matters are also the best speakers?³

The 'invention' of rhetoric is attributed to two Sicilians of the first half of the fifth century, Corax and Tisias. Invention in this connexion had a specific meaning,⁴ namely the introduction of the appeal to probability instead of fact, the drawing up of rules for its application, and their embodiment in written handbooks. If a man accused of assault can produce facts showing incontrovertibly that he did not commit it, he has no need of the art, but, if he cannot, he must invoke the argument from probability. If he is smaller and weaker than his victim he will say, 'Look at me; is it likely that someone like me should go for a big strong man like him?' If on the other hand he is a Samson, he will

¹ Taylor has pointed out (*VS*, 92, 98) that Plato makes two things clear about *antilogiké* and eristic: they were rife in Socrates's time and not due to a perversion of his elenchus, and their ancestry is Eleatic.

² Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2. 31. Gigon (*Komm.* 7. *erst. Buch* 58) doubts the historicity of the incident.

³ Cf. Stenzel in *RE*, 2. Reihe, v. Halbb. 821 f. Stenzel goes so far as to say that language is the starting-point of Socrates's teaching.

⁴ To be a good speaker as well as a man of action had, as Lesky points out (*HGL*, 350), been the ambition of a Greek since Homeric times (*Il.* 9. 443).

argue, 'Would I be such a fool as to attack him when I am the first person on whom suspicion would fall?' These arguments are preserved as a sample from Corax and Tisias.¹ A good modern one was reported in the *Sunday Times* for 21 May 1967. An accusation of exceeding the 70 m.p.h. speed limit on a motorway was brought by police who claimed to have followed the defendant for nearly a mile with their speedometer registering 80-85. The defence was not counter-evidence from the accused's own speedometer. It was that the police-car had a flashing blue light, hence that it was easy for him to see that it was following him, and 'Would I be such a fool as to drive at over 80 with a police-car on my trail?' Rhetoric teaches from the first that what matters is not what is the case, but what appears, what men can be persuaded of (*Phaedrus* 267a). It is 'the art of *logos*', which is not only speech and argument but also appearance or belief as opposed to fact (*ergon*), and its goal is persuasion. On the credit side it may be said that persuasion is better than force,² and rhetoric is *par excellence* the democratic art which cannot, either in its political or its forensic form, flourish under tyranny. Its birth in Syracuse, Aristotle noted (*ap. Cic.*, see n. 1), coincided with the expulsion of the tyrants and the establishment of democracy.

The Sophists, then, were not the pioneers of rhetoric, but they were certainly ready to step in and supply the demand for it which accompanied the development of personal freedom all over Greece.³ A distinction may be drawn between the Sicilian school, carried on after Corax and Tisias by Empedocles (vol. II, 135), Gorgias and Polus and aiming mainly at fine speaking (εὐέπεια), and that of other Sophists who congregated at Athens, Protagoras of Abdera, Prodicus of Cos and Hippias of Elis. These latter, besides being interested in

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Rhetoric and Philosophy

themselves masters of 'the art of *logoi*' and the best teachers of it to others.¹ In Plato's eyes, as in actual fact, Socrates was the real master of this art. He put it to a different use from the Sophists, but, although he was no rhetorician, if Critias in making it illegal to teach the art of *logoi* had Socrates particularly in mind,² this was not altogether unreasonable. He was convinced that if one understood a thing one could 'give a *logos* of it', and his demand for definitions was a demand that people should prove that they understood the essence of courage, justice or whatever else was under discussion by finding a verbal formula which would cover all cases of it. 'He held that those who know what any given thing is must also be able to expound it to others' (Xen. *Mem.* 4. 6. 1). The following words which Xenophon puts into his mouth are characteristic (*Mem.* 3. 3. 11; he is arguing that a good cavalry commander must be a good speaker):

Has it not occurred to you that all the best things that we learned according to custom, by which we know how to live, we learned through speech, that any other good lesson that may be learned is learned through speech, and that the best teachers make the greatest use of speech and those with the deepest knowledge of the most important matters are also the best speakers?³

The 'invention' of rhetoric is attributed to two Sicilians of the first half of the fifth century, Corax and Tisias. Invention in this connexion had a specific meaning,⁴ namely the introduction of the appeal to probability instead of fact, the drawing up of rules for its application, and their embodiment in written handbooks. If a man accused of assault can produce facts showing incontrovertibly that he did not commit it, he has no need of the art, but, if he cannot, he must invoke the argument from probability. If he is smaller and weaker than his victim he will say, 'Look at me; is it likely that someone like me should go for a big strong man like him?' If on the other hand he is a Samson, he will

¹ Taylor has pointed out (*VS*, 92, 98) that Plato makes two things clear about *antilogiké* and eristic: they were rife in Socrates's time and not due to a perversion of his elenchus, and their ancestry is Eleatic.

² Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2. 31. Gigon (*Komm.* 7. *erst. Buch* 58) doubts the historicity of the incident.

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education in its widest sense, emphasized the correct use of language (ῥητορική, ῥηθότης ὀνομάτων) and so were led on from their concern with public speaking to initiate the studies of philology and grammar, etymology and the distinction of synonyms. (See §6 below.)

The essential theoretical basis of rhetoric was that which distinguished it from the beginning, and which so shocked the absolutist Plato, namely that (as he put it of Tisias and Gorgias, *Phaedr.* 267a), 'they held the probable (or likely-seeming, plausible, εἰκότα) in more honour than the true'.¹ The justification of this was that, to a Sophist and rhetorician, truth and knowledge were illusion.

Since all human inquiry moves within the realm of opinion, where deception is easy, all persuasion (philosophic, 'scientific', legal or other) is a result of the force of eloquence rather than of rational insight... If men *knew*, there would be a great difference between deception and truth. As it is, we can only distinguish between successful and unconvincing, persuasive and fruitless arguments.²

Turning Parmenides upside-down, Gorgias claimed that nothing exists (or is real), that if it did we could not know it, and if we could know it we could not communicate our knowledge to another. The philosophical basis is the same as that of Protagoras's 'What seems to each man *is* as far as he is concerned'.³ 'If', says Gorgias (fr. 11 a, 35 DK), 'it were possible through words (*logoi*) to make the truth about reality (*erga*) pure and clear to the hearers, judgment would be easy as simply following from what was said; but since it is not so...'

The *logos* has supreme power, and it is neutral. It can do great good, banishing fear and grief and fostering joy and compassion (Gorg. *Hel.* 8, DK II, 290). Even when deceptive, the deceit may be a just one and the deceived go away wiser than before, as happens with the

¹ Plato must have enjoyed the irony of imagining Protagoras as protesting against precisely the methods of argument which he himself found objectionable in the Sophist and his kind: 'You adduce no compelling proof at all, but rely on the probable' (*Theaet.* 162e).

² Versényi, *Socr. Hum.* 47f.

³ Sicking (*Mnem.* 1964, 245) appears to think otherwise; but it can hardly be denied that if nothing has real existence, nor can be recognized or communicated, the only alternative is that each man's private sensations and beliefs are alone valid, and valid for him alone. That Gorgias's polemic is not aimed *solely* at the Eleatics ('nicht *nur*', Sicking p. 232, though on p. 245 he drops the qualification) cannot alter this.

fictions of tragedy, which to Gorgias was only rhetoric in verse.¹ But in itself it is simply 'the art of persuasion', armed with which a man can convince of whatever he likes 'a jury in court, senators in the Council, the people in the Assembly, or any other gathering of citizens' (Plato, *Gorg.* 452e). This art of speaking Gorgias claimed to teach, and nothing more. Though it concerned right and wrong, he disclaimed the teaching of *areté* (*Meno* 95c) and maintained that the rhetorician is not to be blamed if his pupils employ their skill for wicked ends, any more than a boxing instructor if his pupil goes away and knocks his father down. Rhetoric, it appears, is concerned entirely with means, not ends,² and his teaching had different effects on pupils according to their character. Xenophon (*An.* 2.6.16ff.) contrasts Proxenus the Boeotian, who paid Gorgias's fees because he longed for greatness, fame and money, 'but had no desire to win them unjustly', with the unscrupulousness of Meno the Thessalian (whose connexion with Gorgias is known from Plato). If Socrates's pupils did not all do him credit, it was not for the same reason.

(2) PROTAGORAS

Protagoras's subjectivism has already been introduced in connexion with the relativity of values, and its close relation to his activities as a teacher of rhetoric is obvious.³ He taught his pupils to praise and

¹ *Frr.* 23 and 11.9 (λόγον ἔχων μέτρον). Deceit then is possible. In spite of his denial of absolute truth, Gorgias would not maintain that it is all the same whether a murder takes place on the stage or in reality. But what is death? Whatever we are persuaded it is. There is a nice bit of rhetorical effrontery in Gorgias's *Palamedes*, where, after playing the argument from probability throughout his speech, Palamedes towards the end (§34) exhorts his hearers μή τοῖς λόγοις μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς ἔργοις προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν.

² *Gorg.* 456c-457c. When Socrates presses his argument, Gorgias does indeed admit, in an offhand way, that if his pupil doesn't know about right and wrong he supposes he can teach him (the subjects for which Socrates and Plato found a lifetime of philosophy inadequate!), but, when Socrates goes on to draw the conclusion that in fact rhetoric cannot be used for wrong ends, it is time for the old and respected man to be released and his brash pupil to take over. The whole discussion with Gorgias throws an invaluable light on current conceptions of rhetoric, and bears no marks of caricature. See also *Phileb.* 58a for his conviction of the superiority of persuasion to every other art, and on his disclaiming to teach ἀρετή pp. 271f. below.

³ Nestle (ZN, 1358 n.) says it is nothing but a *petitio principii* to regard rhetoric as the source of Protagoras's philosophy. It is of course unpardonably crude. The scepticism and subjectivism of which he was such a notable representative were rooted in the previous history of philosophy, if only as a reaction from its universal assumption of an unperceived reality underlying pheno-

censure the same case, was notorious for his claim 'to make the weaker argument the stronger' (see e.g. *Ar. Rhet.* 1402a23 ff.), and wrote two books of 'Contrary Arguments' which must have been a rhetorical textbook. 'There are', he said, 'two opposite arguments on every subject',¹ and in the *Euthydemus* (286b-c) Socrates attributes to 'Protagoras and even earlier thinkers' the thesis that it is impossible to contradict, which, he says, amounts to saying that it is impossible to speak falsely.² Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1007b18) speaks of the thesis 'that contradictory statements about the same thing are simultaneously true' and 'it is possible either to assert or deny something of every subject' as one that must be accepted by those who accept Protagoras's dictum. Lower down, at 1009a6, he says (after mentioning denial of the law of contradiction): 'What Protagoras says originates in the same opinion, and they must stand or fall together; for if all that appears and is believed is true, everything must at the same time be true and false, for many people hold opinions opposite to each other.'³

mena or even (in the case of the Eleatics) denying them their right to exist (cf. p. 15 above). It is best to avoid dogmatizing about cause and effect, and say only that, just as the democratic freedom of Athens favoured the rapid rise of rhetoric in practice, so the philosophical situation provided a background suited to its theoretical justification; and this the best of the Sophists, who were very much more than demagogues or soapbox orators, were anxious to provide.

¹ Eudoxus *ap.* Steph. Byz. (DK, A 21; cf. Aristoph. *Clouds* 112 ff.), D.L. 9.55 ('Ἀντιλογίῳν ἄβ'), D.L. 9.31, of which an equally possible translation would be: 'Of every thing two contrary accounts can be given.'

² The 'earlier thinkers' need not be taken too seriously. Plato would chiefly be thinking of Heraclitus and his doctrine of the identity of opposites (vol. 1, 442 ff.), which no doubt influenced Protagoras's views but contained them only in embryo. Plato liked to bring in not only earlier philosophers but even poets as *soi-disant* parents of philosophical doctrines, as, for example, at *Theaet.* 152e and *Crat.* 402b he carries the Heraclitean flux-doctrine back to Homer. Nor, in view of many Platonic examples to the contrary, can we suppose ὁ ἄμφι Π. intended to exclude Protagoras himself. The thesis of the impossibility of contradiction is usually ascribed to Antisthenes on the evidence of Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1024b32, *Top.* 104b20). D.L. (9.53, cf. 3.35) calls it the thesis of Antisthenes, but adds, citing Plato, that it was first argued by Protagoras. Aristotle's words certainly do not exclude this, and Plato's language suggests that it may have been well known in sophistic circles of the fifth century. A papyrus from an author of the fourth century A.D. ascribes it to Prodicus. This may be simply a mistake, but Prodicus was acquainted with both Protagoras and Antisthenes (Xen. *Symp.* 4.62). See Binder and Liesenborghs in *Mus. Helv.* 1966.

³ Untersteiner (*Sof.* 1, 49f.) and H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 225f.) have argued from these passages that the impossibility of contradiction was not a tenet of Protagoras himself, since Aristotle represents it as an *inference* from what he said. The most that can be claimed is that they do not prove that it was, and other evidence makes it practically certain. There is however this qualification to be made, that what cannot be contradicted must 'appear to, or be believed by', at least one man. Protagoras would not agree with Aristotle that everything that can be uttered must be true and false (1007b20), for after all nobody believes that men are triremes or walls.

Protagoras: 'Man the Measure'

The theoretical foundation for all these statements lies in the thesis with which he opened his work on *Truth*,¹ and which has already been quoted for its bearing on concepts of value (fr. 1 DK):

Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of the things that are not that they are not.²

The continuation shows that he had chiefly the individual in mind, though unless Plato goes beyond him in this he would have extended it to the corporate opinion of a state as embodied in its laws. (See p. 172 above.) Besides Plato and Aristotle, the statement is quoted by Sextus, who also understands it of the individual, explaining: 'truth is something relative because everything that has appeared to, or been believed by, *someone* (τινί) is at once real in relation to *him*'.³

The word 'measure' (*metron*) was probably chosen by Protagoras for the epigrammatic flavour which it gives to his very quotable saying, and there is no reason to doubt that Plato, followed by Sextus, was right in explaining it as *kriterion*, standard of judgment.⁴ Its meaning is also brought out by a criticism of Aristotle's. At the end of a discussion of *metron* in the *Metaphysics* (1053a31) he says (to paraphrase and expound a difficult passage) that, in addition to its more usual meanings, the word is applied to knowledge and sensation because they are a means of learning about things, as a standard measure enables us to learn their size, quantity, weight, value, etc. This however is a misuse of the term which makes it mean the opposite of what it should. Far from our knowledge and sensations being the measure of reality, it is reality which must measure the amount and worth of our cognition.⁵ Knowledge cannot determine the nature of things; its job is to adapt itself to their nature as already determined, in order to

¹ The position of this sentence in his work is vouched for by Plato (ἀρχόμενος τῆς Ἀληθείας, *Theaet.* 161c) and Sextus (ἐναρχόμενος τῶν καταβαλλόντων, *Math.* 7.60). καταβάλλοντες appears to have been an alternative title for the Ἀλήθεια (Bernays, *Ges. Abh.* 1, 118). A metaphor from wrestling, it means arguments which overthrow others. Cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 202 (of ancestral traditions) οὐδεις αὐτὰ καταβαλεῖ λόγος.

² On the translation of this fragment, see the Appendix, pp. 188–92.

³ Sext. *Math.* 7.60; cf. *P.H.* 1.216 (DK, A 14).

⁴ Plato, *Theaet.* 178b (and cf. κριτής, 160c); Sextus, *P.H.* 1.216.

⁵ The analogy that he uses to illustrate this is not particularly happy but rather as Bonitz calls it 'exemplum parum feliciter adhibitum': it is, he says, as if we thought we were measuring ourselves when someone else measures us and we learn our own height from the number of times that he applies the foot-rule.

reach the truth. So, he adds, when Protagoras says that man is the measure of all things, meaning the man who knows or perceives, he is talking nonsense, though it sounds clever.

Aristotle is speaking from the point of view of his own and the Platonic philosophy, according to which there exists a reality beyond and independent of our knowledge or beliefs, and contrasting with it the doctrine of Protagoras that nothing exists save what each of us perceives and knows. (Since our perceptions on this theory are infallible, they may be given the name of knowledge, *Theaet.* 152c.) It is our own feelings and convictions that measure or determine the limits and nature of reality, which only exists in relation to them and is different for every one of us. Aristotle's opposition shows that for him Protagoras's was a doctrine of pure subjectivism or relativism. Was this a correct assessment of it? Two views have been taken. To put it in the terms of Plato's example (*Theaet.* 152b), if the wind *is* cold to me who feel it cold, and *is* warm to you who feel it warm, does this mean that the wind in itself is both warm and cold, or that the wind in itself is neither warm nor cold? In general terms, are we to say (a) that all properties perceived by anybody coexist in a physical object, but some are perceived by one man, others by another, or (b) that the perceptible properties have no independent existence in the object, but come to be as they are perceived, and for the percipient?

Cornford (*PTK*, 34ff.) favoured the first view: Protagoras was supporting 'the naive realism of common sense',¹ as well as the Ionian tradition, that the senses were to be trusted and things were mixtures of the opposites apprehended by sense, against the Eleatics, who denied the evidence of the senses and the reality of the opposites. He was also in accord with Heraclitus's belief in the coexistence of opposites and took his side against Democritus. ('Because honey seems bitter to some and sweet to others, Democritus said it is neither sweet nor sour,

¹ Von Fritz says similarly (*RE*, xlv. Halbb. 916f.) that Protagoras's statement does not express full sensualism, relativism or phenomenalism, but aims at opposing a 'Philosophie des gesunden Menschenverstandes' to the philosophies of the Eleatics, Heraclitus, etc., which are so far removed from *communis opinio*. He claims that this is borne out by the *Theaetetus*: Plato goes on to point out that, if Protagoras's statement is carried to its logical conclusion, it does lead to absolute relativism and subjectivism, but makes it clear that this conclusion was not drawn by Protagoras (166d ff.). Cf. also Cherniss, *ACP*, 369.

Heraclitus that it is both', Sext. *P.H.* 2.63.) This, Cornford claimed, is supported by Sextus, who wrote (*P.H.* 1.218) that 'the *logoi* ("grounds", Cornford) of all appearances subsist in the matter, so that matter, in itself, can be all things that appear to all men'. He concludes that for Protagoras contrary sense-objects, like the hot and the cold, exist independently of any percipient, and to call his doctrine 'subjectivist', or even 'relativist', is misleading.¹ But his arguments are not strong. The thesis that no man has the right to contradict another because each man's sensations and beliefs are true for him has little to do with 'the naive realism of common sense', and little more with Heraclitus, who urged men to follow the *logos* which was common to all and despised them for living as if each had his own private wisdom (fr. 2; see vol. I, 425). The language of Sextus is so entirely that of a later age as to cast suspicion on its substance, and his conclusion—'Thus according to Protagoras man proves to be the criterion of what exists'—does not follow from his premises. Although he denies it, 'things' on his interpretation (that is, properties) exist (as Cornford says) whether they are perceived or not: a jar of honey has its sweetness none the less because nobody is tasting it. The theory of a substance or matter containing properties which may or may not be perceived is specifically denied for Protagoras by Aristotle. When discussing the Megarian theory that there is no such thing as a potentiality that is not actualized, i.e. that nothing is cold, hot, sweet or in general perceptible when no one is perceiving it, he identifies this theory with Protagoras's.² According to Cornford the second view, that perceptible properties have no independent existence, corresponds to the 'secret doctrine' (*Theaet.* 152c ff.) which everyone agrees is not Protagorean; but, in quoting Sextus, *P.H.* 1:218, as support for the first, he omits the previous sentence, in which Sextus attributes to Protagoras the doctrine that 'matter is in flux' (τὴν ὕλην ῥευστὴν εἶναι). This, surely, belongs to the 'secret doctrine', and Sextus proves an untrustworthy witness of genuine Protagorean ideas when

¹ Protagoras would thus be in agreement with the contemporary philosopher Diogenes of Apollonia. For this, and for a similar theory in our own time, see vol. II, 381, n. 3.

² *Metaph.* O, ch. 3, especially 1047a 4-7. It has to be remembered that δύναμις, besides its Aristotelian sense of potentiality, was quite commonly used to mean a property like hot, sweet or red. See vol. I, 325, n. 1.

he tries to go further than the 'man-measure' statement itself and its obvious implications.¹

We may conclude that Protagoras adopted an extreme subjectivism² according to which there was no reality behind and independent of appearances, no difference between appearing and being, and we are each the judge of our own impressions. What seems to me *is* for me, and no man is in a position to call another mistaken. If what I feel as warm you feel as cold, we cannot argue about it: it is warm for me and cold for you. No natural philosopher went as far as this, for it is a denial of the very meaning of *physis*. Democritus too said that all sensations are subjective, that hot and cold, sweet and bitter, have no existence in nature, but this was because they were to be explained as due to the interaction between the atomic structure of our bodies and that of the perceived object. There *was* a permanent *physis* or reality, namely atoms and void (vol. II, pp. 438, 440). For Protagoras there is none, and for this Democritus attacked him, objecting that on his view 'nothing was any more *such* than *such*'.³ He was in the vanguard of the humanistic reaction against the natural philosophers, whose contradictory speculations were bringing them into disrepute among practical men—each one, as Gorgias said (p. 51 above), claiming to possess the secret of the universe, but in fact only pitting one opinion against another, each more incredible than the last. Like all the Sophists, he was acquainted with their theories, but turned away from them to teach the one thing that mattered, how to take care of one's own affairs and the business of the state (Plato, *Prot.* 318e–319a).⁴ There is not much profit, therefore, in debating which of the

¹ The view attributed by Cornford to Protagoras seems rather to resemble that which Socrates in the *Cratylus* (386d) distinguishes from his and assigns to Euthydemus, namely πᾶσι πάντα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἅμα καὶ αἰ.

² If a label is wanted, this is a better one than sensualism or phenomenalism, for the theory applied to what was thought or believed as well as what was perceived, to notions of right and wrong as well as sensations of hot and cold. The conclusion here reached as to Protagoras's subjectivism agrees with that of Ad. Levi's article in *Philosophy*, 1940, though it will be evident that I do not accept his further claim that it applied only to knowledge of nature and that Protagoras did not extend it into the ethical field. The difference between us rests on a different interpretation of his speech in the *Protagoras*.

³ μᾶλλον εἶναι τοῖον ἢ τοῖον τῶν πραγμάτων ἕκαστον, Democr. fr. 156 (Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1109a). He also, it would seem, anticipated Plato (*Theaet.* 171a) in arguing that the doctrine is self-refuting (DK, A 114, Sext. *Math.* 7.389).

⁴ Cf. Vlastos, *Ph. Rev.* 1945, 591.

Ethical Conclusions of Protagoras

philosophers he borrowed from or reacted against, especially as we know so little of the content of his writings: they were all chasing chimeras, though his direct polar opposite was of course Parmenides, who taught that all sensations and opinions were to be rejected as false.

We have seen that his relativism extended to the field of ethics. Our information relates only to states, but obviously, if a man sincerely believes that it is good to steal, then for him, so long as he believes it, it *is* good. But, just as it is worth while for a doctor to change a sick man's world by his drugs (*Theaet.* 167a) so that what appears and is to him sour appears and is sweet, so it is worth while for the majority, or their appointed representatives, to whom stealing both seems and is bad, to work upon him by persuasion until his view—that is, the truth for him—is changed. The logical conclusion of Protagorean subjectivism is moral and political anarchy, but this was far from his thoughts, and morals and the social order were saved by this curious doctrine, typical of its period, whereby the standard of truth or falsehood is abandoned, but replaced by the pragmatic standard of better or worse. 'Some appearances are better than others, though none is truer' (*Theaet.* 167b). Here, undoubtedly, the epistemological-ontological¹ doctrine of complete subjectivity breaks down: the appearance of the moment is subordinated to a higher standard, the end or purpose of human nature and society. At the same time the other kind of relativity comes in:² men and societies differ widely, and so therefore do their needs. There is no all-embracing 'good for man'. To diagnose the particular situation and prescribe the best course of action for a man or a state under given conditions, as a doctor does for his patient, is, as Protagoras saw it, the task of the Sophist.³ To ensure

¹ A clumsy expression, which may nevertheless bring home the point that, however it may be today, in Greek thought epistemology and ontology, knowing and being, are not to be separated.

² That which is described under (a) on p. 166 above.

³ The relation of Socrates and Plato to the Sophists is subtle. It is generally said that, whereas the Sophists were empiricists who denied the possibility of a general definition of 'good' on the grounds that it differed relatively to individual men or societies and their circumstances, Socrates (and Plato after him) insisted that there was one universal good, knowledge of which would give the key to right action for everybody everywhere. Thus Aristotle (like Plato in the *Meno*) depicts him as insisting on a general definition of *areté* in contrast to Gorgias who preferred to enumerate separate virtues (*Pol.* 1260a 27). Yet in the *Phaedrus* it is the 'true rhetorician', that is, the dialectically trained philosopher, who is compared to a qualified doctor who not only knows how to administer various treatments but understands also which is appropriate to a particular patient, and when and for how long—a man, it would seem, in the empirical tradition of the best

that that course is followed is the concern of the rhetorician. Protagoras was both, and taught both arts. His own integrity, perhaps, prevented him from seeing that his art of defending both sides, and making the weaker argument appear the stronger, was a two-edged sword in the hands of less scrupulous men. The average rhetorician was satisfied with the means and careless of the end. He turned the heads of the young by telling them that if they only mastered the art of persuasion they could have the world at their feet: what they did with it was their affair.

APPENDIX

Protagoras fr. 1, DK: some points of translation

Controversy has flourished for many years over the translation of three words in this sentence: ἄνθρωπος, ὡς, χρήματα.

1. ἄνθρωπος. Is Protagoras using it in (a) an individual or (b) a universal sense, or is he (c) unaware of the distinction? For older authorities see ZN, 1357, n. 1. In the past at least the majority of scholars have supported (a), e.g. Zeller himself, H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 222 f., 234 ff., in spite of saying on p. 217 that no one would have been more astonished at the question than Protagoras), Nestle (with some qualifications; see his edition of the *Prot.*, p. 14), Grant (*Eth.* I, 135 f.), R. G. Bury (Sextus, Loeb ed. I, xiv), Burnet (*Th. to P.* 115), Campbell (ed. of *Theaet.* xxix), Heinimann (*N. u. Ph.* 117), Calogero and Ad. Levi (for whom see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 86 with nn.).

Grote is always quoted as the originator of (b), but in his *Plato*, II, 322 ff. (to which Zeller refers) I do not find this interpretation. The pages must be read entire, but one may quote 328-9: 'However multifarious the mental activities may be, *each man has his own peculiar allotment and manifestation thereof, to which his cognitions must be relative . . . Each man's mind, with its peculiar endowments . . . is still the limit or measure or limit of his cognitions.*' (My italics.) T. Gomperz on the other hand held the universalist view unambiguously (*G.T.* I, 451): 'Man . . . was obviously not

Greek medical teaching. In contrast, the ordinary rhetorician, who 'through ignorance of dialectic is unable to define the nature of rhetoric', resembles a quack who has learned from a book how to give an emetic or a purge, but has no idea when its use will be appropriate (*Phaedr.* 268 a-c, 269 b). It may be that the Socratic search for definitions, and its offspring the Platonic dialectic of 'collection and division', rather include and transcend than undo the work of Sophists and rhetoricians. Their teaching is, after all, described in the *Phaedrus* as being, though not the art of rhetoric proper, a necessary propaedeutic to it (τὰ πρὸ τῆς τέχνης ἀναγκαῖα, 269 c). Such questions call for careful consideration; see especially *Socrates*, ch. 111, § 8.

the individual, but mankind as a whole.' If Zeller (ZN, 1357) is correct in describing this view as meaning that according to Protagoras 'Things present themselves to us as under the limitations and according to the disposition of human nature they must present themselves', then it fits none of the evidence.

Holders of interpretation (c), which has gained favour recently, include Joël (*Gesch.* 703-5), Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 42, 86f.), Classen (*Proc. Afr. Cl. Ass.* 1959, 35) and Cornford (unpublished). Some who hold this view combine it with (a): Protagoras was thinking of the individual, but the distinction was probably not present to his mind. This seems likely enough, provided it is taken to exclude (b). H. Gomperz, in his argument that Protagoras would have made no distinction, claims that there is no contradiction between the two, because, if what appears to an individual exists for him, then what appears to all men exists for all men. True enough, if Protagoras believed that there was anything at all that appeared the same to all men. But was it not the essence of his teaching that this was not so?

After all this it is refreshing to turn to the common sense of a historian of Greek literature, Lesky, who says in his *Hist. Gr. Lit.* p. 345: 'Certainly the sentence refers to the individual. Anyone who doubts it must hold that Plato is lying or mistaken . . . If we are determined to disbelieve Plato, we have still to reckon with other authors [Aristotle, Sextus] whose use of the word ἑκαστος shows that they also took the sentence as referring to the individual.'

2. ὡς ἔστιν. Does it simply mean 'that they are', ὡς being the equivalent of ὅτι, or does it contain the idea of 'how they are', the *manner* of their existence? Gomperz father and son both spoke for the former, citing the analogy of fr. 4 on the existence of the gods. (See Th. G., *G.T.* 1, 452; H. G., *S. u. R.* 204.) Heinrich's arguments seem decisive, though he adds that the question is of little importance for the substance of the statement. Von Fritz (*RE*, XLV. Halbb. 914) takes the same view, noting that classical scholars tend to the meaning 'that', philosophers to 'how'. Zeller (ZN, 1355, n. 1) thought it more correct to include both meanings. So did Joël (*Gesch.* 708), who denied the validity of fr. 4 as an argument the other way. Untersteiner agrees (*Sophs.* 84), though his interpretation is connected with his curious conception of μέτρον as 'mastery', which has not found general acceptance. (It involves translating Soph. *El.* 236, τί μέτρον κακότητος ἔσται, as 'what way will there be [*sic*] to get the better of wickedness?') The italics are his.) Calogero (see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 90, n. 34) thinks it unhistorical to pose the question because the distinction between existence and essence could not have been consciously present to Protagoras's mind.

This is rather like saying that, because the distinctions between all the different senses of λόγος could not have been consciously present to the mind of a writer of the fifth century, therefore when Herodotus says ἔλεξε λόγον (I. 141. 1) there is no sense in asking whether he meant a story or any of the other things the word could mean: argument, pretext, proportion, definition or whatever. What decides is the context.

That ὥς can mean 'how' is undeniable, but it is also used interchangeably with ὅτι. That it is so used here is made overwhelmingly probable by its setting (especially in the negative clause ὥς οὐκ ἔστι) and by comparison with fr. 4, to which should be added the sophistic Hippocratic treatise *De arte*, ch. 2 (VI, 4 L.), τῶν γε μὴ ἐόντων τίνα ἂν τις οὐσίαν θεησάμενος ἀπογγείλειεν ὥς ἔστιν, where 'that' is certainly the most natural translation of ὥς.

Discussion has concentrated on the word ὥς in this phrase, but the word ἔστι is equally worth comment. Like other scholars I have hitherto written on the assumption that the primary, if not the only, sense of εἶναι when used without predicates is 'to exist', but C. H. Kahn is very persuasive in his claim that its fundamental value is 'not "to exist" but "to be so", "to be the case", or "to be true"'. This, as he points out, fits Plato's explanation of the sentence: 'as each thing seems to me, such is it for me', etc. 'Plato's exegesis becomes entirely natural and intelligible if we understand the absolute use of *einaí* as . . . an affirmation of fact in general, as "what is so" or "what is the case". The existential use, e.g. for an affirmation such as "there are atoms and void", would then be included as a special case of the general factual assertion intended by Protagoras's statement *hōs esti*. If man is the measure of all things, "that they are so or not so", then he is the measure of the existence or non-existence of atoms just as he is the measure of the being-cold or not-being-cold of the wind.' See his article in *Foundations of Language*, 1966, especially p. 250.¹ (It will have appeared, however, that I do not entirely agree with him when on p. 262 he calls Protagoras 'a philosopher of common sense'.)

3. χρῆμα. This is a word of very wide application, meaning anything from an oracle to money (so in sing. Hdt. 3. 38. 3, though commonly in pl.). Recently there has been a tendency to overstress its etymological connexion with χρῆσθαι and narrow it down to 'something one uses', and so something in close relationship to man (Nestle, *VMZuL*, 271), or according to Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 79) 'the totality of things understood as action or experience'. He professes to give a review of its possible meanings, but it is

¹ The use of εἶναι and πρῶμα in Aristotle's discussion of πεῦδος (*Metaph.* 1024b 17ff.) may lend some support to his view.

a very partial one. (On Untersteiner's interpretation of the saying in general R. F. Holland in *CQ*, 1956, is severe but just.) The following (all easily available in LSJ) find no mention.

(a) In plural anything useful or good for man. See Xen. *Oec.* 1.7-8, the passage which affords the strongest support to Nestle's thesis, though not cited by him in this connexion. In any case it is only one of many meanings, and seems to be confined to the plural.

(b) Cases where it might be omitted: δεινόν τι χρήμα ἐπιοιῦντο, 'they thought it dreadful' (Hdt. 8.16.2); πικρόν τι μοι δοκεῖ χρήμα εἶναι, 'it seems to me disagreeable' (Plato, *Gorg.* 485b); τί χρήμα λεύσσω; 'what do I see?' (Aesch. *Cho.* 10 and elsewhere); at Eur. *Alc.* 512 τί χρήμα means 'why?', 'for what cause?'

(c) In periphrasis: ὕος μέγα χρήμα, 'a great boar' (Hdt. 1.36.1); λιπαρόν τὸ χρήμα τῆς πόλεως 'what a fine city!' (Aristoph. *Birds* 826); and so frequently: τὸ χρήμα τῶν νυκτῶν ὅσον, 'how long the nights are!' (*idem*, *Clouds* 2).

(d) As the English 'business' in its wide colloquial sense. ἀπαν τὸ χρήμα ἤμαρτε, 'she mismanaged the whole business' (Soph. *Tr.* 1136); κακὸν τὸ χρήμα, 'it's a bad business' (*idem*, *Ph.* 1265; Untersteiner does give both these references, but explains them as an 'event . . . which one undergoes (χρηῖται)').

(e) Cases where 'thing' is the only possible translation: κοῦφον χρήμα ποιητῆς ἐστίν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, 'a poet is a light, winged and holy thing' (Plato, *Ion* 534b). In explaining Protagoras's sentence Plato (*Crat.* 385a-386e) equates it with πράγμα, a word which also had become estranged from its parent verb and was used to mean simply 'an existing thing'.

(f) Number, amount: χρήμα πολλὸν νεῶν, 'a large number of ships' (Hdt. 6.43.4), χρήμα πολλὸν τι χρυσοῦ, 'a lot of gold' (*idem*, 3.130.5).

No doubt it is possible to represent χρήμα in all these cases as having some relation to mankind (what thing of whose existence we are aware have not?), but it would be fanciful to suppose that this relation is in the writer's mind, and we may conclude that no word more specific than 'thing' will serve as its translation in the dictum of Protagoras. That 'things' include heat and cold, justice and injustice is undeniable, but *Prot.* 330c and d show that these were still commonly regarded by the Greeks as existing things (πράγματα). χρήματα will have been for Protagoras what they were for his contemporary Anaxagoras: that is, they will have included the 'opposites' and concrete things alike (vol. II, 285). We need not dismiss the latter from the argument on the grounds that man cannot be a measure of the existence of trees and stones (as Nestle does, *VMZuL*, 271): according to a philosophy of *esse est percipi* he can. But there is little point in pursuing

this line, since all the examples given by Plato and Aristotle are of properties or attributes. These are what would concern Protagoras as a teacher of politics, ethics and rhetoric.

(3) GORGIAS

Gorgias was primarily a teacher of rhetoric, associated with his countryman Tisias in the use of the argument from probability.¹ He wrote manuals of the art (p. 44, n. 4, above), which may have consisted largely of model declamations to be learned by heart, since Aristotle (*Soph. el.* 183b36) says that this was his method of instruction. Of these the *Helen* and *Palamedes* (fr. 11 and 11a) will be surviving examples,² and the *Helen* has been well described as 'an essay on the nature and power of *logos*' (Versényi, *Socr. Hum.* 44), proving that 'the word is a mighty despot', and that (as Plato says Gorgias repeatedly declared, *Phileb.* 58a-b): 'The art of persuasion far surpasses all others and is far and away the best, for it makes all things its slaves by willing submission, not by violence'. So irresistible is its power that if Helen was persuaded into adultery she was as guiltless as if she had been abducted by force. The epistemological implications of this have already been mentioned (pp. 50 f.), and we must now face the problems of that remarkable *tour de force*, the treatise *On the Non-Existent, or On Nature*.!

The Eleatics, by their primitive limitation of the term 'being'

¹ Plato, *Phaedr.* 267a. Lesky (*HGL*, 351) says Tisias 'certainly accompanied him to Athens in 427' on his mission for Leontini. Perhaps he did, but the sole evidence is an unsupported statement in Pausanias's handbook for travellers in Greece in the second century A.D. (6. 17. 8). See Stegemann in *RE*, 2. Reihe, 1x. Halbb. 140. Gorgias and Tisias must have been almost exact contemporaries, born in the decade 490-480.

² On the character and genuineness of these two speeches see Dobson, *Orators*, 17; H. Gomperz, *S. u. Rh.* 3 ff.; Joël, *Gesch.* 657 ff.; Schmid, *Gesch.* 72, n. 2; Untersteiner, *Sophis.* 95 and other references in his n. 54 on p. 99. The general opinion is now favourable to their genuineness. As to date, see Calogero in *JHS*, 1957, 1, p. 16 with n. 23. The *Pal.* was dated by E. Maass before 411 (*Hermes*, 1887, 579). The *Hel.* was put by Preuss in 414, between the *Troades* and *Helen* of Euripides (*De Eur. Hel.* Leipzig, 1911) and by Pohlenz before the *Troades* (*Nachr. Gött. Ges.* 1920, 166). I should not be surprised if Helen's speech in the *Troades* (914-65) owed something to what Gorgias makes her say on the same subject. In Euripides she takes the offensive at once by saying her troubles were Hecuba's fault for bearing Paris (!), and goes on to blame Aphrodite. The chorus appeal to Hecuba to destroy the *παῖσός* of this 'evil woman who knows how to speak'.

Gorgias himself calls the *Helena* a *παίγνιον*, on which the best comment is probably Versényi's (*Socr. Hum.* 43 f.): it is certainly not serious in its ostensible purpose (Gorgias does not mind whether Helen's memory is vindicated or not), which however he is using as a vehicle for his general views on the nature of *λόγος* and *παῖσός*.

to what is one, unchanging and timeless, had driven practical people like Protagoras to the opposite extreme of subjectivism, a denial of all being in the Eleatic sense. Plato, convinced that any explanation of phenomena must still allow for an eternal and changeless being over and above them, contrasted Sophists as 'those who take refuge in the darkness of not-being' with philosophers who are 'devoted to the nature of being' (*Soph.* 254a). He meant, as Aristotle pointed out (*Metaph.* 1026b14), that the Sophists recognized only accidental as opposed to essential being, that is, the conditional and relative as opposed to the self-existent or absolutely existent. The way to these useful distinctions had been closed for a time by the blunt antithesis of Parmenides, and they were only established by Plato and Aristotle. Obviously Protagoras's 'what appears to me and is for me' had no existence in the Eleatic or Platonic sense (in which 'what is' was completely inaccessible to the senses), and Gorgias brought this opposition fully into the open, and took the Eleatic bull by the horns, by boldly proclaiming that 'nothing exists'.

The treatise itself has not survived, but we possess two paraphrases of its arguments, one in the little work *On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias* attributed to Aristotle, and one in Sextus. They are not always in agreement, and the relevant section of *MXG* contains lacunae and corruptions, but between them they give a good idea of the type of argument which Gorgias employed.¹ He set out to prove three things: (a) that nothing exists, (b) that even if it does it is incomprehensible to man, (c) that, even if it is comprehensible to anyone, it is not communicable to anyone else. A great deal of ink has been spilt over the question whether this was intended as a joke or parody, or as a serious contribution to philosophy,² but it is a mistake to think that parody is

¹ *MXG* 979 a 11-980 b 21, Sextus, *Math.* 7.65 ff. Both texts are available with Italian translation in Untersteiner, *Sof.* 11, 36 ff., Sextus in DK, Gorgias fr. 3. See Lloyd, *Pol. & An.* 115, for a succinct judgment on their relationship, and references to some of the many earlier discussions; also Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 96 f. and Sicking, *Mnem.* 1964, 227 ff. For *MXG* in general, vol. 1, 367 and 170. W. Bröcker in *Hermes*, 1958 endeavoured to show that Sextus has no independent value as a source when compared with *MXG*.

² For orientation in the discussion see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 163-5, Kerferd, *Phronesis*, 1955, 1, n. 1, Sicking, *Mnem.* 1964, 225-7. Sicking says rightly that 'es doch keineswegs von vornherein feststeht, dass man mit der Alternative Scherz-Ernst dem Charakter des Werkes gerecht werden könne'; and Calogero in *JHS*, 1957, 1, 16, n. 22, referring to the chapter on Gorgias in his *St. auf Eleat.*, claims that 'it is neither a joke nor an exercise, but a highly ironical *reductio ad*

incompatible with serious intention. Gorgias's purpose was negative, but none the less serious. To show up the absurdity of Eleatic, and particularly of Parmenidean, logic (the absurdity of arguing from 'it is' and 'it is not' as such) was of the utmost importance both to common sense and to the theory of rhetoric. Gorgias would hardly wish to deny the existence of everything in the sense in which the ordinary man understands existence; his aim was to show that, by the sort of arguments that Parmenides used, it was as easy to prove 'it is not' as 'it is'. The inversion of Parmenides's arguments is undoubtedly amusing, reminding one of Gorgias's advice to his pupils 'to destroy an opponent's seriousness by laughter, and his laughter by seriousness' (fr. 12).

The title of the work is itself sufficient indication of parody. Simplicius, who shows first-hand knowledge of the books of both Parmenides and Melissus, says that both gave them the title 'On Nature', and Melissus 'On Nature or That Which Is' (*Cael.* 556, 557; see vol. II, 102). Considering the subject of Parmenides's work, it is safe to say that that was its full title too. The name 'On Nature' was given to the works of most of the Presocratic natural philosophers either by themselves or by their contemporaries (vol. I, 73), and by saying that 'nothing is' Gorgias was denying the assumption underlying all their systems, that behind the shifting panorama of 'becoming' or appearances there existed a substance or substances, a *physis* of things, from the *apeiron* of Anaximander to the air of Anaximenes, the four 'roots' of Empedocles and the atoms of Democritus. All such permanent 'natures' would be abolished on Gorgias's thesis, but the form of his arguments shows that their irony was aimed especially at Parmenides and his followers, to demonstrate that on their own reasoning it is as easy to prove the contrary of x as x itself.¹

absurdum of the Eleatic philosophy (especially of Zeno). Except that I see more of Parmenides in it than his parenthesis suggests, I am sure that this explanation of it as ironical is correct.

¹ This applies at least to the first part of the treatise proving the thesis that 'nothing is', which to judge from the summaries was the longest and most important. Kerferd (*loc. cit.* 15) finds it hard to believe that Gorgias could have argued in a certain way because having appealed to a 'decisive agreed principle' he then turns round and denies it: one argument depends on the impossibility of saying that what is does not exist, yet the very next one begins 'Neither does what is exist, for . . .' and proceeds to argue it. But the 'decisive agreed principle' comes from Parmenides, and considered as parody the idea of arguing from it as a premise and then disproving it is a good one.

There is one witness who, if only on account of his contemporaneity, cannot well be ignored, though the significance of his tirades for the character of *On the Non-Existent* has been variously judged. Isocrates, though a much younger man than Gorgias, was his pupil when in his early twenties (Münscher in *RE*, ix, 2152). At the beginning of his *Helen* he attacks paradox-mongers and eristics of all kinds. They are not even original, for Protagoras and other 'sophists' of his time could do the same thing better.

Who could outdo Gorgias, who had the audacity to say that nothing is, or Zeno who tried to show that the same things were possible and impossible, or Melissus who amid the infinite profusion of things tried to find proofs that all is one? What they did demonstrate was that it is easy to trump up a false argument about whatever you like to put forward.

Again in *Antid.* 268-9 he issues a similar warning against the 'old sophists', of whom one said there was an infinite number of beings, Empedocles four (with Strife and Love among them), Ion three only, Alcmaeon two, Parmenides and Melissus one, and Gorgias none at all. He compares their efforts to conjuring tricks which serve no useful purpose but are gaped at by fools. It has been argued that, since in these attacks Isocrates has no qualms in grouping Gorgias with the Eleatics and philosophers like Empedocles, his 'nothing exists' must have been meant as a serious philosophical thesis. Probably however more weight should be laid on the fact that Isocrates treats even the philosophers as tricksters ready to maintain the most absurd hypotheses.¹ In his own view, expounded on a number of occasions, philosophy should turn its back on all such idle speculations, and Gorgias condemned himself by stooping to use their own arguments.

Sextus classes Gorgias with those who abolished a constant standard of judgment (*kriterion*), but adds that he used a different method of attack from Protagoras; and after summarizing his arguments he concludes: 'These are the difficulties raised by Gorgias, and they do

¹ See Dodds, *Gorg.* 8, who reproduces the views of H. Gomperz, *S. u. Rh.* 30f. I confess to a slight feeling of uneasiness, because, if Isocrates knew Gorgias's treatise as an ironical exposure of Eleatic reasoning, he would surely have claimed him as an ally rather than attacked him along with the rest. He was, however, above all things an advocate, ready to press anything into the service of his immediate case. His criticism of Gorgias would be that by bothering at all about the philosophers and refuting them with their own weapons he put himself in the same class.

away with the criterion, for there can be no criterion for what neither exists nor can be known nor is of a nature to be described to another person.' In their conclusions Gorgias and Protagoras were at one, and, if there is anything that may be spoken of as a general sophistic view, it is this, that there is no 'criterion'. You and I cannot, by comparing and discussing our experiences, correct them and reach the knowledge of a reality more ultimate than either, for there is no such stable reality to be known. Similarly in morals, no appeal to general standards or principles is possible, and the only rule can be to act as at any moment seems most expedient. This positivism is important both for its own sake and for the reaction which it produced in thinkers of the calibre of Socrates and Plato.

We may now look at some of the arguments of *On the Non-Existent*. The following is not a complete account, but sufficient to convey their character.¹ It should be said as a preliminary that Parmenides's thesis depended on one and the same Greek verb (εἶναι) meaning both 'to be' (which may refer to the relation of subject to predicate, individual to species, identity, etc.) and 'to exist'. Where either is used in the English version, they stand for the same word in Greek.

(a) *Nothing exists. If anything exists, it is either the existent, or the non-existent, or both.* The non-existent does not exist ('what is not is not'). This might be thought obvious, but Gorgias solemnly argues it in ultra-Parmenidean terms: in so far as it is conceived as not-being it is *not*, i.e. does not exist; but in so far as it *is* non-existent, it *is*, i.e. exists. But to be and not to be at the same time is absurd, therefore the non-existent is not. The purpose must be to bring in the point that by saying that something 'is *x*', whatever the predicate, you are allowing being to it; and since according to Parmenides 'is' has only one meaning, namely 'exists', you can prove on his own premises the opposite of what he says. At the same time Gorgias turns against him his criticism of the stupid crowd who claim that to be and not to be are the same as well as different (fr. 6. 6).

Neither does the existent exist. If it does, it must be either eternal or

¹ There is a full summary in Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 145-58. See also Freeman, *Comp.* 359-61, and Bröcker, *Gesch. d. Phil. vor Sokr.* 115-18. One of the best essays on the subject in English, never noticed nowadays, is that of Grant, *Ethics*, 1, 137-42.

generated or both. The argument that it cannot be eternal depends on identifying temporal with spatial infinity and then contending that 'what is' cannot be infinite. Since Melissus had said that it was, and moreover reached this conclusion by the same confusion of temporal with spatial (vol. II, 107ff.), it seems likely that at this point he is the butt of Gorgias's sophisticated wit. The argument that it is not generated follows the lines of Parmenides fr. 8.7ff., by denying in turn that it could be generated from what is or what is not. Again, it must be either one or many. If one, it must have quantity, discrete or continuous, size and body, but then it will be divisible and so not one. Yet for anything to exist without magnitude is absurd. For this too an Eleatic proof was available, since it had been argued by Zeno (frs. 1 and 2; vol. II, 391, n. 2), and according to a fragmentary part of *MXG* (979b36) Gorgias seems to have referred to this. Nor can it be many, for a plurality is composed of ones, so if the one does not exist, neither can the many.

Neither do both exist.¹ This would seem fairly obvious by now, but Gorgias is enjoying his game with Parmenides. Although he has already shown that (a) what is not and (b) what is do not exist, he now 'proves' that both do not exist together. If both exist, they are identical so far as existence is concerned; and since what is not does not exist, and what is is identical with it, what is will not exist either.²

In proving his second and third hypotheses, Gorgias goes beyond the Eleatics, and his arguments are perhaps more interesting.

(b) *If anything exists it cannot be known or thought of by man.* We certainly think of things that do not exist, e.g. chariots crossing the sea

¹ It was of course Leucippus and Democritus who, trapped in the net of Parmenidean language, said that both being and non-being existed, meaning by these terms solid body and void (vol. II, 392). Gorgias may have had them in mind, but the nature of his 'proofs' shows that the Eleatics are his main target all the time. Cf. Mondolfo, *Problemi*, 180, quoted by Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 168, n. 32.

² Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 146, interprets thus: 'The attribution of existence to both Being and Not-being leads to their identification "so far as existence is concerned": therefore Being merges into that existence of Not-being which is Non-existence; Being therefore, like Not-being, will not exist.' This is probably the best that can be done. It is all, of course, engaging nonsense. That what is not does not exist is said in Sextus's summary to be *δηλοῦρον* (admitted, or common ground) and would seem to follow from the expression itself, though this has not prevented Gorgias from 'proving' it earlier.

and flying men,¹ and according to Sextus Gorgias stated and defended the converse, that, if things thought are not existent, then the existent is not thought. He may have been parodying someone who was guilty of this, but more probably his argument was that, if our thought of something is not sufficient to prove its existence, then, even if we think of something real, we have no means of distinguishing it from the unreal.² Gorgias has indeed 'abolished the criterion'. *MXG* (980a 9 ff.), if its corruptions are suitably emended, gives a better sequence of thought. If everything that can be thought of exists (as Parmenides had repeatedly said, fr. 2.7; 3; 6.1), then nothing is untrue, even the statement that chariots cross the sea. [This we may assume to be absurd.] We cannot fall back on the senses, for they are unreliable unless checked by thought, which has already failed us.

(c) *Even if it can be apprehended, it cannot be communicated to another.* This thesis rests chiefly on a point insisted on by Gorgias's master Empedocles, that each sense has its own objects and cannot distinguish those of another (Theophr. *De sensu* 7; vol. II, 231). If there are things existing outside ourselves, they will be objects of sight, hearing, taste and so forth. Our means of communication is speech, which is none of these external objects, and is understood differently. Just as a colour cannot be heard, or a melody seen, so 'since what is subsists externally, it cannot become our speech, and without becoming speech it cannot be communicated to another' (Sext. *Math.* 7.84; that cognition can only be due to the interaction of similars is another Empedoclean doctrine, vol. II, 229). 'Sight does not distinguish sounds, nor hearing colour; and what a man speaks is speech, neither a colour nor an object' (*MXG* 980b1). According to *MXG* 980b9ff. Gorgias added that the hearer cannot have in his mind the same thing as the

¹ That Gorgias had the ἀπάτη of tragedy in mind is probable. Cf. fr. 23. (Gercke, followed by Untersteiner, restored ἀπατῶν for ἀπαντα at *MXG* 980a9.) Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 171, n. 71) mentions the Oceanides of Aeschylus crossing the sea in winged chariots πτερύγων θοαῖς ἀμίλλαις (*P.V.* 129; *MXG* 980 a 12 has ἀμιλλᾶσθαι ἄρματα) and Bellerophon in Euripides. (Why not Daedalus? Sophocles wrote a play of that name, and after all it was Pegasus who flew, not Bellerophon except *per accidens*.)

² So Ad. Levi; see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 152f. The probability is strengthened by *P.H.* 2.64, where in close proximity to a mention of Gorgias, and possibly still dependent on him, Sextus says: εἰ δὲ τίσιν [sc. αἰσθήσει καὶ διανοαῖς κρινοῦσι τὰ πράγματα], πῶς κρινοῦσιν ὅτι ταῖσδε μὲν ταῖς αἰσθήσει καὶ (τῆδε) τῆ διανοαῖ προσέχειν δεῖ, ταῖσδε δ' οὐ, μὴ ἔχοντες κριτήριον ὁμολογούμενον δι' οὐ τὰς διαφορὰς αἰσθήσεις τε καὶ διανοαῖς ἐπικρινοῦσιν;

speaker, for the same thing cannot, without losing its identity, be present in more people than one. Even if it could, it need not *appear* the same to them both, since they are different from one another and in different places. Even the same man does not apprehend things similarly at different times, or as presented by different senses.

Finally one may quote a pregnant saying of Gorgias, appropriately called by Untersteiner 'Gorgias on the tragedy of knowledge'. It has come down to us without context or any indication of its place in his works:

Existence is unknown unless it acquire appearance, and appearance is feeble unless it acquire existence.¹

NOTE. From the arguments used by Gorgias it should be clear that the main weight of his irony fell upon the Eleatics, and in particular on Parmenides, though the thesis itself is equally cogent against all those Presocratics who had posited the existence of a non-sensible reality (or realities) behind the changing panorama of the sensible world. (See G. Rensi, *Fig. di filos.* 99, n. 1, quoted by Untersteiner, *Sof.* II, 36.) This was in essentials the view of Grote (*Hist.* 1888 ed. vol. VII, 51 f.). Gorgias, said Grote, is using the word 'to be' in the Eleatic sense, according to which it did not apply to phenomena but only to ultra-phenomenal (noumenal) existence. 'He denied that any such ultra-phaenomenal Something, or Noumenon, existed, or could be known, or could be described. Of this tripartite thesis, the first negation was neither more untenable nor less untenable than that of those philosophers who before him had argued for the affirmative: on the last two points his conclusions were neither paradoxical, nor sceptical, but perfectly just, and have been ratified by the gradual abandonment, either avowed or implied, of such ultra-phaenomenal researches among the major part of philosophers.'

Grote's view has been criticized by several later scholars, e.g. by A. Chiappelli, on the ground that the distinction between noumenal and phenomenal is foreign to all Greek thought before Plato. It may have been Plato who first formulated it explicitly in those or similar terms, but the contrast between appearance and (non-sensible) reality is a leitmotiv of Presocratic thought, and the whole basis of the present account of the Sophists and their contemporaries is that the question of their relations was at the

¹ Fr. 16 (from Proclus on Hesiod's *Erga* 758) ἔλεγε δὲ τὸ μὲν εἶναι ἀφανὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ δοκεῖν, τὸ δὲ δοκεῖν ἀσθενὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ εἶναι. The implication no doubt was that existence is unknowable, and appearance non-existent, and the Greek would bear the translation 'Existence is unknowable for it does not acquire appearance', etc.

centre of fifth-century philosophical controversy. (Cf. p. 4.) For Heraclitus eyes and ears were untrustworthy unless the mind could interpret their message and discover the underlying truth. Parmenides made the distinction clearly, saying that only the objects of *nous* existed and the phenomenal world was illusion. Democritean atomism also taught the doctrine of a reality behind appearances, a noumenal (the object of 'legitimate' as opposed to 'bastard' cognition) behind the phenomenal. (For the relation of this to Plato's philosophy see vol. II, 462.) This was the legacy which the Sophists inherited and made the most of for their own purposes. Zeller also criticized Grote (ZN, 1367, n. 2), saying that even the Eleatics themselves did not distinguish appearance from what lay behind appearance, but only the true view of things from the false. In fact, however, Parmenides distinguished τὸ ὄν—what exists or is real (or if we follow Kahn, p. 190 above, what is the case)—from τὰ δοκοῦντα, what appears but does not exist, which is what Grote said he did.

(4) OTHER VIEWS: SCEPTICISM EXTREME AND MODERATE

A certain Xenias of Corinth, whom we know only from a brief reference in Sextus,¹ also adopted an extreme scepticism at about this time. According to Sextus 'he said that everything was false, that every impression and opinion is false, and that everything which comes to be comes to be from what is not and everything which is destroyed is destroyed into what is not'. What arguments, if any, he used to support this thesis we do not know, and his assertion is worth quoting simply as another example of the disrepute into which the rival theories of the natural philosophers and especially the logic of Parmenides had brought the whole subject of the nature of reality and the possibility of change. It was Parmenides who expressly attacked the idea that anything could come into being from what is not (fr. 8.6ff.), but the whole of Presocratic philosophy and indeed all Greek thinking up to now had been based on the unquestioned assumption that *ex nihilo nihil fit*.²

¹ *Math.* 7.53. Mentions of him in §388 and *P.H.* 2.76 add nothing. The only indication of his date is that according to Sextus he was old enough to have been mentioned by Democritus. On Xenias in the context of his time see now Lloyd, *Pol. & Anal.* 113, and in general von Fritz in *RE*, 2. Reihe, xviii. Halbb. (1967), 1438f., who has misgivings about the trustworthiness of Sextus's report.

² For the Parmenidean thesis οὐδ' εἶναι πολλά ἀλλὰ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν as the logical conclusion of archaic thought based on the principle ἐκ μὴ ὄντος οὐδὲν ἂν γενέσθαι see *Ar. Phys.* 191a 23-33.

Xeniades and Cratylus

Cratylus, a younger contemporary of Socrates (Plato, *Crat.* 429d, 440d), carried to extremes the Heraclitean doctrine of the flux or impermanence of everything in the sensible world. Aristotle, discussing in his *Metaphysics* the sceptical doctrines that every statement is both true and false, or alternatively that no true statement can be made, attributes them to a belief that there is no existence outside the sensible world, in which (i) contraries emerge from the same thing, and (ii) everything is constantly moving and changing.¹ The latter observation, he goes on (1010a10), blossomed into the most extreme of these doctrines, that of the 'Heraclitizers' and Cratylus, who finally decided that he ought to say nothing at all, but only moved his finger, and criticized Heraclitus for saying that one cannot step twice into the same river on the ground that one could not do so even once. He evidently thought (as one would expect from what is put into his mouth in Plato's *Cratylus*) that to utter any statement is to commit oneself to the affirmation that something *is*.²

In the fifth-century controversy about *nomos* and *physis*, it has now become clear that two positions must be distinguished among those who were sufficiently serious philosophers to trouble about the ontological and epistemological implications of their views. (This did not include all the controversialists, for the argument itself arose in the context of practical human action and was used primarily to advocate a certain attitude to law and morality.) It was possible to think that law and custom, and with them the totality of sense-impressions, were to be contrasted as mutable and relative with a *nature* which was stable, permanent and knowable, opposing like Democritus what was 'by *nomos*' to what was 'in reality'. It may be that 'we really know nothing, for truth is in the depths' (Democr. fr. 117), but there the truth is, if we can dive deep enough to find it. Alternatively it was held

¹ For these characteristics of the sensible world cf. especially Melissus, fr. 8.3: 'It appears to us that hot becomes cold and cold hot, hard becomes soft and soft hard, the living dies, and is born out of the non-living; that all these things change, and what was and what is now are in no way alike: iron which is hard is worn away by contact with the finger, as are gold and stone and every other tough-seeming substance, while out of water come earth and stone. It follows that we do not see or recognize what is real (τὰ ὄντα).' See vol. II, 105, and Morrison in *Phronesis*, 1961, 11.

² *Crat.* 429d. (Presumably he did not carry consistency so far as to deny himself speech in making the criticism of Heraclitus.) This argument is attributed explicitly to Antisthenes; see p. 810 below.

that there was no objective and permanent reality behind appearances and therefore, since these were purely subjective, no possibility of scientific knowledge. No natural philosopher believed this, but sophists seized on the inconsistencies between their accounts as evidence that they were not to be trusted. (Cf. Gorgias, *Hel.* 13, p. 51 above.) It was these sceptics whom Aristotle criticized for making every statement true and false, or true statements impossible, and they included Protagoras and Gorgias. It has been claimed that Antiphon was also of their number.¹ The evidence is scanty and dubious, but so far as it exists it points to a different conclusion. It is confined to fr. 1, a passage in Galen which exists only in a corrupt form and has been variously restored.² The most thorough examination, with the most convincing result, is that of Morrison.³ Galen first says (Critias fr. 40, p. 302 below) that Critias in the second book of his homilies frequently opposes the mind to the senses, then adds that Antiphon does the same in the first book of his *Truth*. There follows the quotation, which therefore, whatever its precise import, must express a contrast between thought and sense. In Morrison's translation it runs: 'When a man says a single thing there is no corresponding single meaning (νοῦς), nor is the subject of his speech any single thing either of those things which the most powerful beholder sees with his sight or of those things which the most powerful knower knows with his mind.'⁴

No reading or interpretation can put the meaning completely beyond

¹ So Schmid, *Gesch.* 1.3.1, 160: 'Antiphon joins in the epistemological scepticism of Protagoras and Gorgias, in that he also contests the possibility of real knowledge and confines himself within the limits of δόξα. Within this framework he distinguishes two levels of cognition: a higher one through the mind (γνώμη) and a lower one through the senses, which in his view as in that of the Eleatics and the atomists cannot communicate any valuable cognition.' Yet every other contemporary thinker who distinguished between mental and sensual perception associated the one with real knowledge and the other with δόξα, and so far as I can see Schmid produces no evidence at all for the surprising idea that Antiphon, though he accepted both modes of cognition, saw the functions of both alike as confined within the limits of δόξα.

² *In Hipp. De med. off.* xviii B., 656 K. Besides the attempts given by DK in their apparatus, that of H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 67) and the interpretation of Untersteiner, who accepts Bignone's text (*Sophs.* 235 and 258), may be noted. Cf. also Stenzel in *RE*, suppl. iv, 37.

³ *Phronesis*, 1963, 36 ff. His text of the fr. itself is as follows: ἐν τῷ [or better τοῖ] λέγοντι οὐδέ γε νοῦς εἶ, ἐν τε οὐδὲν αὐτῶ οὔτε ὧν ὅψει ὀρεῖ (ὁ ὀρεῶν) μακρότατα οὔτε ὧν γνώμη γινώσκει ὁ μακρότατα γινώσκων.

⁴ Literally 'the man who sees farthest' (or most deeply, μακρότατα) with his sight and 'the man who has the deepest insight (or power of recognition, γινώσκων) with his mind (γνώμη).' I have altered Morrison's 'seer' to 'beholder' to avoid the former's misleading associations with prophecy.

Antiphon

doubt, but Antiphon seems to be criticizing the ambiguity of language and the shifting meaning of words, which renders them incapable of expressing reality, with the implication that such a constant reality does exist. Even phenomena, if the senses are keen enough, can be 'a sight of the unseen', as Anaxagoras and Democritus held (vol. II, 459), though both were emphatic in contrasting the powers of sense and intellect and insisting on an unseen reality behind the perceptible flux of becoming. (It was of course an aspect of physical body no less than the phenomena, not a *noumenon* in the Platonic or Aristotelian sense.) They would agree with Heraclitus that the senses delude unless subject to an understanding mind. Antiphon seems to have followed them rather than the Eleatics who denied that the senses could assist in any way whatsoever towards the apprehension of 'what is'.

It is in keeping with this that Antiphon, unlike Gorgias who threw doubt on all the theories of the *physici* alike, made his own study of the natural world, which took up a large part of the second book of his *Truth*. The fragments show him speaking in traditional Presocratic style of cosmogony (the 'ordering' of the world) and of the cosmic whirl, of the nature of the sun and moon, eclipses, hail, earthquakes and the sea, and of biological matters.¹ The contrast between natural and artificial he illustrated, in a passage criticized by Aristotle, by saying that if one were to bury a wooden bed and the rotting wood went out a shoot, what came up would be simply wood, not another bed.² Nor does fr. 1, as here interpreted, conflict with the ethical views expounded in the papyrus fragments of *Truth*, where the reality and inevitability of nature are opposed to the artificiality of *nomos* as truth to appearance, and *nomos* is stigmatized as a shackle imposed on nature.³

¹ Frs. 23-36 (fr. 15, on the origin of life from putrefying matter, is referred to book 1). Not that his recorded observations on these topics show any originality. So far as the scanty fragments go, they seem to be a hotchpotch of Presocratic ideas, going back to Heraclitus and Empedocles, and common to Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia. On the influence of Anaxagoras cf. Momigliano in *Riv. di Filol.* 1930, 134f., and for a summary Freeman, *Comp.* 395f.

² *Ar. Phys.* 193a9, cited also more briefly by Harpocration. See fr. 15 in DK. On Aristotle's criticism of Antiphon here see Guthrie in *CQ*, 1946.

³ Fr. 44 A, pp. 108f. above. For a fuller discussion of the bearing of these fragments on Antiphon's ontological views, and their relation to the use of language, see Morrison's valuable article in *Phronesis*, 1963. Of Antiphon's remarks in fr. 44 B (*Oxy. Pap.* 1797, p. 110 above, about the inconsistency of applying the name 'justice' to the bearing of true witness), Morrison says (p. 44): 'This argument, again, tends to the rejection of common names, which have no single meaning, and adopting instead concepts which are based on nature.'

(5) LANGUAGE AND ITS OBJECTS

No doubt Antiphon was not a profound philosopher, but one may regret the scantiness of our knowledge of him because what we have gives us one brief glimpse of a much-debated theme: the relation of language to its subject-matter. His reference to the equivocal use of words in Galen's quotation is obviously disapproving, and in another place Galen, commenting on the fact that 'each one of those concerned with *logoi* thinks fit to coin new names', adds that this is made sufficiently plain by Antiphon, 'who teaches how they ought to be made'.¹ Presumably his teaching was that they should be made to fit the concepts which they were intended to express. The problem of the correctness of words or names (ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων) aroused widespread interest at this time, and Morrison has clearly shown the importance of this debate 'in the wider investigation of the problem of how ὄντα (existing things) are to be known' (*loc. cit.* 49). Antiphon's position in this debate was perhaps not far from that taken up by his sparring-partner Socrates, at least with reference to moral terms: on the meaning of 'just' and 'good' we disagree with each other and even with ourselves, and this is a state of things that calls for remedy.² Morrison (*loc. cit.* 42 f.) gives good reasons for supposing that even the method by which, in Plato, Socrates proposes to rectify it, namely 'division according to natural kinds' (κατ' εἶδη διατέμνειν ἢ πέφυκεν, *Phaedr.* 265 e, cf. *Rep.* 454a), was not invented by Plato but current in the fifth century. He cites the *Clouds* of Aristophanes (740 f.), and the Hippocratic *De arte* 2 (quoted by DK after fr. 1 of Antiphon). There the writer says that the arts, or sciences (*technai*, p. 115, n. 3, above), take their terminology from the kinds (εἶδεα), not *vice versa*, for words are an attempt to impose legislation on nature (νομοθετήματα φύσεως), whereas the kinds are not conventionally imposed but natural growths (βλαστήματα). One is reminded also of Antiphon's contrast between nature as a matter of growth and law as conventional agreement.³

¹ Galen, *Gloss. Hipp. proem.* v, 706 B., xix, 66, 7 K., quoted by Morrison, *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* 1961, 49. οἱ περὶ λόγους ἔχοντες sounds very general, but λόγων τέχνη referred particularly to rhetoric (pp. 177 f. above).

² Plato, *Phaedrus* 263 a; see p. 165 above.

³ Fr. 44 A, DK 11, 347: τὰ τῆς φύσεως φύντα οὐχ ὁμολογηθέντα. See p. 108 above. On the *De arte* passage Heinimann, *N. u. Ph.* 157; and cf. *Nat. hom.* 5 (*ibid.* p. 159). Also relevant is Xen. *Mem.* 4.5.11-12 (*Socrates*, pp. 119 f.).

Instruction in 'the correctness of names' is ascribed by Plato to Protagoras, Prodicus, and the Sophists in general.¹ It is sometimes taken to mean simply the correct, or effective, use of language as we should understand it, and we may be sure that for most of the Sophists, as teachers of rhetoric, it included that. But Plato's *Cratylus* shows that the question at issue was whether the names of things had an inherent, or natural, fitness or were merely conventional signs. Two expressions have to be considered, *orthoepeia*, of which the nearest possible translation is perhaps 'correct diction', and 'the correctness of names' (ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων). Both have been thought to be the titles of books by Protagoras, but this is at least uncertain.² They do not necessarily mean the same. *Onoma* is a single word, a name or a noun. *Epos* may mean a word, saying or speech, but was also a current term for poetry (not only epic); and Fehling has drawn attention to the significance of *Prot.* 338^{eff.}, where Protagoras claims that an educated man ought to be skilled in this subject so as to understand when a poet is composing correctly and when not,³ and challenges Socrates to interpret a poem of Simonides. Moreover in his grammatical pronouncements the target of his criticism is the *Iliad*. (See pp. 220 and 221, n. 2, below.) Fehling concludes that he had no systematic programme to offer, but suggestions for the right use of language set in the framework of a criticism of poetry. That *orthoepeia* had this reference is indicated by the title of Democritus's work 'On Homer, *orthoepeia* and unusual words', from which a comment on Homeric

¹ Protagoras, *Crat.* 391 c; Prodicus, *Crat.* 384 b, *Euthyd.* 277 e; the Sophists, *Crat.* 391 b.

² At *Phaedr.* 267 c Plato introduces ὀρθοεπεία in connexion with Protagoras, and Hackforth translates it as the title of a book. Murray (*Gk. Stud.* 176) assumed that π. ὀρθ. ὀνομ. was an alternative title for it, presumably (though he gave no reference) on the strength of *Crat.* 391 c, where Hermogenes is recommended to ask his brother τὴν ὀρθότητα περὶ τῶν τοιούτων [sc. the nature of names] ἦν ἔμαθε παρὰ Πρωταγόρου; Classen on the other hand (*P. Afr. C.S.* 1959, 34 f.) thinks ὀρθοεπεία was no more than a slogan or catchword, but it is at least vouched for as a title among the works of Democritus (fr. 20a, from a scholium on Dion. Thrac.), though not among Protagoras's as listed by D.L. (9.55). Actually the reply of Hermogenes at *Crat.* 391 c shows clearly enough that whatever Protagoras wrote on the subject occurred in the Ἄληθεια.

Prodicus is usually connected with ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων, but a late writer (Themistius, *Or.* 23, p. 150 Dindorf) says that he taught ὀρθοεπεία and ὀρθορρημοσύνη. The catch-phrase is brought in by Aristophanes in connexion with Euripides (τῆς ὀρθότητος τῶν ἑπῶν, *Frogs* 1181).

³ πρὶ ἑπῶν δεῖνόν εἶναι· ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεγόμενα ὁλόν τ' εἶναι συνίεναι, ἢ ἢ ὀρθῶς πεποιήται καὶ ἄ μὴ. The association of the words ἔπη and ὀρθῶς surely is suggestive. See Fehling in *Rh. Mus.* 1965, 213.

vocabulary has survived.¹ Like the study of the 'correctness of names' it probably included speculation on the natural fitness of names to what they signified, for Socrates introduces Homer as an authority on the latter subject, citing first of all his practice of mentioning two names for a thing, one used by men and the other by the gods: 'obviously the gods must call them by the names which rightly and naturally belong to them' (*Crat.* 391d).

'Correctness of names' is the subject of the *Cratylus*, which discusses two opposing views.

1. The fact that a group of men have agreed what they will call a thing does not make that its name: indeed a word which has no further warranty is not a name at all. Belonging to each thing is one natural and proper name, the same for Greeks and foreigners alike. It must be supposed to have been bestowed by an original name-giver or legislator who had complete insight into the nature of the thing itself, doubtless as a result of superhuman powers.²

2. To this thesis of Cratylus Hermogenes opposes his own that correctness of names is determined solely by convention and agreement, and differs for different people. Asked for his own opinion, Socrates at first supports Cratylus. To maintain the completely arbitrary character of names leads inevitably to accepting the Protagorean thesis that there is no objective reality but things too are different for each individual, or else that of Euthydemus that all things possess all attributes together and all the time. This they agree is wrong. Putting it in his own teleological terms, Socrates argues that actions (πράξεις) like things (πράγματα) have a fixed nature and must be performed with the proper instrument, as cutting with a knife. This includes speech, whose instruments, namely words or names (ὀνόματα), have the func-

¹ He approved the use of ἀλλοφροεῖν as a term for mental derangement. See vol. II, 452, n. 1. That this occurred in the above-mentioned work is not expressly stated, but it seems the obvious place.

² νομοθέτης, 429a, ὁ θεμενος (τιθέμενος) τὰ ὀνόματα, 436b-c, 438a. Hence as Fehling has pointed out (*Rh. Mus.* 1965, 218 ff.), the later contrast between a φύσει and a θέσει theory of names is not appropriate at this date. (Perhaps one should not overlook the attribution of it to Democritus by Proclus, in Democr. fr. 26, but in all probability Proclus is importing the categories of his own time. See Momigliano, *Atti Torino*, 1929-30, 95 f.) The opposition is between θέσις (κατὰ φύσιν) by a single, mythical divine or heroic εὐρετής and the collective action (δμολογία or συνθήκη) of an evolving society. (For the place of speech in evolutionary theories of society cf. Diod. p. 81 above, and Soph. *Ant.* p. 80; and for the divine teacher Eur. *Suppl.* p. 80.)

tion of teaching about, and distinguishing, the essences of real things. They are given by *nomos*, and hence by a legislator or word-maker who (on the analogy of other crafts, e.g. a shuttle-maker who subserves the work of the weaver) must produce the name naturally fitted for its object, working under the direction of the skilled user, that is, the dialectician, or expert at discussion.

In what, then, does the correctness of names consist? Socrates disclaims knowledge—this is the province of the Sophists and poets—but is induced to expound a theory. A name is a vocal imitation of an object—not in the crude sense in which one imitates a cow by saying 'moo', but conveying the nature of the thing, as, if we had not speech, we might convey the nature of heaviness by a downward movement of the hand. Words being compound or simple, this applies most directly to the simple, and still more directly to the letters and syllables of which they are composed. These are like the pigments which the painter may use either singly or in combination to build up his picture. The form of the word will sometimes show it obviously enough, e.g. the letter *r* imitates motion or violent action, *l* smoothness; but many words have become so battered and distorted in the course of history that the intention of the original name-maker is no longer recognizable. Socrates then proceeds to illustrate his point by a series of etymologies most of which are obviously fanciful, making evident his own sceptical attitude towards them by several ironic remarks.¹ He is parodying a current practice,² and keeping his own opinion to himself.

Names, then, are not arbitrary labels, but a form of imitation of their objects. Nevertheless (turning to Cratylus) it must be said that, as with painters, some will be better imitators than others, and so will be their products, the names. Cratylus disagrees. Either the names are right, or they are nothing, simply unmeaning noises like the banging of a gong. (It is in keeping with this that Cratylus avows himself one of those who hold that it is impossible to speak falsely.) Socrates

¹ E.g. the references to Euthyphro at 396d–e, 400a, 407d. Under his influence Socrates has become possessed, and is uttering his etymologies under divine inspiration. He will let it run today, but tomorrow will find someone, 'either a priest or a Sophist', to purge it away. Elsewhere (426b) he describes his etymological guesses more straightforwardly as 'presumptuous and ridiculous'.

² A practice with which Euripides shows himself familiar when his Hecuba connects the opening syllables of 'Aphrodite' with ἀφροσύνη, 'folly'. (*Tro.* 989 f.: note the inevitable ἀφροσύνη.)

counters that an imitation can never be exactly like the original in all respects, or it would *be* the original, but Cratylus remains unconvinced, and falls back on the superhuman power of the original inventor of names.¹

These linguistic theories have an obvious connexion with current theories of knowledge and of reality. The thesis of Hermogenes, that words are of purely arbitrary and conventional origin, is agreed in the dialogue to lead to the Protagorean doctrine that there is no reality behind appearances. The opposite view of Cratylus allows for a reality (*physis*) to which the name is essentially united (383a), so that 'he who knows the names knows the things also' (435d). False opinion or statement is impossible, but for the opposite reason to that given by Protagoras. Whereas he dissolved reality in appearance, this more paradoxical theory (which as we shall see immediately was that of Antisthenes) holds that there is a *physis* for everything and no possibility of naming or describing it wrongly. To apply to it what others would call the wrong name or *logos* is to utter no name at all but merely unmeaning noises (430a, 438c). Only Socrates puts forward an explanation of language based on the antithesis commonly called sophistic, and maintained especially clearly by Democritus and Antiphon, between *physis* and *nomos*. Things have a fixed nature, and words are an attempt to reproduce that nature through the medium of sound; but such imitation is never perfect, and in some cases very imperfect, even from the beginning, besides which the words have become corrupted through use and the passage of time (421d). Nor are the imitations attempted in different parts of the world the same. (The possibility of a non-Greek origin for some words is mentioned at 409d-e, 416a, 425e.) Further, just as a picture of Smith may be wrongly identified as a picture of Jones, so a word too may be wrongly identified with something other than that of which it is the image (430c). On such a theory it could well be true, as Antiphon said, that

¹ Aristotle in the first chapters of *De interpr.* obviously has his eye on the *Cratylus*. He sides with Hermogenes in maintaining (16a19) that a name is φωνή σημαντική κατά συνθήκην and that this means (a27) ὅτι φύσει τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅταν γένηται σύμβολον. He distinguishes between inarticulate sounds, common to early man and animals, which are natural and convey meaning but are not yet language, and 'names' which are conventional (a28, ἐηλοῦσι γέ τι καὶ οἱ ἀγρόμαστοι ψόφοι, οἷον θηρίων, ὧν οὐδέν ἐστιν ὄνομα). See on this L. Amundsen in *Symb. Osf.* 1966, 11 f.

men usually or conventionally apply the word 'justice' to what is not truly, correctly or naturally just. The end of the *Cratylus* affords another fascinating glimpse (cf. p. 187, n. 3, above) of the way in which Socrates turned sophistic arguments to his own purposes. He suddenly asks Cratylus if, granted that words are images of things, it is not better to learn of the reality which an image expresses rather than only of the image. Cratylus cannot dispute this, and Socrates leads him on from it to his own 'dream' of absolute and unchanging forms of beauty, goodness and the rest, which alone can be said to be real and knowable, and are different from their fleeting representations in a fair face or a good action. Cratylus is still inclined to stick to his own Heraclitean position, and the dialogue ends, like so many, in an agreement to give the matter further thought. But in a reader's mind the seed has been sown.

Antisthenes, a disciple of Socrates who was among the intimate circle present at his death, showed his sense of the importance of language by entitling a work 'On Education, or on Names', and declaring that 'the foundation of education is the study of names'. Caizzi says truly: 'The problem of the relation between things and names, or better the close connexion of the one with the other, is fundamental to Antisthenes's thought and will have important consequences.'¹

Unfortunately we are still dealing with fragmentary quotations, and it is difficult to be certain what Antisthenes's teaching was. As we have seen (p. 182, n. 2, above), he like Protagoras was credited with the thesis that it is impossible to contradict or to speak falsely, and it is commonly thought that he was one of those who held that to predicate one thing of another was erroneous: it is not admissible to say 'man is good', but only 'man is man' and 'good is good'. In fact the two doctrines are held to be inseparable,² but recent work has shown that this need not necessarily be so. We must look at the evidence.

¹ ἀρχὴ παιδείσεως ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπίσκεψις, fr. 38. (References are to Caizzi's edition of the fragments.) The title of the work occurs in D.L.'s list (6.17). See also Caizzi in *Stud. Urb.* 1964, 31. For Antisthenes in general see pp. 304ff. below.

² Grote, *Plato*, III, 521: "'Man is good" was an inadmissible proposition: affirming different things to be the same, or one thing to be many. Accordingly it was impossible for two speakers really to contradict each other.' (My italics.)

In his 'philosophical dictionary' (*Metaph.* Δ),¹ Aristotle deals with the concept 'false'. It may refer (a) to things or facts, if they are non-existent (e.g. a diagonal commensurate with the side) or produce the appearance of something non-existent (e.g. dreams, or illusionist painting); (b) to *logoi*. Here Aristotle will have had in mind the classic difficulty, often referred to by Plato and used by Antisthenes himself in support of his thesis of the impossibility of contradiction: 'Every *logos* (statement) is true, for he who speaks says something, he who says something says what is, and he who says what is speaks truth.'² Speaking absolutely ('*qua* false'), says Aristotle, a false *logos* is of what is not, therefore in practice when we speak of a false *logos* we mean one which belongs to something other than that to which it is applied, e.g. the *logos* of circle is false if applied to a triangle. (A triangle every point on which is equidistant from a given point does not exist, yet the *logos* 'plane figure every point on which is equidistant from a given point' does exist; i.e. it describes something which is; it has only been misapplied.) Further, although there is in a sense only one *logos* of each thing, namely that which describes its essence, in another sense there are many, since the thing itself and the thing plus certain non-essential attributes are somehow the same, e.g. Socrates and educated Socrates (or Socrates the educated man). This is the reason, he goes on, why it was foolish of Antisthenes to suppose that a thing can only be spoken of by its proper *logos*, one to one; from which it followed that it is impossible to contradict, and practically impossible to speak falsely.

The meaning of *logos* here emerges from the context. It has been understood as a single word or term,³ but clearly means a description, or statement of what a thing is. This accords with D.L. 6.3: Antisthenes said 'a *logos* is that which sets forth what a thing was or is'.⁴

¹ 1024b 17 ff. The reference to Antisthenes comes at line 32.

² Procl. *In Crat.* 37 Pasq. (Antisth. fr. 49): "Α. ἔλεγε μὴ δεῖν ἀντιλέγειν. πῶς γάρ, φησι, λόγος ἀληθεύει. ὁ γὰρ λέγων τι λέγει, ὁ δὲ τι λέγων τὸ ὄν λέγει, ὁ δὲ τὸ ὄν λέγων ἀληθεύει. Caizzi (*Stud. Urb.* 34f.) detects a discrepancy between Aristotle's witness and Proclus's, and suspects that Proclus has given a current justification of Antisthenes's paradox without going back to the original source.

³ Campbell, *Theaet.* xli: 'There is only one term applicable to one thing.' He refers not to Aristotle but to Isocr. *Hel.* οὐδὲ δύο λόγῳ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πραγμάτων ἀντιπεῖν, where the rendering 'terms' seems even more improbable in the context. According to Plato in the *Sophist* (262a ff.) a *logos* must contain at least a noun and a verb.

⁴ Fr. 45. Caizzi notes (*Stud. Urb.* 29) that its authenticity is confirmed by Alexander, *In Top.* 42, 13 ff. (fr. 46). Alexander, commenting on Aristotle's definition of a definition as λόγος ὁ τὸ

The 'foolishness' of Antisthenes is enlarged on by pseudo-Alexander in his commentary (Antisth. fr. 44 B), who explains how the assertion that each thing has only one *logos* led to the impossibility of speaking falsely or of two people contradicting each other. To contradict, they must say different things about the same thing, but since each thing has only one *logos* (which after all, in addition to any more specialized uses, means simply 'one thing which can be said—λέγεσθαι—about it') this is impossible. If they say different things they must be speaking about different things and hence not contradicting each other. None of our authorities gives examples, and modern scholars have been similarly reticent.¹ Presumably Antisthenes would have claimed that 'one cannot say' 'man is a winged and feathered animal', for that is to say what is not, i.e. to say nothing (οὐδὲν λέγειν).² He who says nothing cannot contradict or be contradicted, and the only alternative is that, although uttering the sound 'man', the speaker is really talking about birds and so, once again, is not contradicting another who gives a different *logos* of man.³

Such theories of language are made more comprehensible by the probability that they owed their origin to the prestige enjoyed by rhetoric, the art of persuasion. For Gorgias persuasion was sovereign because there was no truth over and above what a man could be persuaded to believe, and Protagoras was already teaching his pupils that on every subject opposite positions could be argued with equal

τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνων, defends the insertion of εἶναι on the grounds that without it the formula might apply equally to a statement of the genus (it is an answer to the question 'What is man?' to say 'He is an animal'; or, in the Peripatetic terminology of Alexander, genus is a predicate in the category of being), which however does not by itself constitute a definition. 'The ἦν, then, is not sufficient by itself as some have thought, of whom Antisthenes appears to have been the first.'

¹ My discussion of these matters owes much to Caizzi's lucid interpretations in *Stud. Urb.* 1964. Nevertheless more concrete examples would have been welcome there too, especially in the discussion of essence and accidental attributes on pp. 33f. For Antisthenes (says the author), to say 'Socrates is black' would be to say nothing at all, whereas for Aristotle it is to say Socrates with an untrue predicate. One would welcome a similar illustration of a *logos* of the essence of Socrates which would maintain the difference between the two philosophers. Field gives the example of a triangle (*P. and Contemps.* 166). This is helpful, but mathematical definitions are a special case, and the application of the theory to natural objects is not so obvious to us.

² For the effect on problems of this kind of the ambiguous Greek phrase οὐδὲν λέγειν cf. vol. II, 20. The doctrine expounded here is that parodied by Plato at *Euthyd.* 285 dff. and referred to πολλοὶ δὲ, and in particular to οἱ ἀμφὶ Πρωταγόραν.

³ If this sounds implausible, I can only say that I see no alternative explanation, and that others have interpreted Antisthenes similarly but softened the implausibility by refraining from illustrating their interpretations with examples. Cf., in its context, Arist. *Metaph.* 1006b20.

validity, what a man believed was true for him, and no man could contradict another in the sense of opposing a true view to a false. Antisthenes may have gone further than Protagoras in attempting a philosophical explanation of how this could be so. In connexion with the last paragraph it is interesting that Plato (*Phaedrus* 260b) examines the effects of applying the name 'horse' to the *logos* of donkey ('tame animal with the largest ears'), and persuading someone that the creature signified by this *logos* possesses the virtues generally ascribed to horses, in order to compare them to the harm done by rhetoricians who, ignorant themselves of the nature of good and evil, advocate evil as being really good.¹ Antisthenes himself wrote rhetorical exercises, of which we still possess speeches of Odysseus and Ajax, contending for the arms of Achilles.²

But Aristotle has more about Antisthenes (or his followers). Elsewhere in the *Metaphysics* (1043b23) he says: 'Therefore the difficulty which was raised by the Antistheneans and other such crude thinkers is not inapposite, that you cannot define what a thing is, because a definition is an extended *logos*.³ You can explain what it is like, e.g. of silver you cannot say what it is, but only that it is like tin. There *is* a class of substance of which definition (ὄρος) or *logos* is possible, namely composite substance, whether sensible or intelligible; but its elements cannot be defined, since definition predicates one thing of another, and the one must be matter and the other form.'

As an example, pseudo-Alexander *ad loc.* (Antisth. fr. 44 B) takes 'man'. 'Man' is a name. We may say he is a rational mortal animal, but this in turn is only a string of names. We are simply listing, enumerating or naming his elements, but neither separately nor collectively do they provide a definition,⁴ for a definition is different from

¹ There is a story in D.L. (6.8) that Antisthenes taunted the Athenians with the ignorance of their *stratēgoi* by saying that they ought to vote that donkeys are horses (or 'vote donkeys into the position of horses', τοὺς ὄνους ἵππους ψηφισασθαι).

² FR. 14 and 15 Caizzi. He is said to have been a pupil of Gorgias before he met Socrates (p. 306, n. 2, below), and to have adopted a rhetorical style in his dialogues.

³ λόγος μακρός. That this phrase was used by Antisthenes himself is vouched for by pseudo-Alexander, *In Met.* 554.3 Hayd. It suggests evasion, and Warrington renders it *ad sensum*, 'circumlocution'. Ross on *Metaph.* 1091a7 gives some evidence from literature that the word had a contemptuous flavour.

⁴ Aristotle was speaking a little carelessly, or from his own point of view, when at 1043b29 he used the two words ὄρον καὶ λόγον to describe Antisthenes's view.

a name. What is 'rational' or 'animal'? Even if we can divide them into further pluralities of names, yet ultimately we shall come to a simple, elemental entity which cannot be so divided, and this will be indefinable. But how can we claim to have defined, or explained the being of, something if we have simply described it as composed of elements which are themselves indefinable?

Plato in the *Theaetetus* (201 d ff.) describes a similar doctrine anonymously. There can be no *logos* of the first elements of which we and everything else consist; they can only be named. But the compounds made up out of them, being complex themselves, can have the names belonging to them combined to make a *logos*, for this is just what a *logos* is, a combination of names. Elements, then, are inexplicable and unknowable, but can be perceived, whereas complexes are knowable and explicable and comprehensible by a true opinion.

The theory assumes that a complex whole is no more than its parts put together in a certain way. To this Aristotle opposes his own view (inspired by Plato) that the essence or substance of anything, which is expressed in its definition (the 'what it was to be the thing'), is not simply elements-plus-combination but a new, unitary 'form'. For him a definition must include an expression of the cause (see e.g. *An. Post.* 2 ch. 10, *Metaph.* 1043 a 14 ff.), that is, the final cause, for in fact Aristotle's theory of substance amounts to an assertion of his faith in teleology. A house is not to be defined as bricks enclosing a space and covered by a roof. If that were all that could be said, Antisthenes would be right, for that is merely an enumeration of (ultimately indefinable) elements and their arrangement. It is defined by saying that it is a shelter for man and his possessions, and this type of definition applies to natural objects also, for 'nature makes nothing without a purpose' (*De caelo* 291 b 13, *De an.* 432 b 21, etc.).¹

As far as can be judged from these second-hand and hostile reports, it does not seem likely that Antisthenes supported the doctrine that none but identical predication is possible. This is referred to contemp-

¹ Hence Antisthenes's mistake of saying that, when one thing is predicated of another, 'one must be matter and the other form'. All the elements stated in a definition are formal constituents. (This is explained by pseudo-Alexander, *In Metaph.* 554, 11 ff.) For Aristotle individuals are indefinable: only definitions of species and genera are possible. The mistake, in his view, resulted from a confusion between the particular and the universal references of a noun like 'horse'. (Cf. p. 215, n. 3, below.)

tuously by Plato in the *Sophist* (251b) as something that is seized on by 'youths and old men of retarded intellect', 'who object that it is impossible for many things to be one or one many, and enjoy insisting that we must not say a man is good, but only man is man and good is good'. Some have identified this with the thesis ascribed to Antisthenes by Aristotle that 'a thing can only be spoken of by its proper *logos*, one to one', but in the light of other evidence, including that of Aristotle himself, it is plain that *logos* here is not limited to a single term. It is not the same thing as ὄνομα (a name),¹ which in view of the current uses of *logos* would in any case be improbable. If it is true that Antisthenes said 'a *logos* is that which sets forth what a thing was or is', he evidently went on to claim that such a *logos* could only substitute for the name of the thing a collection of the names of its elements, which themselves could only be named. Grote called him the first nominalist, because he denied the existence of those forms or essences (εἶδη or οὐσίαι) of particular things, which Socrates sought to define and Plato was already proclaiming as independent realities. (Antisthenes lived till about 360.) The rivalry between the two philosophies is suggested by the anecdote that Antisthenes said to Plato: 'I see a horse, but I don't see horseness', to which Plato replied: 'No, for you have the eye with which a horse is seen, but you have not yet acquired the eye to see horseness.' This is told by Simplicius, whose teacher Ammonius also quoted the *mot* of Antisthenes as an illustration of his view that 'the kinds or forms existed only in our thoughts' (ἐν ψιλᾷς ἐπινοίαις).²

¹ Grote (*Plato*, III, 521) was one who thought that Aristotle was crediting Antisthenes with the proposition that none but identical propositions were admissible, but had to admit (on p. 526) that in that case the doctrine which Aristotle attributes to οἱ Ἀριστοτέλειοι at *Metaph.* 1043b23 is not in harmony with that which he ascribes to Antisthenes himself. He also thought it probable (p. 507, n. x) that in the *Sophist* Plato does intend to designate Antisthenes as γέρον ὀψιμαθής. (He may have been some 20 years older than Plato.) Apart from the plural, such commentators ignore the fact that the theory is ascribed equally to οἱ νέοι. Contrast Campbell, *Theat.* xxxix: the doctrine of *Theat.* 201 d ff. (which we have seen to be the same as that ascribed to Antisthenes at *Metaph.* 1043b23 ff.) 'is surely very different from such crude nominalism [sc. as that described in the *Soph.*] . . . The opinion quoted, if properly examined, is not a denial of predication, but rather a denial that anything can be predicated of the prime elements . . . which is by no means the same thing.'

² *Simpl. Car.* 208, 28; Ammon. *In Porph. Isag.* 40, 6 (Antisth. fr. 50 A and C). The story is told in a slightly different form of Diogenes the Cynic, naturally enough considering that he was Antisthenes's pupil and Antisthenes himself came to be regarded as the founder of the Cynic

If however nominalism is the doctrine that assumes, as a recent definition has it, 'that language imposes its own structure upon a reality which by itself lacks any such distinctions',¹ it does not appear that Antisthenes was its advocate. His teaching does not resemble the convention-theory of names maintained by Hermogenes in Plato's *Cratylus*, so much as the nature-theory of Cratylus² according to which names have a natural affinity with their objects (or, if they do not, they are not names, and the man who utters them 'says nothing', 429b ff.): they 'reveal the things' (433d), and he who knows the names knows the things also (435d). A complex object can be analysed by naming its elements, but the elements can only be named or described analogically (silver like tin). They are grasped by intuition or perception ('I see a horse'; cf. *Theaet.* 202b), but cannot be explained, or known as knowledge was understood by Socrates and Plato, for whom it meant the ability to give a *logos* of the essence of the thing known. If we may judge by the criticisms of Plato and Aristotle, Caizzi is right in saying that Antisthenes's theory of 'one, and only one, proper *logos* for each thing' is based on a lack of the distinction between essential and accidental predication plus a confusion between proper and common names.³ Predication is not impossible, but it must

school. Whether historically true or not, it is certainly *bien trouvé*. Other stories were also current testifying to the ill will between him and Plato, against whom he wrote a dialogue under the opprobrious name of Sathon. (See p. 310, n. 2, below.)

¹ Lorenz and Mittelstrass, *Mind*, 1967, 1. They themselves add (p. 5) that realism and nominalism can be recognized as variants of the nature-theory and the convention-theory of the *Cratylus*. It might be interesting to compare the latter with the conventionalist theory of necessary truth as it appears in Hobbes, who like the fifth-century philosophers saw a close connexion between names and truth: 'the first truths were arbitrarily made by those that first of all imposed names upon things'. See W. and M. Kneale, *Dev. of Logic*, 311f.

² A similar conclusion was reached by von Fritz in *Hermes*, 1927: it is Antisthenean doctrine, 'gleichgültig, ob dort Antisthenes persönlich oder allein gemeint ist oder nicht' (p. 462). See also Dümmler, *Akad.* 5. Field, however, in a carefully reasoned account, concluded that 'there is no real evidence for associating him with either view' (*P. and Contemps.* 168).

³ *Stud. Urb.* 34. (The confusion would be facilitated by the fact that at this primitive stage of grammatical study the one word *ὄνομα* had to do duty for both 'name' and 'noun'. According to Lorenz and Mittelstrass (*Mind*, 1967, 5), it persists in the *Cratylus* and throughout Plato's writings.) Cf. 32: 'For Plato [and, one might add, for Aristotle] the object of definition is not the particular but the universal. . . Therefore. . . the denial of *ποιότης* implies also the denial of the definition of what a thing is. According to Antisthenes we not only see but know the individual horse, in whose name is included all that is proper to it. He does not seem to have realized that this would imply the necessity of a name for every single thing, not only for every class.' And on p. 31: 'The problem of predication, which the thesis that only names can express the essence seemed to have rendered impossible, is therefore to be resolved on this plane, i.e. basically the descriptive.'

be assumed that whatever follows the copula is essential to the subject (a part of 'what it is'), and if any of the elements named is inapplicable to the subject the whole *logos* must be dismissed as meaningless. (He was misled, says pseudo-Alexander, *In Metaph.* 435, 1, by the fact that a false *logos* is not absolutely or primarily (μη ἀπλῶς μηδὲ κυρίως) the *logos* of anything into saying that it was nothing at all.)

On those who denied the possibility of predicating one thing of another, Aristotle has this to say:

The more recent of previous philosophers were disturbed by the thought of making the same thing one and many. For this reason some abolished the word 'is',¹ as Lycophron did, while others altered the form of the expression, saying not 'the man is white' but 'the man has-been-whitened' [λελεύκωται, one word in Greek], not 'is walking' but 'walks', lest by adding 'is' they should make the one many, as if 'one' or 'being' had only one sense.²

Simplicius (*Phys.* 91) explains that Lycophron simply omitted the verb 'is', saying 'white Socrates'³ for 'Socrates is white', as if to state the attribute in this way did not involve the addition of anything real; but if it did not, he adds, then there would be no difference between saying 'Socrates' and 'white Socrates'. It was to avoid the consequence that no significant statement was possible that the 'others' (whom neither he nor Aristotle identifies) tried using other verbs instead of the offensive copula. If Lycophron thought it admissible to say 'white Socrates' he cannot, any more than Antisthenes, have been one of those at whom Plato is tilting in the *Sophist* (251b). The only other thing known about his theory of knowledge is that he described knowledge as 'an intercourse (συνουσία) of the *psyche* with the act of knowing'. So Aristotle puts it (*Metaph.* 1045b9ff.), and pseudo-Alexander explains (563, 21; DK, 83, 1): 'Lycophron when

¹ Sc. as copula. Simplicius (*Phys.* 91) adds that Lycophron allowed its existential use. For Lycophron see pp. 313f. below.

² *Phys.* 185b25. To say that Socrates is (a) white, (b) a philosopher, and (c) an Athenian would be to make the one subject, Socrates, many (Philop. *Phys.* 49, 17).

³ Actually Σ. λευκός in the Greek, not λευκός Σ. One cannot fully understand these people without reference to current idiom. The copula frequently was omitted in speech and writing, so that Σ. λευκός is as much a complete sentence, meaning 'Socrates is white', as if the ἔστι were expressly inserted. Lycophron was a little naive if he thought that those who omitted it were correcting a logical fault. Themistius's comment on his procedure was κακῶ τὸ κακὸν λώμενος (*Phys. paraphr.* 7.2 Schenkl, not in DK).

Impossibility of Predication

asked what it was that caused knowledge and the *psyche* to be one, would reply that it was their intercourse'. This 'intercourse' or 'coexistence'¹ of the mind with knowledge suggests a view like that of Antisthenes, not scepticism but belief in knowledge by direct acquaintance. One cannot say 'Socrates is white' (himself plus whiteness), but one experiences 'white Socrates' as a unitary essence.

The only people specifically mentioned as qualifying for Plato's condemnation by confining speech to identical propositions ('man is man', 'good is good', etc.) are Stilpo the Megarian and the Eretrians.² Since Stilpo was probably born c. 380 and the Eretrian school was founded by Menedemus who was born after Plato's death, it is improbable that the former, and impossible that the latter, could have been Plato's target. But Euclides who founded the Megarian school was a friend of Socrates, and the Eretrian was closely linked with it, Menedemus having been a pupil of Stilpo. Plato stayed with Euclides at Megara after the death of Socrates, and they may well have differed and had lively discussions of these questions. A doctrine which could lead to the same conclusion as that in the *Sophist* is ascribed to them by Simplicius (*Phys.* 120). After quoting from Eudemus that the mistakes of Parmenides were excusable owing to the inchoate state of philosophy at his time, when no one had suggested that a word could have more than one sense or had distinguished essence from accident, he goes on:

Out of ignorance of this even the philosophers known as Megarians assumed as an obvious premise that things having a different *logos* were different, and that different things were divided from each other, and so thought to prove that everything is divided from itself, e.g. the *logos* of 'educated Socrates' is different from that of 'white Socrates', therefore Socrates is divided from himself.

¹ In ordinary language *συνουσία* meant intercourse or association, but it could also, and more literally, be understood as 'co-being'. In the late commentators, the verb *συνουσιόομαι* is used to express the idea of being essentially united. See LSJ s.v.

² For Stilpo see Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1119c-d, and for the Eretrians Simplicius *Phys.* 91, 28. It might be interesting to compare their doctrine with that which has been derived in modern times from a strict interpretation of Bishop Butler's dictum: 'Everything is what it is and not another thing', quoted by Moore as the motto of *Principia Ethica*. This, it has been claimed, appears to rule out not only a definition of 'good' (the 'naturalistic fallacy'), but all definitions of any term whatsoever, on the grounds that they must be the result of confusing two properties, defining one by another, or substituting one for another. See the discussion by Frankena reprinted in the *Foot essays*, pp. 57 ff.

Rhetoric and Philosophy

The same doctrine is opposed by Aristotle in *Soph. el.* (166b28ff.) without attribution: 'Coriscus is a man [but note that Greek has no indefinite article], "man" is different from "Coriscus", therefore Coriscus is different from himself.' It bears a resemblance to the 'one *logos* to each thing' of Antisthenes, but was brought to a more radical conclusion.¹

In the foregoing account an attempt has been made to attach the various theories to individual authors. Such assignment has been the subject of intensive research in the past, but the evidence is not always sufficient for certainty, nor is the matter of great importance for the history of thought, since some of the possible authors are now little more than names. The important thing is to know that in the lifetime of Socrates and Plato these questions of language and its objects were being zestfully thrashed out by a group of contemporaries who in the course of their debate threw up a number of related or rival views which were all ultimately the result of wrestling with the crude but effective logic of the Eleatics. The thought of Socrates and Plato, whose influence on the subsequent history of philosophy has been profound, must be seen against this background, as an integral part of the debate and an attempt to find a definitive solution to its problems. That in Plato's hands it became only an element in a great moral and metaphysical synthesis does not alter this fact, which a reading of the *Cratylus* and *Euthydemus* alone (not to mention more important dialogues like the *Sophist*) puts beyond all doubt.

Summary of results. During the lifetimes of Socrates and Plato the following positions were held. Names of some who held them are given in brackets where either certain or probable.

1. It is impossible to speak falsely, for that is to say what is not, and what is not cannot be uttered. (Protagoras, Antisthenes. The thesis depends on Parm. fr. 2. 7-8.)

2. As a corollary, no one has a right to contradict another. (Protagoras, Antisthenes.)

¹ See on this Maier, *Syllogistik*, 2. Teil, 2. Hälfte, 7ff., where the relevance of Arist. *Metaph.* Γ 4 is discussed, and it is suggested that in Aristotle's time the eristic of Antisthenes and the Megarians was undergoing a certain fusion.

Language and its Objects: Summary

3. Truth is relative to the individual. (Protagoras, Gorgias.)
4. We use words inconsistently and with no correspondence to reality. This is wrong, for there is a reality (ὄν, φύσις) and there are natural kinds (εἶδη), to which our terms should correspond univocally. (Socrates, Antiphon, Hippocr. *De arte*.)
5. Definition of the essence of a thing is impossible, for one can only list its elements and they themselves, not being subject to further analysis, are indefinable, and can only be described analogically. (Antisthenes, probably Lycophron.)
6. To every object belongs one and only one proper *logos*, which says what it is by naming the elements of which it is composed. If any of them do not apply to it, there is no *logos*. (Antisthenes.)
7. Names have a natural affinity with their objects, which are known by direct contact of mind with object as in sense-perception (αἴσθησις). A name which has no such affinity is not wrong, but no name at all. (Antisthenes, Lycophron, 'Cratylus' in Plato.)
8. Names are labels arbitrarily chosen, having no natural connexion with the objects to which they are applied. (Democritus, 'Hermogenes' in Plato.)
9. The use of 'is' to join subject and predicate is illegitimate because it makes one thing many, though one may perceive and speak of a subject and its attribute (e.g. white Socrates) as a unity. (Lycophron.)
10. On the same Eleatic grounds that a thing cannot be both one and many, only identical predication is possible. (Megarians, and probably others.)

(6) GRAMMAR

The intense interest in the possibilities and limitations of language led to the beginnings of grammatical study (distinction of genders, parts of speech and so forth), of which there are traces from Protagoras onwards. The foregoing sections, however, as well as the treatment of these topics themselves, should make it clear that in contemporary minds they were not divorced from wider questions, whether of the philosophy of language or of rhetorical practice. The aim was not in fact scientific, to sort out and codify existing usage, but practical, to

reform language and increase its effectiveness by a closer correspondence with reality.¹

Protagoras, we are told, was the first to divide speech (*logos*) into four basic kinds (*πυθμένες λόγων*): request (or prayer), question, answer, command; or according to other authorities into seven: narration, question, answer, command, report, request, summons. A little later Alcidamas said that the four *logoi* were affirmation, negation, question and address.² This comes from a late source, but Aristotle refers to the division when in the *Poetics* (1456b15) he records that Protagoras criticized Homer for writing 'Sing, goddess', because this was to command when what was wanted was a prayer.

The distinction between noun and verb (*rhēma*) occurs in Plato, and as Cornford remarks (*PTK*, 307), it is introduced in the *Cratylus* (425a) without explanation as something familiar, so was probably made earlier by Protagoras or some other Sophist.³ It is true, nevertheless, that in the *Sophist* they are carefully defined and illustrated by examples. A combination of noun with verb yields a statement (*logos*).⁴ *Rhēma* is here defined as 'what signifies actions', which seems definite enough, but at this early stage terminology is by no means fixed, and elsewhere (*Crat.* 399a-b) we find Plato saying that if the name Diphilus is split into its component parts (Δι φίλος, 'dear to Zeus') it becomes a *rhēma* instead of a name. Literally *rhēma* means only a 'thing said', and a name or noun is contrasted with it as that of which things are said. Even Aristotle with his more technical vocabulary, for whom *rhēma* is most often a verb and is so defined (*De int.*

¹ 'Ancient Greek *grammatiké* was a τέχνη, an art or craft, a study aiming at practice; modern philology is not a τέχνη but a physical science. It takes the worldwide phenomenon of human speech as its object, and is concerned merely to ascertain and co-ordinate the facts.' This is from Murray's highly readable essay on *The Beginnings of Greek Grammar* (in *Gk. Stud.*), in which he also points out the enormous difference resulting from the fact that γραμματική was concerned solely with Greek speech: 'The phenomenon that lay before the Greek *grammatikoi* was not all human language. It was the *Logos*.'

² D.L. 9.53f. His words might mean that others, not Protagoras, divide into seven, and so Hicks translates. The second list looks dubious, and it is difficult to see on what grounds, in such a general classification, διήγησις was separated from ἀπαγγελία. Unfortunately there is no more nearly contemporary authority.

³ The classification of letters as vowels, sonants and mutes, which precedes it at 424c, is ascribed to οἱ δεινοὶ περὶ τούτων.

⁴ ὄνομα plus ῥήμα = λόγος, *Crat.* 425a, 431b-c, *Soph.* 262c ff. 'Theaetetus sits' is an example of the simplest λόγος. On these two parts of speech as the sole essentials of a λόγος see the comments of Cornford, *PTK*, 307.

16b6), uses it also to mean an adjective (*ibid.* 20b 1-2), and the wider term 'predicate' must sometimes be the best translation.

Stenzel noted (*RE*, xxv. Halbb. 1010f.) that, if Plato's definition of a statement by its simplest grammatical form seems primitive, we must bear in mind that his concern is not in fact with the grammatical form but with such questions as how, of two grammatically equally correct propositions ('Theaetetus sits', 'Theaetetus flies'), one can be true and the other false. The exalted position of the *logos* in a Greek mind is well brought out by the build-up which Plato gives it at *Crat.* 425a. Nouns and verbs are constructed out of letters and syllables, and from nouns and verbs we compose 'something great and beautiful and complete, the *Logos*, formed by the art of naming or rhetoric or whatever it be, just as a living figure is composed by the art of the painter'. This Greek attitude to *Logos* (in some contexts the capital letter seems to impose itself) must never be forgotten when as cold-blooded grammarians or logicians we find ourselves growing exasperated by the looseness and ambiguity with which it appears to be used.

Protagoras's interest in the gender of nouns is vouched for by a contemporary. Aristotle tells us that it was he who divided nouns into masculine, feminine and neuter,¹ and this is reflected in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. The play contains, under the name of Socrates, an attack on Protagoras's claim to make the weaker ('unjust') argument the stronger, and Strepsiades, who has come to Socrates to learn the unjust argument in order to avoid payment of his debts, is dismayed to discover that he must first learn 'about names, which of them are masculine and which feminine'. His failure (in common with all his fellow-Greeks) to distinguish animals of different sex by different terminations, and his use of the masculine article with nouns which have what is usually a feminine ending, earn him a sharp rebuke from 'Socrates'. This castigation of the grammar of ordinary language as illogical or imprecise appears again in Protagoras's contention that the Greek words for 'wrath' and 'helmet', which are feminine, ought to be masculine.²

¹ Or things (σκέψη), *Ar. Poet.* 1407b7. Aristotle himself called them μετὰ φύ (*Rhet.* 1458a9, *Soph. el.* 166b 12, 173b 28). The word οὐδέτερον (Lat. *neuter*) came into use with later grammarians.

² *Arist. Soph. el.* 173b 19. Some have supposed that this was on account of the warlike or 'unfeminine character' (Murray) of the conceptions which the words signified. More probably

Rhetoric and Philosophy

Prodicus¹ is mentioned in the *Euthydemus* (277e) as one who insisted on the primary importance of 'the correctness of names', which Socrates there calls the first stage of initiation into the mysteries of the Sophists. His speciality was precision in the use of language and the accurate distinction of the meaning of words commonly regarded as synonymous. He rebukes me, says Socrates in the *Protagoras* (341a), for using an expression like 'terribly clever'. 'Terrible' (*deinos*, see p. 32) must qualify unpleasant things like poverty, disease or war. The same dialogue contains a parody of his teaching, a somewhat pompous speech in which he distinguishes between discussion and dispute, esteem and praise, pleasure and enjoyment. In the *Laches* (197d) he is mentioned, in connexion with the distinction between courage and fearlessness, as 'the best of the Sophists at drawing such distinctions'.² Aristotle shows him listing enjoyment, delight and gladness as subdivisions of pleasure, and in connexion with this a late commentator credits him with the 'invention' of 'verbal accuracy'.³

Perhaps the most interesting thing about all this is the evidence for a personal relationship between Prodicus and Socrates, who refers to himself several times in Plato as Prodicus's pupil or friend.⁴ Prodicus's insistence on distinguishing precisely between words of closely related

Protagoras was moved by purely morphological considerations connected with their terminations. See T. Gomperz, *Gr. Th.* 1, 444f. and Fehling, *Rh. Mus.* 1965, 215, and cf. the argument about κάρδος at *Clouds* 670ff. Note that once again his target is Homer, and indeed his criticism of the concord μῆιν οὐλομένην belongs to the same context as that of the mood of αἶδε, viz. a critique of the opening lines of the *Iliad*. See Fehling's imaginative reconstruction, *ibid.* 214, and, for his conclusions from this, p. 205 above.

¹ For Prodicus in general see pp. 274ff. below.

² Other Platonic references to Prodicus in this connexion are *Prot.* 340aff., *Meno* 75e, *Charm.* 163d, *Crat.* 384b.

³ τέρψις, χαρά and εὐφροσύνη, *Ar. Top.* 112b 22; cf. schol. on *Phaedr.* = Hermias, p. 283 Cournvour (not in DK but added by Untersteiner, *Sof.* II, 173f.): Prodicus τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων εἶρεν ἀκριβείαν. According to the scholiast, τέρψις was pleasure through the ears, χαρά pleasure of the mind, and εὐφροσύνη visual pleasure; a classification which, if really Prodicus's, shows once again the normative rather than descriptive character of this kind of teaching, for it hardly corresponds to ordinary usage. (In Prodicus's speech in the *Protagoras*, εὐφραίνεσθαι is contrasted with ἡδίσθαι, and is defined as the enjoyment resulting from exercising the intellect.) The scholiast, however, has very likely introduced a Stoic classification. Cf. Alex. in DK, 84 A 19, and see on this Classen in *Proc. Afr. C.A.* 1959, 39f. Classen thinks that even Aristotle has confused Prodicus with Platonic διαίρεσις.

⁴ See pp. 275f. below. I agree with H. Gomperz (*S. u. R.* 93) that these allusions cannot be dismissed as jokes without any historical foundation.

Prodicus on Precise Diction

meaning has obvious affinities with the Socratic habit of pinning down an interlocutor and making him say precisely what courage, temperance, virtue, or whatever be the subject of their discussion, *is*—what is its form or being; and the teaching of Prodicus may well have been an influence directing his thought along these lines. Whether, as Calogero has written, ‘the difference between the two approaches is very sharp’, Prodicus caring only for ‘correct speaking’ and Socrates interested in ‘the real thing’ or whether, as W. Schmid has it, Prodicus’s art of division was a ‘scientific fertilization of the Socratic sphere of thought’ and ‘his attempt to sharpen and regularize the use of language through logical demands an undoubtedly valuable preparation for the conceptual clarification of literary language’, is a question that will be taken up later.¹ One may add here, however, that Prodicus like other Sophists had a high reputation as a political orator and gave paid public displays of eloquence, and also, like Protagoras, undertook to teach the art of success in politics and the management of private estates. It is likely therefore that his insistence on precise language occurred in the context of rhetorical instruction.²

ADDITIONAL NOTES

(1) *Prodicus and Thucydides*. Antiphon, Gorgias and Prodicus were all mentioned in late antiquity as teachers or models of Thucydides. (See DK, 84 A 9, H. Mayer, *Prodikos*, 61.) In Mayer’s own opinion the ‘Schärfe und Prägnanz’ of Thucydides’s style is a combined inheritance from Gorgias’s antitheses and Prodicus’s ‘Synonymik’. It is not easy to see in Gorgias a teacher of ‘Schärfe und Prägnanz’, but in any case I do not wish to enter here on a discussion of influences on Thucydides in general but simply to follow Mayer in drawing attention to some places where the distinction between near-synonyms

¹ See pp. 275 ff. For some further assessments of the value of Prodicus’s linguistic work see Grant, *Ethics*, I, 124 f. (‘We must acknowledge the merit of this first attempt at separating the different shades of language, and fixing a nomenclature’, etc.); H. Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 124–6 (the aim of his instruction was rhetorical—otherwise young men would not have paid 50 dr. a time to hear him!—yet ‘aus der Bedeutungslehre des Prodikos ist die Begriffsphilosophie des Sokrates erwachsen’); and other authorities referred to in Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 225, n. 66. Untersteiner is not quite correct in saying on p. 215 that ‘all scholars are agreed’ on the question.

² Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 282 c, *Rep.* 600 c, and see pp. 41 f. above.

is drawn in a way so strikingly reminiscent of Prodicus in the *Protagoras* that they must surely owe their inspiration to him.

In 1.23.6 we have the famous distinction between the true but disguised *cause* (πρόφασις) of the war and the *reasons* (αἰτίαι) which were openly given.

1.69.6, αἰτία and κατηγορία. 'Please do not think that our remonstrance arises out of any hostile feelings. *Remonstrance* (αἰτία) is what one employs against friends who have erred, *accusation* (κατηγορία) against enemies who have wronged one.'

2.62.4, ἀχρημα and καταφρόνησις. 'Any coward can be *boastful* out of ignorance and luck, but a proper *disdain* comes from reasoned confidence in one's superiority over the enemy.'

3.39.2, ἐπαναστήναι and ἀποστήναι. The Mytileneans are 'not so much *revolutionaries*—a word which applies to people who have suffered harsh treatment—as deliberate *insurgents* plotting with our enemies to destroy us'.

4.98.6, ἀμάρτημα and παρανομία. 'Involuntary *faults* [the Athenians claimed] earned sanctuary at the altars of the gods, and the name *crime* should be reserved for wrongful acts committed gratuitously, not under the pressure of circumstances.'

6.11.6, ἐπαίρεσθαι and θαρσεῖν. 'What matters is not to feel *elation* at any chance setback of our enemies, but rather *confidence* in our own superior planning.'

All but one of these instances occur in a speech, direct or reported, and the use made of them by Thucydides is further evidence of the rhetorical purpose of such nice distinctions. They can indeed be remarkably effective.

(2) *Synonymic and philosophy*. Momigliano has an interesting theory of the possible bearings of Prodicus's discrimination of synonyms on both philosophy of language and ethics. The words 'theory' and 'possible' are my own, for Momigliano presents his conclusions as certain. On the evidence that we have, it is difficult to be so confident, but even on a more cautious view the interpretation is too interesting to be passed over. It is as follows (in *Atti Torino*, 1929-30, 102 f.). Democritus had

¹ Not all the examples cited by Mayer seem relevant. At 1.84.3 the rhetorical effect is gained by using αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη indistinguishably rather than differentiating between them, and at 1.36.1 φοβουμαι and δέδοικα seem to be used simply to avoid clumsy repetition. Nor is any difference of meaning between ἴσος and κοινός suggested at 3.53.1-2.

said that words do not reflect reality because (among other reasons) not every word has an object corresponding to it. (See vol. II, 475.) The only way to refute him was to show that it did, i.e. that of so-called synonyms (like τελευτή, πέρας, ἔσχατον, *Meno* 75e) each has in fact its own separate object. What Prodicus is doing with his apparent pedantry is to oppose the prevailing scepticism. And, since theoretical scepticism led to practical relativism, he is equally in reaction against 'the army of Thrasymachuses and Callicleses'. This explains how Prodicus the hair-splitter is also the author of the moralizing fable of the Choice of Heracles (pp. 277f. below). The art of distinguishing synonyms had important bearings on ethics, involving the separation of ἀγαθός from κρείττων, δίκαιον from συμφέρον. (These particular examples do not, so far as I am aware, occur in the surviving record of Prodicus's activity.) His reaction, continues Momigliano, is the more interesting for not being simply a defence of traditional beliefs. On the dangerous subject of the gods he was both bold and original (see on this pp. 238ff. below), yet he felt the need of upholding sound moral principles in daily life. He thus (concludes Momigliano) occupies a special place among the Sophists, different on the one hand from the scepticism of Gorgias, Protagoras and Thrasymachus, and on the other from Antiphon and Hippias with their antithesis between natural and conventional morality.

IX

RATIONALIST THEORIES OF RELIGION: AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM¹

(I) CRITICISMS OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The Presocratic philosophers, whether or not they retained a belief in a divine force or forces, all alike promulgated conceptions of religion which were far removed from the anthropomorphism of the popular or state cults based on the Homeric pantheon. Xenophanes openly attacked them, and substituted a non-anthropomorphic monotheism or pantheism, while others tacitly abandoned them in favour, first, of an ever-living world-stuff described vaguely as governing or steering the motions of the cosmos and everything in it, and later, in Anaxagoras, of a single Mind separate from the matter of the universe and the cause of the rational order which it displays. We have seen Heraclitus condemning phallic and other cults for their unseemliness and Democritus (doubtless under the influence of already existing evolutionary theories) claiming that it was only the alarming nature of thunder, lightning and similar phenomena that made men think they were caused by gods. As 'enlightenment' grows, it shows itself under two main aspects (whether in ancient Greece or Europe since the Renaissance): first, the determination to believe only what is reasonable and a tendency to identify reason with positivism and the progress of natural science, and secondly a genuine concern with morality. Morality is identified with the amelioration of human life and the elimination of cruelty, injury and all forms of exploitation of human beings by their fellows, and is based on purely humanistic and relative standards, for it is held that absolute standards claiming supernatural

¹ For a general aperçu of the criticism of traditional religion in Greece, a subject which far exceeds the scope of this history, see P. Decharme, *La critique des trad. rels. chez les Grecs*.

Criticism of Religion in the Fifth Century

authority not only have led in the past, but must inevitably lead, to cruelty, intolerance and other evils. The Greek gods were very vulnerable in both these aspects, and as soon as conventional piety began to yield to a more thoughtful attitude—when *nomos* in all its aspects was no longer taken for granted but rather contrasted with what was natural and universal¹—scepticism and disapproval began to make themselves felt in increasing volume.

The attack on religion was indeed closely bound up with the *nomos-physis* antithesis. Plato (*Laws* 889e) complains of people who claim that 'the gods are human contrivances, they do not exist in nature but only by custom and law, which moreover differ from place to place according to the agreement made by each group when they laid down their laws'.

When Plato wrote, such contentions were nothing new. The Aristophanic Socrates rejected the gods as an out-of-date currency (*nomisma*, p. 56 above), and in Euripides Hecuba calls *nomos* superior to the gods because it is by *nomos* that we believe in them as well as in standards of right and wrong (p. 23). There is plenty of evidence that the hold of religion over men's minds was weakening in the intellectual ferment of the Periclean age, and also that Athenian officialdom was nervous and touchy about it. The cult of the gods was integral to the life of the state and a powerful cohesive force. It may be claimed that all that was necessary was conformity with cult-practices,² and that thought was free; but it must have been as obvious to an Athenian traditionalist as it was to Cicero's Cotta that those who deny outright that the gods exist 'non modo superstitionem tollunt . . . sed etiam religionem, quae deorum cultu pio continetur' (*N.D.* 1.42.117). Hence the impiety trials and the decree of Diopieithes against atheism and cosmic speculation.

¹ The conventional attitude is exemplified by the reply of Socrates in Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.3.16) to Euthydemus, who acknowledges divine providence but is worried by the thought that no adequate return can ever be made to the gods by men. The gods themselves, he says, have provided the answer, for whenever the Delphic oracle is approached with this problem, it always replies: 'Follow the *nomos* of your city', which means propitiating the gods with sacrifices just as far as is in your power. Such an answer would scarcely satisfy the more progressive and inquiring spirits of the fifth century.

² 'Even if we concentrate on the religious controversy which occasioned the trial [of Socrates], the problem of faith never became an issue.' (Snell, *Disc. of Mind*, 26.) See also p. 237, n. 2 below.

Rationalist Theories of Religion

They did not tolerate [says Plutarch (*Nicias* 23)] the natural philosophers and star-gazers,¹ as they called them, dissolving divinity into irrational causes, blind forces and necessary properties. Protagoras was banished, Anaxagoras put under restraint and with difficulty saved by Pericles, and Socrates, though in fact he had no concern in such matters, lost his life through his devotion to philosophy.

And in his life of Pericles (32):

About this time [*sc.* just before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War] Aspasia was prosecuted for impiety . . . and Diopieithes² introduced a bill for the impeachment of those who denied the gods or taught about celestial phenomena, directing suspicion at Pericles through Anaxagoras.

The motives might be political, but the state of opinion was such that imputations of atheism and natural science were a sure way to secure a prosecution, as Socrates's accusers knew well. No distinction was drawn between the scientific writers and the paid teachers whom we call Sophists. They shared the same religious scepticism, which for the Sophists was often the result of reading the works of the scientists, and at the time the word *sophistes* was applied as naturally to Anaxagoras as to Protagoras or Hippias (p. 30 above).

Criticism of the gods on moral grounds came early. It needed no scientific speculation or logical subtlety to be scandalized by Zeus's castration of his father or his many amours, the thefts and deceit of Hermes, or the jealousy of Hera and the malicious and vengeful character of the immortals in general. Myths in which the gods appeared as thieves, adulterers, seducers and gluttons were already rejected by Xenophanes and Pindar. In the age of enlightenment we find Euripides everywhere giving rein to such criticism. It can take different forms—reproach of the gods for their behaviour, declarations that gods exist

¹ μετεωρολόχοι, lit. 'chatterers about things in the sky'. The word occurs in Plato (*Rep.* 489c), coupled with the adjective ἀχρήστους, to illustrate the kind of abuse that was levelled at philosophers.

² Not much is known about the appropriately named Diopieithes. The name is mentioned several times in Aristophanes (*Knights* 1085, *Wasps* 380, *Birds* 988), but all that emerges is that the holder of it was a soothsayer. Fragments of other comic poets depict him as a fanatic and as a drummer in the Corybantic rites (Ameipsias 10 K., Teleclides 6 K. and Phrynichus 9 K.; see Lobeck, *Aglaoph.* 981). The prosecution of 'Anaxagoras the Sophist' is mentioned (but not Diopieithes or his ψήφισμα) by Diodorus (12.39.2). For the connexion of the Sophists with the natural philosophers cf. pp. 45 ff. above, and for the supposed connexion between 'sky-gazing' and immoral sophistic teaching *Clouds* 1283 (pp. 114f.).

but do not and cannot behave like that, or assertions that, since these are the gods we are taught to believe in, either they do not exist—it is all lies—or they are heedless of human affairs and do not merit or need our worship. As a dramatist Euripides could reflect all points of view through his various plots and characters. In the *Ion* we see the disillusionment of a pious young acolyte who learns that the god he serves has stooped to seduce a mortal woman. The *Heracles* contains a vehement denial that the gods could behave wickedly (1341 ff.):

I do not believe that the gods take pleasure in unlawful intercourse, nor have I ever thought nor can be persuaded that they load each other with fetters, nor that one is lord over another. God, if he be truly god, lacks nothing. These are the wretched tales of bards.¹

Complete disbelief in the gods, based on the prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the just, is voiced in a passionate outburst in the *Bellerophon* (fr. 286): There are no gods in heaven. To believe in such old wives' tales is folly. You have only to look around you. Tyrants murder, rob, cheat and ravage, and are happier than the pious and peaceful. Small god-fearing states are overwhelmed by the military might of those larger and more wicked. More in the vein of the *Heracles* passage is the line, again from the *Bellerophon* (fr. 292.7): 'If gods act basely, they are no gods.' That the example of the gods could be invoked to excuse human failings is also pointed out by Euripides, for instance when Phaedra's old nurse condones her illicit passion by reminding her, with the examples of Zeus and Eos, that Aphrodite is a power too strong for the other gods themselves to resist, and again by Helen in extenuation of her own conduct (*Tro.* 948). The same point is made in comic vein by Aristophanes, when the Unjust Argument claims that without his rhetorical skill a sinner will be lost, but with it he will confound his accusers (*Clouds* 1079):

Suppose you are caught in adultery, you will argue that you have done nothing wrong, and point to Zeus, who could never resist love or women. How, you will say, could you, a mortal, show greater strength than a god?

¹ Yet so strong was the force of tradition that the whole plot of the *Heracles* depends on the jealous wrath of Hera, of whose unspeakable cruelty the hero himself, who speaks these words, has been the victim. Some have thought that the paradox was deliberate, to bring out the inherent absurdity of the situation, but Lesky (probably rightly) sees it as a product of the tension between the subject-matter, imposed by tradition and mythology, and the intellect of the dramatist. See Lesky, *HGL*, 382.

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In contrast to the homely traditionalism of the nurse, the moralist could claim that a god might be simply the product of psychological transference: men gave the name to their own evil passions. 'My son was handsome,' says Hecuba to Helen (Eur. *Tro.* 987), 'and at sight of him your mind became Cypris. All foolish acts are called Aphrodite by mankind.'¹ The kind of criticism which sought to absolve the gods from the unethical behaviour attached to their names in the myths must not be thought of, and was not thought of at the time,² as an attack on religion as such, or even the established state-religion. One of its most vigorous exponents was Plato, who in the *Republic* firmly accused Homer and Hesiod of lying, yet was an implacable opponent of unbelief either in the gods or in their providential care for mankind, and an upholder of the official cults.

Besides moral probity, self-sufficiency was being demanded as an essential property of deity. Aided perhaps by Xenophanes and Eleatic notions of God as 'unmoved' and 'impassible', the rationalism of the time saw the godhead as 'lacking nothing'. These words of Euripides's Heracles can hardly be unconnected with the pronouncement of Antiphon: 'For this reason he has need of nothing, nor does he expect anything from anybody, but is infinite and all-sufficient.'³ Belief in the

¹ Cf. also fr. 254 N.:

- A. Often the gods lead mortal men astray.
- B. You take the easy line, and blame the gods.

G. Devereux has pointed out that Helen's defence is anticipated by what Penelope says about her at *Od.* 23. 222. See his *From Anxiety to Method*, 344, n. 2. (The comparison is made by Stanford *ad loc.* in his edition.) But whereas Homer accepts, Euripides, in the person of Hecuba, criticizes.

² Decharme (*Critique*, p. vii) has pointed out a reason why no suspicion of impiety attached to this purgation. Fundamentalism was a phenomenon unknown to the Greeks because there was nothing in their religious literature corresponding to the 'word of God'. 'Ils ne crurent point que les dieux eux-mêmes eussent été les auteurs de leur théologie, où ils virent seulement l'œuvre des poètes.'

³ (a) Fr. 10. With Antiphon's οὐδενὸς δεῖται cf. δεῖται γὰρ ὁ θεὸς . . . οὐδενὸς in Euripides.

(b) There is so much uncertainty about the date of Antiphon's writings (see p. 286, n. 2, below) that it is impossible on external grounds to say whether Euripides is copying this passage from the Ἀλήθεια or not. Some have used 'echoes' of Antiphon in Euripides as actual evidence of his date, but this is a dangerous criterion. Such statements as 'God lacks nothing' could be common to more than one writer of the time, and neither Euripides nor Antiphon need have said it first.

(c) The quotation is given in a lexicon (the Suda) to illustrate the meaning of ἀδέητος. Since context is lacking, the reason referred to in διὰ τοῦτο is unknown. It is not even stated (but can scarcely be doubted) that the subject is θεός. (For the consensus of scholarly opinion on this point see Untersteiner, *Soph.* 259, n. 10.)

Divine Self-sufficiency and Providence

self-sufficiency of the deity leads naturally to doubts about the reality of any divine providence or care for mankind. The idea which Plato deplored, that 'there are gods, but they take no thought for human affairs' (*Laws* 885b, 888c), was current in the fifth century. Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.4.10) represents a man called Aristodemus as protesting to Socrates, when taxed with refusing to give the gods their customary meed of sacrifice and prayer, that far from contemning the divine, he thought it was too great to need his service, and moreover that the gods could have no thought for mankind. Antiphon is said to have denied providence in the same work *On Truth* in which he declared the self-sufficiency of God and spoke of the advisability of conforming to conventional morality only when under observation;¹ and Thrasymachus saw in the prevalence of wickedness evidence that the gods are blind to what goes on among men (p. 97 above).

The rationalism of the natural philosophers was not completely atheistic (as we should use the word) but none the less destructive of the traditional and official pantheon. In the Ionian tradition divinity for long was identified with the living *physis* of the world, until Anaxagoras separated it as a remote Mind which started the cosmic process in the beginning. More important to his contemporaries than the existence of this Mind was his reduction of the all-seeing Helios, who traversed the sky every day in his flashing chariot and was the awful witness of men's most sacred oaths, to the status of a lifeless lump of glowing stone. Euripides was bold enough to introduce this description into his tragedies and it made such a deeply unfavourable

(d) I have translated ἀπειρος by infinite. Luria suggested that there was a double meaning: (i) infinite, (ii) untried, and Untersteiner has followed him (*Sophs.* 259, n. 13). But in the passages which he cited as parallel (Plato, *Phil.* 17e and *Tim.* 55d), the second meaning is active (ignorant, inexperienced). LSJ give no example of the passive sense (unexperienced, unknown or untried), nor do I know of any.

(e) Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 260, n. 13a, *Sof.* iv, 42f.) thinks Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.10 is proof that Antiphon was not giving his own view but one that he was opposing. Schmid (*Gesch.* 1.3.1, 160) takes the fr. at its face value and includes *Mem.* 1.6.3 among his references without comment. The reader may take his choice. Personally I think even Xenophon's Socrates was capable of a bit of raillery. What he says is: 'You seem to imagine that happiness consists in luxury and extravagance, ἐγὼ δὲ νομίζω τὸ μὲν μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι θεῖον εἶναι', slyly bringing up his own words against him.

¹ Fr. 12, from Origen. For references to modern opinions about this see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 264, n. 74. It should be noted that Untersteiner is one of those who believe that the whole passage *Laws* 888d-890a reproduces the doctrine of Antiphon. See *Sophs.* 231, n. 17, 263, n. 70, 265, n. 91, and *Sof.* iv, 178ff.

impression on the Athenian mind that not only was it said to have been the occasion of Anaxagoras's banishment but Meletus thought it worth while to try to implicate Socrates in it at his trial.¹ But the most popular philosophic theology was that which identified divinity with the air or *aither*, revived as a scientific theory at this time by Diogenes of Apollonia and easily absorbed by popular thought owing to its affinities with ancient beliefs.² Its familiarity is shown by the invocation of Socrates to the 'Lord and Master, measureless Air' in the *Clouds*, and the identification of air or *aither* with Zeus in the prayer of Hecuba in Euripides's *Troades*. *Aither* also takes the name of Zeus in two other places in Euripides. The atomic gods of Democritus were even farther removed from official religion.³

It is hard to arrive at the mind of Euripides himself, beyond saying that he was intensely interested in the most advanced thinking of his day. He speaks through his characters, who mirror almost every point of view,⁴ and it is as such a mirror of his time that he is (for our present purposes, naturally) best regarded. A woman in the *Thesmophoriazusae* accuses him roundly of atheism (450f. 'In his tragedies he persuades men that the gods do not exist'), but the comic poet has hardly made her an impartial witness. Plutarch (*Amat.* 756b-c) says that, when the *Melanippe* was first performed, the line (fr. 480) 'Zeus, whoever Zeus may be, for I know not save by hearsay' caused such an uproar in the theatre that for a second production he altered it to 'Zeus, as truth itself has said'.⁵ A similar phrase, 'whatever the gods may be', occurs in the *Orestes* (418) in a context of outspoken criticism of divine powers.⁶

¹ See vol. II, 307, 269 and 323, Plato, *Apol.* 26d.

² Vol. II, chapter VII, and vol. I, 128ff.

³ See vol. II, 310f., and Eur. fr. 877, 941 (quoted from unknown plays and without context); also Euripides's αἰθήρ ἕμὸν βόσκημα at *Frogs* 892. For Democritus vol. II, 478ff., esp. p. 480, n. 1. There may be a flavour of Democritus in *Tro.* 886, but the idea was widespread. 'Αἴη and αἰθήρ were interchangeable in these contexts (vol. II, 480). In the *Clouds* it is αἴη who ἔχεις τὴν γῆν μετέωρον, and γῆς ὄχημα at *Tro.* 884 must be the same, whereas in fr. 941 it is αἰθήρ which 'holds the earth in its buxom arms'.

⁴ Though Lucian, *Zeus trag.* 41, quotes both fr. 941 and fr. 480 as places where Euripides is speaking his real mind, not bound by the exigencies of the dramatic situation.

⁵ It is curious that the same line occurred in the *Peirithous*, now generally attributed to Critias (Eur. fr. 591.4 N. = Critias fr. 16.9 DK).

⁶ The expressions of Euripides show a quite different spirit from some in Aeschylus which superficially might be thought to resemble them.

(i) The famous fr. of the *Heliades* (fr. 70),

Ζεὺς ἔστιν αἰθήρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός,
Ζεὺς τοι τὰ πάντα, χῶτι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον,

A striking choric passage which must surely express his own outlook is fr. 910 where he speaks of the happiness of a man who has learned the ways of scientific inquiry and observes 'the ageless order and beauty¹ (*kosmos*) of immortal nature, and how it was put together'. Such a man, he says, will have no part in wicked or injurious deeds. This praise of *historia* is not necessarily inconsistent with the disparagement of *meteorologoi* in fr. 913: 'Beholding these things, who is not conscious of god?² Who does not cast far from him the deceitful wiles of the star-gazers, whose mischievous tongues, void of sense, babble at random of matters unknown?' Misguided probing into the secrets of nature has brought some to atheism, but for a wise man the ageless *kosmos* which she reveals can only lead to the conclusion that there is a god, an intelligent orderer, in or behind it. Fr. 913 can stand beside the air- or *aither*-god of the *Troades* and frs. 877 and 941, and the god of Diogenes from whom they doubtless derive, the air which is also a conscious planning mind (vol. II, 369). If it does not preach the Olympian religion, it is far from being atheism. Lacking the context, we do not know for certain what 'these things' are, the sight of which makes one aware of the divine, but, if we assume them to be natural, and especially celestial, phenomena, the lesson of the passage is the same as Plato's in the *Laws* (967a-c): understanding of the *taxis* (orderly arrangement) of the stars does not lead to atheism but to an awareness of the mind that brought about this *kosmos*. Astronomers (says Plato) got the name of atheists because some of the earlier ones thought that the heavenly bodies were mere dead masses carried round by necessity. But even among these the keener minds suspected that

does not reflect any rationalistic theories about an air-god, but clearly conveys the idea that Zeus is present in all the manifestations of nature and at the same time transcends them. It is deeply felt pantheism—the poet is conscious of a living spirit in earth and sky and everything else—and something more besides. Comparison with the last lines of Sophocles's *Trachiniae* (Lloyd-Jones in *JHS*, 1956, 55) misses the mark badly, for τούτων there refers to the changes and chances of human life, not to 'aither, earth, sky and all things'.

(ii) At *Ag.* 160 the chorus invoke Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, but the following words show that this is the familiar case of a piety apprehensive lest it offend by addressing a god by the wrong name or one that is displeasing to him (as in Euripides himself, fr. 912, where ὁ πάντων μεθῶν is addressed with the words Ζεύς εἶτ' Ἀΐδης ὀνομαζόμενος στέργεις); and, as in the *Heliades* fr., the feeling expressed seems to be that Zeus is omnipresent: 'All things have I measured, yet nought have I found save Zeus.'

¹ The complex force of *kosmos* cannot be rendered by one word. Cf. vol. I, 110 and 206.

² θεῶν οὐχὶ νοστὶ. For the meaning of νοστὶ see vol. II, 17 ff.

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their perfectly calculated movements could not have been achieved without intelligence, and decided that, although the stars themselves might be lifeless clods and stones, there was a mind behind them directing their movement and the whole cosmic order.

(2) AGNOSTICISM: PROTAGORAS

According to Diogenes Laertius (9.24), the Eleatic philosopher Melissus said that it was wrong to make any pronouncement about the gods, because knowledge of them was impossible. But the classic case of an agnostic in this century is his contemporary Protagoras, who was famous for having written:

Concerning the gods I am unable to discover whether they exist or not, or what they are like in form; for there are many hindrances to knowledge, the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.

The full text is quoted by Diogenes Laertius and Eusebius, and the major part by Sextus,¹ and much nearer his own time it is referred to by Plato, who in the *Theaetetus* (162d) imagines the great Sophist as objecting to the introduction of gods into the discussion, 'whose existence or non-existence I expressly refuse to discuss in my speeches and writings'. The form of the statement as one of personal opinion ('I am unable . . .') contrasts significantly with an expression like that of Xenophanes fr. 34, that no man has seen, nor will any man ever know, the truth about the gods. Some believed in gods and some did not, and so, in accordance with the 'man the measure' principle, gods existed for some and not for others; but for Protagoras himself suspension of judgment was the only possible course.² Sextus and the Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda indefensibly ranked him with the atheists, but Cicero carefully distinguishes them.³ The sentence is said to have stood at the opening of a work (or section of a work)

¹ See Protagoras fr. 4 and A 12 DK. It is also referred to by Timon of Phlius (quoted by Sextus, *loc. cit.*), Philostratus (*V. Soph.* 1.10.2 = A 2), Cicero (*N.D.* 1.1.2, 12.29 and 23.63), and Diogenes of Oenoanda (A 23).

² Cf. Jaeger, *TEGP*, 189. This disposes satisfactorily of T. Gomperz's contention (*GT*, 1, 457) that if Protagoras had believed, as Plato said he did, that 'every man's truth is the truth which appears to him', he could not have said what he did about the gods.

³ *N.D.* 1.1.2, 'Dubitare se Protagoras, nullos esse omnino Diagoras Melius et Theodorus Cyrenaiicus putaverunt'. Cf. *ibid.* 23.63, 42.117.

called 'On the Gods',¹ and scholars have naturally wondered what could have followed on such an unpromising beginning. We shall never know, but 'there is nothing against supposing' (to adopt a phrase from the latest commentator)² that it upheld religious worship and cult according to the ancestral *nomoi*. Not only was this an integral part of the life of the *polis*, that civilized social and political community of whose value, and indeed necessity, he was firmly convinced, but also the instinct for worship was probably in his view an original and ineradicable trait of human nature.³ (Cf. p. 65 above.)

(3) ATHEISM: DIAGORAS, PRODICUS, CRITIAS;
PLATO'S TWO TYPES OF ATHEIST

'As a dogmatic creed, consisting in the denial of every kind of supernatural power, atheism has not often been seriously maintained at any period of civilized thought.' So A. C. Pearson, in a brief article whose main merit is to demonstrate the difficulty of establishing beyond doubt that any Greek thinker was an atheist in the full sense.⁴ There is first the need to distinguish a rejection of traditional polytheism from denial of the whole idea of divinity, secondly the fragmentary and sometimes untrustworthy character of our authorities for this period, and thirdly the tendency to use a charge of atheism as a weapon against any public

¹ D.L. 9.52 and 54, Eus. *P.E.* 14.3.7 = Prot. fr. 4, Cic. *N.D.* 23.63 (without title). For σύγγραμμα applied to part of a work see Untersteiner, *Sof.* 1, 78, von Fritz, *RE*, xlv. Halbb. 919. The 'title' of a prose work at this time often consisted, as in this case, of the opening words. (See C. W. Müller, *Hermes*, 1967, 145.)

² 'Nichts spricht gegen die Vermutung', C. W. Müller. Earlier conjectures were collected by Nestle, *VΜΖυL*, 278-82. Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 38, n. 47) criticizes Nestle's, partly because it does not fit his own conviction that π. θεῶν was part of the Ἀντιλογία (in which he follows H. Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 131). Müller (*Hermes*, 1967) also thinks Nestle's suggestion neither demonstrable nor probable, but his own is of course, like everyone else's, no more than 'Vermutung'. Nestle's idea (see also his edition of the *Protagoras*, p. 18) was that the work was directed against popular proofs of the existence of gods and their care for men, and he adduced in support the official anger which there is some evidence that it aroused at Athens.

³ Müller (*Hermes*, 1967, 143f.) offers a new and subtle interpretation of *Prot.* 322a. ὁ ἀνθρώπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας κτλ. is a mythical reversal of the 'homo mensura' dictum: man's 'kinship with the gods' means, when stripped of mythical clothing, that the gods are simply projections or reflections of humanity. This interpretation, he says, removes the objection to regarding the Platonic passage as genuinely Protagorean. I doubt if it is necessary for that purpose (cf. p. 65 above and my *In the Beginning*, 88f. and 141f., nn. 10 and 11), but it has its attractions nevertheless.

⁴ 'Atheism (Greek and Roman)', in Hastings, *ERE*, vol. II, 184f.

figure whom on other grounds it was desired to discredit. As the case of Socrates shows, we must be careful about accepting such an imputation at its face value, and conversely one or two of his contemporaries whom later antiquity regarded, with some reason, as out-and-out atheists seem never to have been brought to trial. That such atheists ('complete disbelievers in the existence of the gods', 908b) were common by Plato's time is certain from his mentions of them in the *Laws*, where he carefully distinguishes them from those who hold (a) that gods exist but have no interest in human conduct, (b) that they can be bought off by offerings.

In later writers we find a kind of stock list of atheists, that is, those who denied outright the existence of the gods.¹ It included Diagoras of Melos, Prodicus of Ceos, Critias and (of a later date) Euhemerus of Tegea and Theodorus of Cyrene. Diagoras in particular never appears without having 'the atheist' tacked on to his name. Yet, if he defended his atheism by any philosophical arguments, we know nothing at all of what they were.² The only reason alleged for it, and that in late sources, is moral: he is said to have begun as a god-fearing dithyrambic poet, who later became convinced of the non-existence of gods by the spectacle of successful and unpunished wrongdoing, in this case a specific injury done to himself, though its nature is variously reported. Besides his unbelief, the only other fact recorded about him by contemporaries is that he was convicted on a charge of impiety by the

¹ They φασι μὴ εἶναι θεούς (*Aët.* 1.7.1) or 'omnino deos esse negabant' (Cic. *N.D.* 1.42. 117f.). Cic. *ibid.* 118 adds, though without naming him, the theory of Critias, who appears by name in Sextus's list (*P.H.* 3.218) and with Diagoras in Plutarch, *De superst.* 171 c. See also Sext. *Math.* 9.51-5. On the origin of the list in the περί ἀθεότητος of the Academic Clitomachus (second century B.C.) see Diels, *Dox.* 58f., and Nestle, *VMJL*, 416. For Hippon, known as ἄθεος and occurring in the list of Clem. Alex. (DK, 38 A 8), see vol. II, 354ff.

² All the sources of information on Diagoras are printed in full by Jacoby, *Diagoras ὁ ἄθεος* (*Abh. Berl.* 1959), 3-8. (He is omitted from DK.) For modern literature see *ibid.* 31 f., n. 2, and Woodbury, *Phoenix*, 1965, 178, n. 1. Perusal of the different arguments and conclusions of Jacoby and Woodbury will tell a reader all he needs to know about Diagoras-problems. The Suda (Jacoby, p. 5) calls him a philosopher (as well as a lyric poet) and says that he wrote a book, with the unintelligible title of Ἀποπυργίζοντες λόγοι, describing his abandonment of religious belief. Jerome (see Woodbury, *op. cit.* 178, n. 5) makes him out to have been a φυσικός with a following. His book was already known to Aristoxenus in the fourth century (*ap.* Philodemus, Jacoby, p. 5 = Aristoxenus fr. 127a, Wehrli, *Schule des Ar.* vol. x, p. 198), which, *pace* Woodbury (p. 207), is more significant than the fact that Aristoxenus wished to atheize it. The book, or one called Φύργοι λόγοι (which may be the same), is mentioned in a number of late sources, but beyond the meagre words of the Suda we have no clue as to its contents.

Athenians, and a price put on his head in his absence from the city. Aristophanes (*Birds* 1071 ff.) does not specify the charge, and pseudo-Lysias (*Andoc.* 17) says merely that he 'committed impiety against the rites and festivals in words'. Later writers say that he insulted the gods by mocking and divulging the Eleusinian mysteries. This is not the same as a charge of intellectual atheism, but puts him more in line with Alcibiades and his friends who parodied the mysteries, or with the unknown mutilators of the Hermae. The evidence of Aristophanes suggests that his trial took place about the same time, shortly before the launching of the Sicilian expedition, when nerves were taut and the city prone to take instant alarm at anything which might offend the gods or be of evil omen.¹ Nevertheless, though it may have been some such irreverent frivolity that led to his actual prosecution, the fact of his out-and-out atheism cannot be doubted. Jacoby is right when he says that all witnesses alike attribute to him 'a repudiation pure and simple of the whole concept of gods, an atheism radical, extreme and uncompromising'. This goes back to his contemporary Aristophanes, for whom (and for his audience) Socrates could be immediately branded as an atheist by calling him 'Socrates the Melian'.²

Since nothing is known of Diagoras's mind save the fact of his disbelief in the gods, he cannot claim much space in a history of philosophy. More interesting are those who are known to have held a

¹ At *Birds* 1071f. Aristophanes introduces a quotation from the actual decree outlawing Diagoras (which is known also from other sources: see Jacoby, p. 4) with the words τῆδε θῆμέρα ἐπιαναγορεύεται. The allusion would have had little point if it were not topical, and the *Birds* was produced in 414. I do not see that any other evidence can stand against this, and Jacoby's attempt to make Diagoras a victim of the decree of Diopeithes in 433/2 has been countered by Woodbury in his *Phoenix* article.

² The ousting of Zeus by Dinos does not mean that Socrates is here accused of introducing δαιμόνια καινά, but that he agrees with those who were substituting natural (ἀναγκαῖα) forces, like the vortex of the atomists and others, for gods. Woodbury (*op. cit.* 208) contends that before the Hellenistic age (i.e. at the time when the label was first attached to Diagoras) ἄθεος did not mean 'atheist' but only 'godless' or 'god-forsaken', but this is not so. Plato, *Apol.* 26c, does not 'show the transition from one meaning to the other'. When Socrates says καὶ αὐτὸς ἄρα νομίζω εἶναι θεοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἶμι τὸ παράπαν ἄθεος, he shows that ἄθεος already means 'not believing in the existence of the gods'. Nor can Woodbury's argument from the use of νομίζειν be allowed. It may occasionally be possible to translate νομίζειν θεοὺς as 'pay respect, or customary worship, to the gods' (as at Aesch. *Pers.* 497-8, though even here the meaning 'believe in' would be equally appropriate), but never of course with εἶναι, and usually (as in the same sentence of the *Apology*) νομίζειν and νομίζειν εἶναι are used interchangeably. There is no need to go into this, or cite once again examples like Hdt. 4. 59. 1 or Plato, *Laws* 885c, because the point was demonstrated, it is to be hoped finally, by J. Tate in *CR*, 1936 and 1937.

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particular theory of the natural and human origin of the belief in gods. Democritus saw it, partly at least, in fear of the more violent manifestations of nature (vol. II, 478). Prodicus, like many of his contemporaries, was interested in the origins of things. This included cosmogony (for the comic cosmogony of the birds in Aristophanes, *Birds* 684ff., is offered as an alternative to Prodicus) and more particularly, as befitted a Sophist, anthropology. Unlike Democritus, he saw the origin of religious belief in gratitude, not fear. We have the following reports:¹

(a) Philodemus (Epicurean of first century B.C.) *De piet.* c. 9, ed. Gomperz p. 75: 'Persaeus² shows himself destructive, or utterly ignorant, of the divine when in his book on the gods he declares not improbable what Prodicus wrote, namely that the things that nourish and benefit us were the first to be considered gods and honoured as such, and after them the discoverers of foods and shelter and the other practical arts such as Demeter, Dionysus and the . . .' [*break in papyrus*]

(b) Minucius Felix (second to third century A.D.), *Octavius* 21.2 (text omitted by DK but given in Untersteiner, *Sof.* II, 192, and Nestle, *VMZuL*, 354, n. 22): 'Prodicus says that those were accepted as gods who in their journeyings discovered new crops and so contributed to human welfare.'

(c) Cicero, *N.D.* I. 37. 118: 'What sort of religion did Prodicus of Ceos leave us, who said that things useful to human life were accounted gods?'

(d) *Ibid.* 15. 38: 'Persaeus says that those were considered gods who had discovered what was especially useful for civilized life, and that things useful and salutary were themselves called by the names of gods.'

(e) Sext. *Math.* 9. 18: 'Prodicus of Ceos says, "The ancients considered as gods the sun and moon, rivers, springs, and in general all the things that assist our life, on account of the help they give, just as the Egyptians deify the Nile." He adds that for this reason bread was called Demeter, wine Dionysus, water Poseidon, fire Hephaestus, and so on with everything that was of service.' (This is repeated in slightly different words in chapter 52.)

(f) *Ibid.* 51 includes Prodicus in a list of atheists 'who say there is no god'.

(g) *Ibid.* 39-41 criticizes 'those who say that the ancients supposed that all the things which benefit life are gods—sun and moon, rivers and lakes and the like', on the grounds (a) that the ancients could not have been so stupid as to ascribe divinity to things they saw perishing or even ate and destroyed themselves, and (b) that on this argument one ought also to believe

¹ Some of the passages are in DK (Prodicus fr. 5), and all in Untersteiner, *Sof.* II, 191 ff.

² Stoic and pupil of Zeno, c. 306-243 B.C.

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that men, especially philosophers, are gods, and even animals and inanimate utensils, for all these work for us and improve our lot.

(*h*) The thirtieth oration of Themistius (fourth century A.D.) is an encomium of husbandry containing the kind of exaggerated claims that had been commonplace at least since the days of Isocrates,¹ about agriculture not only providing the means of subsistence but being the mother of all civilized life, the begetter of laws, justice, peace, cities, temples, philosophy and much else. In the course of this he speaks (p. 422 Dindorf) of 'the wisdom of Prodicus, who derived all religious practices, mysteries and initiations from the benefits of agriculture, believing that the very notion of gods came to men from this source and making it the guarantee of piety'.²

These passages, the authors of which range in date from 400 to 800 years after Prodicus, exemplify the wretchedly inadequate material at our disposal for reconstructing the thoughts of a fifth-century Sophist. But we must do our best. Philodemus presents a theory, rather like some in the nineteenth century, of the development of religion from the cult of inanimate objects to the deification of culture-heroes, the supposed discoverers of the amenities and arts which raised mankind from the beasts to civilization. It has been disputed whether the second half of the statement, and so the two-stage theory of religion, should be credited to Prodicus or only to Persaeus. The former not only conforms better to the run of the sentence³ but also accords with Minucius Felix (passage *b*) and Cicero (*d*). The important thing about the latter is not that he attributes the theory to Persaeus (for we know from Philodemus that Persaeus accepted it) but that he puts both halves together as parts of one and the same theory. Sextus, it is true (passage *g*), ridicules the idea that beneficial objects or products were ever deified on the grounds (among others) that it would be as reasonable to believe in the deification of men. I hesitate to adopt Untersteiner's solution of this difficulty, namely that the 'dis-

¹ *Paneg.* 28. See p. 62 with n. 2 above.

² *θεῶν ἐννοίαν* is probably right, though since it is a correction by Diels of *εὐνοίαν* (which Dindorf printed) it is misleading of DK and Untersteiner to adopt it with no comment. See Nestle, *VMZuL*, 352, n. 14. In the last phrase, *καὶ πᾶσαν εὐσέβειαν ἐγγυώμενος*, Untersteiner prints the widely different conjecture of Kalbfleisch, *ἐγγενέσθαι*. As will appear, a point of some substance could depend on this. Diels, followed by Untersteiner, supposed a lacuna after *ἀσέβειαν*.

³ See Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 221, n. 9, or *Sof.* 11, 191f., Nestle, *VMZuL*, 354.

coverers' whom Prodicus supposed to have been deified were never in fact men, because I am not convinced that it is right or even that I understand it correctly.¹ On the other hand, even if Sextus had Prodicus chiefly in mind, he is casting his criticism in general form, and although the unexpressed conclusion of his argument might seem most naturally to be 'and nobody believes that', this is impossible, for Sextus was well aware of the belief that gods were deified men. He speaks of the theory of Euhemerus more than once.² This however lands us in a further difficulty, because in chapters 51 and 52 Prodicus's theory is not only described (repeating chapter 18) as a theory of the deification of sun, moon, rivers, springs, and other beneficial objects, but expressly distinguished, as a different form of atheism, from that of Euhemerus who believed in the deification of 'men of power'. It must be said then that the evidence of Sextus is decisively against a 'Euhemeristic' theory for Prodicus, though that of Philodemus and Minucius Felix is in favour of it (if Minucius was only paraphrasing Philodemus, at least he took him in this sense), and to a lesser extent that of Cicero, *N.D.* 1. 15. 38. Taking all things into account (including Cic. *N.D.* 1. 37. 118), it must at least be agreed that the feature of Prodicus's theory which made the greatest impression was that the origin of religion lay in the tendency of primitive man to regard things useful to his life—including sun, moon and rivers as well as bread and wine—as gods.³ This theory would come easily to the mind of a rationalizing Greek, for in his literature from Homer onwards he would find the name of the appropriate god used for the substance itself, as Hephaestus for fire ('They spitted the entrails and held them over Hephaestus', *Il.* 2. 426), and the sun, moon and rivers *were* gods.

¹ His n. 27 on pp. 222f. of *Sophs.* I find very obscure. If the discoverers were not originally men, what were they before they 'were received among the gods' (p. 211)? His language here does not suggest that he thinks they were purely mythical for Prodicus, and I cannot reconcile p. 210 and p. 223 at all.

² *Math.* 9. 17, 34 (without name), 51. He would know, too, that the theory was older and went back to Prodicus's time, for there are traces of it in Herodotus. (See Nestle, *VMZuL*, 354f.) He must also have known that even man-made σκεῦη, like the hearth (Hestia), were worshipped as gods.

³ The theory of two stages of religious development is claimed for Prodicus by Nestle (*VMZuL*, 353f.), whom others follow including Untersteiner (*Sof.* 11, 92, *Sophs.* 211 and 222, n. 7) and Versényi (*Socr. Hum.* 59f.). None of these takes into account the way in which Sextus contrasts the theory, as that of the deification of useful objects, with that of Euhemerus.

Prodicus on the Origin of Religion

'My suitor was a river', says Deianeira quite naturally (Soph. *Trach.* 9), and, being a god, he could take any form he wished—a bull, a serpent or a man, as well as water. Empedocles gave the names of gods to the four elements, and (for what it is worth) Epiphanius says that Prodicus called them gods, as well as the sun and moon, 'because the life of everything depends on them'.¹

A remarkable passage in the *Bacchae* (274 ff.) shows how easily the Greek mind could slip from the idea of a substance as embodying a living god to that of the god as its inventor or discoverer. Attempting to soften the impious hostility of Pentheus to Dionysus, Tiresias tells him that

two things are primary in human life: first, the goddess Demeter—she is Earth, but call her by which name you like [and of course Ge, the earth, was a great goddess by that name too]. She gives men all nourishment that is of a dry nature. To balance this came Semele's son, who *discovered* the flowing liquor of the grape . . . He, being a god, is poured out to the gods.²

Here Dionysus, the god of wine, is described at the same time, with no sense of incongruity, as the discoverer of wine and the wine itself. Here, therefore, in all probability, is the key to Prodicus's doctrine. In the pious prophet Tiresias he would see a perfect example (and, since Euripides is sure to have known his teaching, he too saw an example) of the mentality out of which religion arose: to ask whether men imagined their food, drink and other life-giving or life-enhancing things as gods, or alternatively the beings who discovered and provided them, was to make a psychologically unreal distinction. Dionysus was at the same time wine and the giver of wine, Hephaestus fire and the giver of fire.

Was Prodicus an atheist?³ Certainly all antiquity thought so.

¹ Epiph. *Adv. haer.* 3.21 (*Dox.* 591 and Untersteiner, *Sof.* 11, 194, not in DK). Too much attention should not be paid to this. The Christian writer is running hastily through all the philosophers, one sentence to each, and commits some glaring blunders.

² There is no need to translate the perfect participle γεγώς as 'when he had become' ('zum Gott geworden', Nestle *VMZuL*, 354) and so see two chronological stages. The perfect forms of γίγνομαι mean rather 'to be'. For the god who is wine cf. the Indian parallel in Dodds, *Bacch.* 100f., who quotes Sir Charles Eliot on Vedic hymns addressed to Soma: 'It is hard to say whether they are addressed to a person or a beverage.'

³ In trying to reconstruct Prodicus's outlook on religion and human life, I have thought it best not to follow scholars like Cataudella and Untersteiner in using the *Birds* of Aristophanes as a source. (See Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 221, n. 3, and 223, n. 33.) They may be right, but the only

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Dodds (*ad loc.*) identifies Tiresias's speech with the doctrine of Prodicus, and then says that the reason why it can be put in the mouth of a pious and believing character is that Prodicus's doctrine was not in fact atheistic. I have already offered a different explanation: to believe that wine and bread are gods is of course not atheistic, it is precisely the belief which Prodicus said 'the ancients' had and from which religion arose. To Prodicus himself they were just wine and bread. The relevant passages in Sextus, of which Dodds quotes one, are offered as explanations of his atheism. Dodds translates the last words of the Themistius passage (*h*) as a claim that Prodicus had 'put piety on a sound foundation', but even if the verb is not corrupt (see p. 239, n. 2, above), it need not mean that, and the claim that the very conception of gods resulted from the practice of agriculture does not sound as if it came from a believer in them. Prodicus may be justly hailed as one of the earliest anthropologists, with a theory about the purely human origin of belief in gods which would not have disgraced the nineteenth century. In this theory, as the passage from Themistius shows, he laid especial stress on the evidential value of agricultural practices. This was entirely natural and reasonable when one considers, first, the belief already current that not only our food but all the benefits of a settled and civilized life are owed to this source, and secondly the number and variety of religious cults that in fact owe their existence to the fertility of the soil. Prodicus, as was to be expected of one who was both Sophist and natural philosopher, and wrote on cosmogony, evidently subscribed to a 'progress', not a 'degeneration', theory of human development (pp. 60 f. above); and, like Protagoras, he thought of religion, along with settled conditions, the building of cities, the rule of law and the advancement of knowledge, as one of the fruits of civilization and essential to its preservation. To hold these views it is not necessary to believe in the existence of gods as the objects of worship independently of men's conception of them.¹

certain inference from the mention of Prodicus at *v.* 692 is that he produced a cosmogony of some sort, perhaps the very latest. It may equally be true that his name is simply being used to stand for any *μετεωροσοφιστής* (*Clouds* 360): the birds can do better than any of these.

¹ In my *In the Beginning* (p. 142, n. 11) I quoted the case of Frederic Harrison, who 'regarded all religions as false, but insisted on the human necessity of worship'. Versényi (*Socr. Hum.* 60) points out that 'giving a psychological foundation to religion . . . is not tantamount to saying that religion has no legitimate basis'. It is true that a modern Christian can accept such an origin

Critias: Religion as a Political Device

Critias¹ was a wealthy aristocrat who would have disdained to be a professional Sophist, yet he shared the intellectual outlook which came to be known as sophistic. In his play *Sisyphus*² he depicted religious belief as a deliberate imposture by government to ensure an ultimate and universal sanction for the good behaviour of its subjects. Although the speech is put into the mouth of Sisyphus himself, the notorious sinner who no doubt received his well-known punishment by the end of the play, this is a fairly obvious device of the author's for promulgating an atheistic view without giving too much offence.³ It starts with a brief account, which has already been quoted (p. 82 above), of the progress of human life from lawless brutality to the introduction of laws, punishment and justice. This we know from other sources to have been a seriously held current view. It continues (fr. 25.9ff.):

Then when the laws prevented men from open deeds of violence, but they continued to commit them in secret, I believe that a man of shrewd and subtle mind invented for men the fear of the gods, so that there might be something to frighten the wicked even if they acted, spoke or thought in secret. From this motive he introduced the conception of divinity. There is, he said, a spirit enjoying endless life, hearing and seeing with his mind, exceedingly wise and all-observing, bearer of a divine nature. He will hear everything spoken among men and can see everything that is done. If you are silently plotting evil, it will not be hidden from the gods, so clever are they. With this story he presented the most seductive⁴ of teachings, concealing the truth with lying words. For a dwelling he gave them the place whose mention would most powerfully strike the hearts of men, whence, as he knew, fears come to mortals and help for their wretched lives; that is,

for human belief in God without abandoning his conviction of its truth, but this seems to me to represent a stage of thought well ahead of the pioneers of rationalism. (Drachmann (*Atheism*, 43f.), like Dodds and Versényi, thought Prodicus believed in—indeed 'took for granted'—the existence of gods, and did not connect the question of their existence with that of the origin of the conception of them.)

¹ See below, pp. 298ff.

² Our sole source for the extract is Sextus (*Math.* 9.54), who attributes it to Critias. Some ancient authorities gave Euripides as the author. On the authorship see ZN, 1407, n. 2.

³ On this, of course, two views are possible. For the opposite one see Drachmann, *Atheism*, 45f., which goes against Sextus (*P.H.* 3.218, *Math.* 9.54) and Plutarch (*De superst.* 171c). Schmid (*Gesch.* 180f.) thought that in any case no Athenian archon would have allowed the play to be performed, and Critias must have intended it only for reading.

⁴ ἥδιστον is strange in this context of fear, and Nauck's suggestion of κέρδιστον (*TGF*², 773) is tempting. Though he does not say so, Nauck doubtless had Eur. *El.* 743f. in mind (quoted on p. 244, n. 3, below).

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the vault above, where he perceived the lightnings and the dread roars of thunder, and the starry face and form of heaven fair-wrought by the cunning craftsmanship of time; whence too the burning meteor¹ makes its way, and the liquid rain descends on the earth. With such fears did he surround mankind, and so by his story give the godhead a fair home in a fitting place, and extinguished lawlessness by his ordinances. . . . So, I think, first of all, did someone persuade men to believe that there exists a race of gods.

This is the first occurrence in history of the theory of religion as a political invention to ensure good behaviour, which was elaborately developed by Polybius at Rome and revived in eighteenth-century Germany.² There is no other mention of it at this time, so it may well have been as original as it was daring,³ and ingenious in the way in which it subsumes under a more general theory the teaching of both Democritus and Prodicus that belief in gods was a product of either the fear or the gratitude produced by certain natural phenomena. At the same time the theory reverses the increasing volume of criticism which attacked the gods on moral grounds, insisting that if they existed, or deserved the name of gods, they ought to be the guardians of the approved moral code. It was the demand for a supernatural sanction for moral behaviour, says Critias, which brought the gods into being in the first place.

This exhausts the list of those known to have argued, on some

¹ Or the sun (DK, Untersteiner). I have hesitantly followed R. G. Bury in the Loeb Sextus (against DK) in taking λαμπρὸς ἀστὲρός μύδρος to refer to meteors or meteorites. (He gives no note.) Critias, it is true, was writing after Anaxagoras had called the sun μύδρος διάπυρος, and sun and rain make a natural pair as two of the δνήσεις of mortal life. This seems to me slightly outweighed by the difficulty of taking δθεν with both rain and sun: rain comes from the sky, but not, surely, the sun. In pseudo-Ar. *De mundo* (395b 23) μύδροι διάπυροι are the stones thrown out by volcanoes, and after all it was probably the fall of the meteorite at Aegospotami that gave Anaxagoras the idea that sun and stars might also be μύδροι. (If Wecklein's στίλβει, not the MS στέλχει, is what Critias wrote, this would obviate the difficulty of δθεν.)

² See H. Trevelyan, *Popular Background to Goethe's Hellenism*, 28, n. 2. It is however not the same as theories of the exploitation by politicians of already existing religious beliefs, current in and after the Renaissance and culminating in Marxism, which are identified with it by Nestle (*VMZuL*, 419).

³ Eur. *EL* 743f. φοβεροὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι μῦθοι κέρδος πρὸς θεῶν θεραπείαν may echo it, though to say 'fear is conducive to worship of the gods' is not the same as saying that worship based on fear is conducive to good behaviour and was invented to that end; and to express disbelief in the more incredible of the myths (λέγεται, τὰν δὲ πίστιν μικρὰν παρ' ἑμοῖοι' ἔχει ν. 737) was certainly not atheism. There is absolutely no evidence for Nestle's contention (*VMZuL*, 416) that Diagoras's atheism was based on the same theory as that of Critias, and was indeed its source.

Immoralism and Sacrilege

kind of theoretical ground, that the gods were fictions of the human mind, for of Hippon's atheism we know no more than of Diagoras (vol. II, 355). But it is hard to believe that the immoralist upholders of *physis* against *nomos*, like Callicles and Antiphon (or those whose views he depicts), held any sort of religious beliefs. At the most, they could have subscribed to Plato's second type of error, that gods exist but have no interest in human kind, but it is unlikely that they thought there was much difference between gods that were totally ineffective and no gods at all. Antiphon indeed, with his advice to heed *nomos* before witnesses, but disregard it when unobserved, exhibits precisely the attitude which on Critias's theory prevailed before the gods were invented. Such irreligion must have been common among the intelligentsia of the time. The profanation of the mysteries and the mutilation of the Hermae were not the work of believers. Another instance was Cinesias, a butt of the comic poets of the time on many counts—his inflated verse, unconventional music, physical emaciation, and impiety or 'atheism'. The orator Lysias named him with three others as forming a kind of 'Hell-fire club' or band of Satanists ('Kakodaemonists' as they called themselves), who deliberately chose unlucky or forbidden days on which to dine together and mock the gods and the laws of Athens. He was also said to have defiled a statue of Hecate, an exploit parallel to that of the mutilation of the Hermae.¹ All this may have little direct connexion with the history of philosophy, but together with the rationalism of natural philosophers and Sophists it contributed to the atmosphere in which Plato grew up, and which moved him to construct in opposition a philosophical theology based on a theory of the origin and government of the whole universe and of man's place within it.

¹ For the *κακοδαίμονισταί* see Lysias *ap.* Ath. 12.551e. The defilement of the statue is mentioned by Aristophanes in the *Frogs* (366, cf. *Eccl.* 330), where the scholiast says Cinesias was the perpetrator. For further information about them, Maas in *RE*, XI, 479–81, Dodds, *Gks. and Irrat.* 188f., Woodbury in *Phoenix*, 1965, 210. Woodbury (p. 199) makes the interesting point that such offences of sacrilege and blasphemy 'presuppose the authority of something holy. A black mass implies the authority and validity of the sacrament.' This can be so. Medieval Satanists no doubt believed themselves to be giving allegiance to one of two opposed, and equally real, powers. But it is also possible to commit offences which might bring down the wrath of the gods, if they existed, simply to demonstrate one's confidence that they do not. This, on the evidence, is more likely to be the explanation of the antics of Cinesias and his dining club, and of the perpetrators of other outrages against religion at Athens.

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It is of interest that Plato, commonly regarded as the most bigoted and ruthless of theists, distinguishes two types of atheist, one much more dangerous than the other and deserving much more severe treatment. He admits that atheism does not necessarily lead to immoral conduct, and recognizes a type something like the ethical humanists of our own day. The relevant passage is *Laws* 908b-e:

Though a man may be a complete unbeliever in the existence of the gods, if he have a naturally upright character he will detest evildoers, and out of a repugnance to wickedness will have no desire to commit wrongful acts, but will shun the unrighteous and be drawn to the good. But there are others who in addition to their belief that there are no gods anywhere are characterized by a lack of self-control in pleasures and pains, combined with a vigorous memory and keen intellect. Both sorts have in common the malady of atheism, but in respect of injury to others the one does far less harm than the other. The one will no doubt have a very free way of speaking about gods, sacrifices and oaths, and by ridiculing others may perhaps make some converts if he is not restrained by punishment; but the other, holding the same opinions but with the reputation of being a gifted man, full of craft and treachery—this is the kind which breeds your diviners and experts in all sorts of quackery. Sometimes also it produces dictators, demagogues, generals, contrivers of private mysteries, and the devices of those called sophists. There are thus many types of atheist, but two which deserve the attention of the legislator. The sins of the hypocrites deserve more than one death or even two, but the others call for admonition and confinement.

In Plato's eyes the first and greatest crime against religion is not open atheism but the encouragement of superstition. Earlier too, in the *Republic* (364b-e), he had arraigned the pseudo-priests and prophets who fleeced the gullible rich with spurious Orphic books promising immunity from divine punishment to all who would pay for their rites and incantations. A character in Euripides calls prophecy 'a thing of naught, and full of lies'. The flames of sacrifice, he thinks, and the cries of birds, have nothing to teach us. Good sense and good counsel are the best prophets.¹ But this is not an attack on the gods,

¹ From the messenger's speech in the *Helena*, vv. 744ff. With 757 γνώμη δ' ἄριστος μάντις ἢ τ' εὐβουλία cf. fr. 973 μάντις δ' ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάξει καλῶς. According to a late source Antiphon made a similar remark, that μαντική was ἀνθρώπου φρονήμου εἰκασμὸς (*Gnomol. Vindob.* DK, A 9). This is anecdote, and, according to Plutarch, *Pyth. Or.* 399a (who also quotes Eur. fr. 973 at *Def. or.* 432c), the saying became proverbial. The attack on μαντική goes back to Xenophanes. See Cic. *Div.* 1.3.5 and Aët. 5.1.1 (in DK, 21 A 52).

Plato's Two Types of Atheist

for he adds: 'Let us sacrifice to the gods and pray for good, but leave prophecy alone.' Nor is Plato condemning all prophecy alike. He fully respected the Delphic oracle, the mouthpiece of Apollo himself, but the mantic art had its higher and lower forms, and there was a whole tribe of mercenary diviners, claiming to tell the will of the gods from the appearance of sacrifices, the flight of birds, or written collections of forged oracles (such as are ridiculed by Aristophanes in the *Birds*) who were bringing religion into contempt. Plato gives yet further evidence of the need to distinguish attempts to purify religion from attacks on religion itself.

(4) MONOTHEISM: ANTISTHENES

To detect and isolate any expressions of pure monotheism in Greek writings is as difficult as to pin down unadulterated atheism. The question of one god or many, so central in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, hardly troubled the Greeks at all. This is manifest even in the works of so philosophical a theologian as Plato, who uses the expression 'god'¹ and 'the gods' indifferently, and often in the closest proximity. Many philosophers were convinced of the existence of a single spirit or intelligence in or behind the universe, but they would not necessarily deny that there was either practical value or an element of truth in the polytheistic beliefs and cults of the cities and the ordinary man. This single godhead, living and intelligent, could be identified, as we have seen in many authors, with a physical element, especially the air or *aither*. An idea which came easily to the Greek mind was that the divine spirit entered, in a higher or lower degree of purity, into creatures of a lower order such as *daimones*, men or even animals. One form of this belief was that the living and divine *aither*, in its less pure form of air, was breathed in and so assimilated by mortals, a doctrine shared by religious mystics and physical philosophers from the time of Anaximenes or earlier.² In a climate of thought which saw the problem of 'the one and the many' in these terms, it

¹ More often 'the god', for Greek regularly, though not invariably, uses the article, which gives the word less of the character of a proper name than our 'God'. This applies to the New Testament also.

² It has occurred frequently, and recently, in these pages, but see especially vol. 1, 128 ff.

was not difficult for a philosopher to take the popular gods under his wing by supposing them to be genuine manifestations of 'the divine' (τὸ θεῖον: the abstract expression is frequent) in different aspects. On one point however the philosophers are agreed: 'the divine' itself is not anthropomorphic, whether it be the Logos-fire of Heraclitus, the 'one god' of Xenophanes fr. 23 (vol. I, 374) who is 'in no way like mortals either in body or in mind', the god of Empedocles who is pure thought and expressly denied all bodily parts (fr. 134, vol. II, 256), or the original cosmopoeic Mind of Anaxagoras. Some of these thinkers might be classified, if we wished, as monotheists or pantheists, especially Heraclitus and Xenophanes with their scathing attacks on popular beliefs and cults. No such attacks by Anaxagoras are recorded, but his expression of his own doctrine was extremely outspoken and his prosecution for impiety not surprising. Empedocles on the other hand found room for a number and variety of gods in his unique amalgam of physical science and religion (vol. II, 257ff.). On the whole it is better to avoid these labels, which though made up from Greek roots were alien to the Greeks themselves.

Nevertheless in the period of the Sophists and Socrates which we are now considering there does seem to be one unmistakable expression of a monotheistic view, couched in terms of the current antithesis between *nomos* and *physis*. It is that of Socrates's disciple Antisthenes, whose theory of the relation of language to reality we have already examined, and as usual we have only tantalizing little fragments of indirect testimony. Said to come from a work on Nature, they are to the effect that 'according to *nomos* there are many gods, but in nature, or in reality, there is one' (κατὰ δὲ φύσιν ἓνα). So Philodemus the Epicurean reports, and Cicero's Epicurean (all our other versions are in Latin) puts it that 'Antisthenes, in the book called *Physicus*, by saying that there are many gods of the people, but only one in nature (*naturaliter unum*), does away with the power of the gods'. The Christian Lactantius adds that the one 'natural' god is the supreme artificer of the whole, and phrases it that he alone exists although nations and cities have their own popular gods. Christian writers also quote Antisthenes as saying that the god is like no other thing (or person; the dative could be either masculine or neuter) and that for this

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reason no one can learn of him from an image.¹ If Lactantius is correct in saying that for Antisthenes the one god was the creator of the world (which in the absence of better qualified witnesses cannot be taken as certain), then this is a remarkably early example in Greece of a pure monotheism. The contrast between the many gods of *nomos* or popular belief and the one real god is clear and emphatic. Without this addition, however, the emphasis on the unity of God and the impossibility of representing him by any visible image is reminiscent of Xenophanes and consistent with a pantheistic, rather than a monotheistic credo.²

¹ The testimonies are collected by Caizzi as fr. 39 A-E and 40 A-D. They are Philod. *De piet.* 7, Cic. *N.D.* 1. 13. 32, Min. Felix 19. 7, Lact. *Div. inst.* 1. 5. 18-19 and *De ira Dei* 11. 14, Clem. *Sirom.* 5. 14. 108. 4 and Protr. 6. 71. 1, Euseb. *P.E.* 13. 13. 35, Theodoret. *Graec. aff. cur.* 1. 75.

² Caizzi, the most recent scholar to make a special study of Antisthenes, describes it cautiously as 'una fede monoteistica, forse in germe panteistica'.

X

CAN VIRTUE BE TAUGHT?

'Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue can be taught? Or is it a matter of practice, or natural aptitude or what?' The urgency with which this question was debated in the fifth century has been mentioned in an introductory chapter (p. 25), where the meaning of *areté* was briefly outlined and it was suggested that it had powerful social implications inclining a writer to answer in one sense or another on grounds not purely rational. The debate reflected the clash between older aristocratic ideals and the new classes which were then rising to prominence under the democratic system of government at Athens and seeking to establish what would today be called a meritocracy.¹ The claim of Sophists that *areté* could be imparted for fees by travelling teachers, instead of being freely transmitted by the precept and example of family and friends, and by association with 'the right people', coupled with the qualities of character native to any young man of good birth, was to the conservative-minded profoundly shocking. Philosophically, the question whether it was a matter of natural talent, or could be acquired by either teaching or assiduous practice, is chiefly important because, as a commonplace of the time, it was caught up in the thought of Socrates and Plato, who tried to answer it at a deeper level. Since the present study must be in part preparation for meeting these two great figures we may take a brief look at the kind of answers offered in and before their time. Afterwards, of course, the topic became more commonplace still, till we get to Horace's 'fortes creantur fortibus et bonis . . . doctrina sed vim promovet insitam'.²

The old idea is typified by Theognis in the sixth century. To his

¹ I fear it is too late to kill off this ugly and bastard term and replace it by its legitimate half-brother 'axiocracy'.

² *Odes* 4.4.33. For other passages in Latin literature see Shorey in *TAPA*, 1909, 185, n. 1, who rather surprisingly does not mention this one. In general his article (Φύσις, Μελέτη, Ἐπιστήμη) should be consulted on this topic.

young friend Cynrus he writes (vv. 27ff. Diehl; the rest of his poetry makes it abundantly clear that for him 'good' and 'noble' mean 'of the right class'):

Out of the goodwill I bear you I will tell you what I myself learned from good men when I was still a child. Consort not with bad men, but always cling to the good. Drink, eat and sit with the great and powerful, and take pleasure in their company, for from noble men you will learn noble ways, but if you mingle with the bad you will lose what sense you have. Understand this and consort with the good, and some day you will say that I am a good counsellor to my friends.

This idea of having virtue 'rub off on one' through the right associations was still a commonplace in the fifth century and later, its connexion with social class becoming more tenuous with time. It was as a conservative member of the governing democratic party¹ that Anytus expressed his contempt for the professionals and claimed that 'any Athenian gentleman' would fit Meno for political life better than a Sophist. In Euripides (fr. 609) it sounds more like the moral commonplace which it became in Menander's 'Evil communications corrupt good manners'. A bad companion, he says, educates his fellows to be like himself, and a good one similarly, therefore young men should pursue good company; a sentiment repeated in an actual Sophist, Antiphon (fr. 62): 'A man necessarily comes to resemble in his ways whomsoever he consorts with for the greater part of the day.' Pindar's exaltation of natural gifts (φύσις) is aristocratic,² and the contexts in which he expresses it show how the question whether *areté* is teachable is a part of the general antithesis between *physis* and art, or *physis* and *nomos*.

Ol. 2.86: 'Wise are they to whom knowledge of many things comes by nature; but those who learn, vehement and garrulous as crows, utter idle words.'

Ol. 9.100: 'What is natural is always best, but many have leaped to seize fame through accomplishments (*aretai*) got by teaching.'³

¹ See pp. 38, n. 1, and 39 above.

² Though the Anon. Iambl. shows that by the end of the fifth century an emphasis on φύσις had lost this association. For him it is a matter of chance (p. 71 above).

³ For an example of the antithesis in prose, see Thuc. 1.121.4 (speech of the Corinthians at Sparta): 'The good qualities which we possess by nature, they cannot acquire by teaching.'

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This does not mean that native talent cannot be improved by training. As he says in another Olympian ode (10.20), the man born to achievement (φύντ' ἀρετῆ) is raised to great glory when training has put a keen edge on his *areté* and the gods are on his side. Pindar's poems were commissioned, and just as he conformed to the aristocratic outlook of his patrons, so (as his editor Gildersleeve reminds us) some praise of the trainer, whom in this passage he has just mentioned by name, was part of the contract.

This ode was in praise of a boy boxer, which is a reminder that besides its general sense, in which it stood for the type of excellence most valued in the period of its use, *areté* could be qualified as excellence in a particular accomplishment or art. Just as we (and the Greeks) speak not only of a good man, but also of a good runner, fighter, scholar or carpenter, so *areté*, suitably qualified, stood for excellence or proficiency in these and other pursuits. This is natural enough, but needs to be said in view of the traditional but misleading English translation 'virtue'. In the *Iliad* Polydorus as a swift runner 'displayed *areté* of the feet' (20.411), and Periphētes (15.641 f.) excelled his father in 'all kinds of *areté*, both in fleetness of foot and in fighting'. This application persists in Pindar, who in the tenth Pythian (v. 23) writes of someone who 'conquering by his hands or the *areté* of his feet wins the greatest prizes by his daring and strength'.¹ In this sense horses too can have it (*Il.* 23.276, 374; Xen. *Hieron* 2.2, 6.16), and inanimate objects or substances like soil (i.e. fertility, Thuc. 1.2.4, Plato, *Critias* 110e, *Laws* 745d) or cotton (Hdt. 3.106.2). Plato applies it frequently to particular skills, as when he makes Protagoras speak of '*areté* of carpentry or any other craft' (*Prot.* 322d), and of course of his own speciality 'political *areté*'. In the *Republic* (353b ff.) Socrates claims that there is a proper *areté* belonging to whatever has a particular function or job to perform, namely the condition in which it will be best able to perform that function, and as examples he mentions pruning-hooks, eyes and ears. He then goes on to make his own point

¹ This linguistic usage could lead to what we cannot but regard as a slightly comic confusion. Arguing in the *Meno* that *areté* cannot be taught, Socrates (at 93c-d) comments on the fact that Themistocles was unable to impart his statesmanlike virtues to his own son, and with no hint of irony points to the young man's ability to throw a javelin while standing upright on horseback as proof that he was not lacking in natural talent.

The Meaning of 'Areté'

by claiming that the *psyche* of man also has its function, namely to govern the lower elements, to deliberate and in general to ensure a life lived to the best of human capacity, and that its own *areté* is to be identified with justice or righteousness.

It might therefore be said that it was Socrates who enlarged the meaning of *areté* from talent or proficiency in a particular art or function to something like virtue in our sense, the prerequisite of a good human life. There is some justification for this, but it needs qualification. The absolute use of the word had always existed, alongside its particularization by means of a genitive or an adjective, to stand for what its users thought was human excellence in general. It is so used in Homer, though we may translate it 'valour', that being the virtue most prized in a heroic age. Used thus it was liable to 'persuasive definitions' by reforming spirits who claimed that excellence 'really' consisted in this or that, as when Heraclitus (fr. 112) declared that 'the greatest *areté* is self-control'. The general use is seen in the title of a work of Democritus 'On *Areté* or Manly Virtue' (ἀνδραγαθίας, D.L. 9.46).¹ The originality of Socrates did not lie in recognizing the general use, but in (a) the emphasis which he laid on it as a moral quality, rather than simply the prerequisite of success, and (b) his attempt to give it philosophical justification by demanding a universal definition. In his eyes a general term was only valid if it corresponded to a single 'form' or reality whose 'essence' could be defined in a single verbal formula. Here he was on controversial ground. When he asks Meno to tell him 'what *areté* is', Meno thinks it an easy question, for he can say what is the virtue of a man, a woman, a child, a slave, or anyone or anything else. But he is puzzled when Socrates replies that he does not want a list of virtues but a statement of the essence, form or being of the one thing, virtue, which in his view must be common to them all to justify calling them by the one name. It looks like a lesson in elementary logic, and so in Meno's case it is, for he is no philosopher but an impetuous young aristocrat who genuinely does not understand the difference between enumerating a string of instances and drawing an inductive generalization from them. But he

¹ See also p. 71 with n. 3, on the Anon. Iambl., which however may have been influenced by Socrates. Connexion between this work and Democritus may be more than fortuitous. See A. T. Cole in *HSCP*, 1961, 154.

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is introduced as an admirer of Gorgias, and we know from Aristotle that Gorgias did not approve of attempting a general definition of *areté*. After mentioning Socrates by name as holding that self-control, courage and justice are the same for a woman as for a man, Aristotle goes on (*Pol.* 1260a 25): 'Those who speak in general terms, saying that virtue is "the well-being of the soul" or "right action" or the like, are wrong. To enumerate the virtues, as Gorgias did, is much nearer the mark than to make this kind of definition.'¹ To Socrates it is as legitimate to ask for a general definition of virtue as it is to ask for a definition of an insect and to object when a list of insects is offered instead; and Meno is perhaps not altogether to be blamed when he says that he can understand the question as applied thus to a natural genus but does not grasp it so easily when it is transferred to virtue, which he feels is not altogether parallel to the other cases mentioned by Socrates (72d, 73a). Gorgias would no doubt have claimed that Socrates was trying to extend a method appropriate to natural science beyond its proper sphere. The opening of his *Helen* is a good example of his own practice. To explain the meaning of *kosmos*, where Socrates would have looked for an all-embracing definition, he writes: '*Kosmos* is for a city the manliness of its citizens, for a body beauty, for a soul wisdom, for an action virtue, for speech truth. *Akosmia* is the opposite of these.' This reluctance to give a general definition is a consequence of the sophistic belief, shared by Protagoras, in the relativity of values.²

Although Meno puts his question to Socrates in the form of clear-cut alternatives, it is not likely that anyone believed *areté* to be attainable *solely* by the bounty of nature or by personal effort or by another's instruction. Even Pindar admitted that natural endowment can be sharpened by training, and although Hesiod spoke as a peasant, not an aristocrat, when he uttered his famous line about the gods putting sweat on the path of achievement (*Erga* 289), his poem became a part

¹ For the same view in Isocrates see *Helen* 1, and cf. *Nicoles* 44.

² Compare Protagoras's miniature lecture on the relativity of goodness in the *Protagoras* (pp. 166 f. above). This point is made by Versényi (*Socr. Hum.* 41 f.), who comments that 'in Protagoras, this reluctance leads not to the denial of the unity of virtue but to a formal rather than a material definition (the equation of the good with the useful, fit, appropriate, etc.)'. On the difference between Socrates and the Sophists in this matter Versényi is helpful. See his pp. 76 ff.

of the Greek heritage, and no one was so unrealistic as to suppose that greatness could be achieved without effort. There was nevertheless great difference in the emphasis laid on the three elements of natural endowment, practice or personal effort, and teaching respectively.

That 'virtue' could be taught was the basis of the Sophists' claim to a livelihood, and its justification lay in the close connexion in the Greek mind between *areté* and the special skills or crafts (*technai*). Protagoras's references, in Plato, to 'the craftsman's *techné*' and 'the craftsman's *areté*'¹ show that for him they meant much the same. He himself considers instruction in the special *technai*, which some Sophists offered, to be beneath him, and the 'political art' or 'political virtue'² which is his own speciality is much closer to moral virtue, for it has its roots in the ethical qualities of justice and a respect for oneself and others. Without these, he considers, life in an organized society is impossible. (Cf. p. 66 above.) Nevertheless this political art is capable of precise definition as 'prudence in personal affairs and the best way to manage one's own household, and also in the affairs of the State, so as to become a most powerful speaker and man of action' (318d-e), a subject practical and utilitarian and at the same time obviously suitable for a course of instruction. Protagoras's view on whether virtue is natural or acquired can be extracted from his long and brilliant speech in the *Protagoras* when its mythical elements are thought away. This has been done already (pp. 65 ff.), and a brief summary is all that is necessary here. It was not, in the beginning, a part of human nature as such. Hence, although primitive men had the intelligence to learn various arts such as the use of fire, the working of metals and so forth, they treated each other savagely and could not co-operate sufficiently to protect themselves within walled cities from the attacks of animals fiercer and more powerful than they. Gradually and painfully some of them learned to exercise self-denial and fair play sufficiently to enable them to take joint action and so survive. No one completely without these virtues, therefore, is alive today, and even the most villainous characters in our civilized societies have some elements of virtue. They have been acquired by teaching since early childhood, first from parents and nurse, then from schoolmasters, and finally from the state, whose

¹ 322b and d. See p. 66, n. 1.

² τέχνη 319a, 322b, ἀρετή 322c.

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system of laws and punishments has an educative purpose. Admonition and punishment are only appropriate in the absence of such good qualities as may be acquired through 'care, practice and teaching': they are not employed against natural deficiencies which a man can do nothing to alter. All that the Sophist can claim is to carry the teaching a little further and do it a little better, so that his own pupils will be somewhat superior to their fellow-citizens. This does not mean of course that everyone has an equal talent for learning political virtue, any more than for mathematics or piano-playing. It is an obvious fact that all men are not equally endowed by nature, and this is no less or more true of virtue than of any other accomplishment.

For all this we rely on Plato, but it accords well with the meagre quotations from Protagoras himself that have any bearing on the subject. Successful teaching, he said, requires that the pupil contribute both natural ability and assiduity in practice (ἄσκησις), and he added that to learn one must begin young (fr. 3). Elsewhere he said (fr. 10) that art and practice, or study (μελέτη), were inseparable. Plato, again (*Theaet.* 167b-c), makes him compare the influence of the orator on cities and the Sophist on individuals to that of the husbandman on plants, recalling what seems to have been a commonplace, the comparison between education and husbandry in which the soil represents the natural capacity of the pupil. We have seen it recurring in Antiphon and the Hippocratic *Law* (pp. 168f. above).¹

The claims of training or practice (ἄσκησις) were preferred to those of nature by Democritus (fr. 242), and his comment on the relation between natural ability and teaching was less superficial than most and in modern terms might be said to have an existentialist tendency. The two were complementary, because a man's nature is not irrevocably fixed at birth: he can be altered by teaching, which is therefore a factor in the formation of his nature.² A line of Critias is also quoted (fr. 9) to the effect that more men become good through study (μελέτη) than by nature. Iamblichus's anonymous writer puts 'nature' first, followed

¹ As Shorey pointed out (*TAPA*, 1909, 190), Euripides in the *Hecuba*, 592ff., uses this simile to make an entirely different point, that human nature cannot be changed by circumstances, whether from bad to good or good to bad.

² Democr. fr. 33. Hazel Barnes, *An Existentialist Ethics*, 33f., speaks of Sartre's pronouncement 'that human nature is not fixed, that man is indeed a creature who makes himself by a process of constant change'.

Importance of the Question

by sustained hard work and willingness to learn, begun in early youth. *Areté* is only to be acquired by applying oneself diligently to it over a long period of time. (See p. 71 above.) The 'Double Arguments' devoted a chapter to the same well-worn theme of whether virtue is teachable (pp. 317ff. below), Isocrates summed up the position, and Plato himself in the *Phaedrus* speaks of it in much the same vein, indeed so similarly to Isocrates that it is usually supposed that one of these was acquainted with the other's writing.¹ As will have appeared by now, much of what was said on the subject was sententious and trivial, yet at the time it seemed of paramount importance to know how *areté* was acquired. In the competitive society of the day ambitious young men like Meno and Hippocrates (in the *Protagoras*) were willing to spend fortunes on Sophists who might be able to impart the secret, and the suggestion that no teacher could communicate it was in Socrates's day an attack on a large vested interest. In this discussion Socrates and Plato took a vigorous part. In the *Euthydemus* Plato ridicules two charlatans who claim to teach it in the face of Socrates's doubts whether it can be taught at all. In the *Protagoras* he expresses the same doubts, and Protagoras counters them with skill and force. The *Meno* is wholly devoted to the topic. Sometimes, as in the discussion of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* already mentioned, Plato joins in the argument at the same rather banal level as the rest.² At other times he makes it the starting-point for developing his own or the Socratic philosophy.

For Socrates—surely the most uncompromisingly intellectual of all ethical teachers—what one man could give to another by teaching was knowledge. If then virtue (in which he certainly included the moral virtues) could be taught, it must be a form of knowledge (*Meno* 87c). As to the teaching of it, his answer was neither crude nor simple (see companion volume on Socrates); but that it was a form of knowledge he

¹ For references to, and discussion of, the relevant passages in Isocrates and Plato, see Shorey's article in *TAPA*, 1909.

² Of certain passages in Plato and Isocrates, Shorey points out (*op. cit.* 195) that 'there is nothing in either of which the sufficient suggestion is not found in the apologetic and protreptic literature of the day'. Plato may be summarizing the opinions of Isocrates, a conclusion which may be unpalatable 'on account of our natural tendency to regard Plato as the more original thinker', but, as Shorey rightly adds, 'the originality of a work so surpassingly rich in suggestion as the *Phaedrus* does not depend on these links of commonplace lightly assumed in passing'.

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was convinced. But if virtue is knowledge, vice or wrongdoing can only be due to ignorance and it follows that 'no one sins deliberately'. Right action will follow automatically on knowledge of what is right. Socrates was judging others by himself for, astonishing as it may seem, in his case it was true. His calm assurance that he was following the right course was unshaken by the fact that its outcome was the cup of hemlock, which he tossed off in complete confidence that 'no harm can come to a good man'. Such heroic doctrine was not for most men. Aristotle said bluntly that it was 'in flat contradiction to experience' (*EN* 1145b27). Plato makes Socrates recognize the prevalence of the opposite view in the *Protagoras* (352d-e). 'You know', he says, 'that most men don't believe us. They maintain that there are many who recognize the best but are unwilling to act on it. It may be open to them, but they do otherwise.' Since the struggle between conscience and desire, or weakness of will, is essentially dramatic, it is not surprising that some of the most striking expressions of the opposite point of view occur in Euripides, quite possibly in conscious contradiction of Socrates. This has been suspected of Phaedra's words in the *Hippolytus*:¹ 'We know, we recognize the right, but do it not, some of us from idleness, others through choosing some pleasure rather than the good.' Faced with the prospect of killing her own children, Medea cries (*Medea* 1078ff.): 'I understand the evil I am prompted to commit, but my passions (*θυμός*) are stronger than my counsel, passion which is the cause of men's greatest crimes.' In this connexion 'nature' with her 'necessity', that despairing resort of the weak-willed, makes an appearance once again. (See p. 100 above.) 'All that you warn me of I know well', says another character (fr. 840), 'but though I know it, nature compels me.' Nor is the other partner of the antithesis, *nomos*, lacking. 'Nature willed it, who cares nought for law' is the excuse of an erring woman: women were made like that.² Again (fr. 841): 'Alas, this is a heaven-sent curse for mortals, that a man know the good but pursue it not.' ('Heaven-sent?') comments the moralizing Plutarch, 'Nay, rather bestial and irrational.' See *De aud. poet.* 33e-f.) 'To be

¹ 380ff. See Snell in *Philologus*, 1948; Dodds, *Gks. & Irrat.* 186 with n. 47; O'Brien, *Socr. Paradoxes*, 55, n. 78.

² Fr. 920, and see Dodds, *op. cit.* 187 with n. 55.

overcome by pleasure' was a phrase of the day,¹ a phrase which is subjected to a critical investigation by Socrates in the *Protagoras* (352d ff.). For him the natural course was to act as reason and knowledge dictated, though it does not follow (indeed there is some evidence to the contrary)² that he was entirely without emotions and would not have qualified for Antiphon's description of a temperate (σώφρων) man. 'He who has neither felt the desire for, nor come in contact with, what is foul and evil', said Antiphon (fr. 59), 'is not temperate, for there is nothing that he has had to overcome in order to show himself well-behaved (κόσμιον).'³ Antiphon also brought in the idea of 'mastery of self', where 'self' stands for the lower self or base desires⁴ (fr. 58 *ad fin.*): 'The best judge of a man's temperance is one who⁵ makes himself a bulwark against the momentary pleasures of the passions and has been able to conquer and master himself. Whoever chooses to yield to his passions at every moment chooses the worse instead of the better.' This self-mastery however is not recommended by Antiphon on any purely moral grounds, but rather as a piece of calculated self-interest. He has just said that 'temperance' or self-restraint (it is the same word, *sophrosyne*, or its adjective *sophron*, which unfortunately cannot be fully covered by any single English one)⁶ consists in admitting the truth of the old Greek adage that the doer shall suffer. 'Whoever thinks he can injure his neighbours without suffering himself is not a temperate man. Such hopes have brought many to irrevocable disaster, when they have turned out to suffer exactly what they thought to inflict on others.' Therefore think before you give your passions rein. There is here at least the germ of the 'hedonic calculus' which Socrates advocates in the *Protagoras* and which obviously played an important part in the formation of his thought. Everything depends

¹ See e.g. Lysias 21.19, Thuc. 3.38.7. In the *Gorgias* Socrates calls it 'the popular notion' (ὡσπερ οἱ πολλοί. 491d).

² See *Socrates*, pp. 73 ff.

³ Scholars have made much of the moral tone of this, which is indeed sufficiently remarkable. See the quotations in Untersteiner, *Sof.* IV, 144f. When Phaedra opposes Socratic doctrine in the words (*Hippol.* 358) οἱ σώφρονες γὰρ οὐχ ἐκόντες ἀλλ' ὄμως κακῶν ἐρῶσιν, Euripides may have had Antiphon in mind.

⁴ As is explained in the *Republic*, 430e-431a.

⁵ Jacoby's alteration of ἄλλος to ἄλλου, adopted by DK, seems unnecessary. See Untersteiner's note, *Sof.* IV, 142 (where ἄλλου is presumably a misprint).

⁶ A full-scale study of the history of the concept has now been made by Helen North (*Sophrosyne*, 1966).

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on making the right decision, i.e. on the correct calculation and weighing up of one's own interests. This brings us close to Socratic intellectualism. What is wanted for a correct choice of pleasures is, in Socrates's phrase, an "art of measurement".¹ The difference between them is that for Socrates no pleasure could exceed that of a good conscience, and no pains, though they might include poverty, disgrace, wounds and death, could outweigh it. It is better, and to the man who knows less painful, to suffer injury than to inflict it, for what matters is the soul, the *psyche*, not the body or appearances, and to prosper and enjoy what are vulgarly called pleasures by selfish and unjust means is to maim and injure one's own *psyche*.

¹ So K. Gantar in *Živa Ant.* 1966, 156, discussing Antiphon fr. 58. His reference is to Plato, *Prot.* 356d-357b. See further on this *Socrates*, pp. 142 ff.

XI

THE MEN

INTRODUCTION

In the foregoing chapters many of the views of Sophists and their contemporaries have been introduced in a discussion of the main topics of philosophical interest in the fifth century. The priority given to this discussion over a treatment of each thinker individually may be justified by the reflection that on the whole this was a debate of contemporaries eagerly exchanging views and that the subjects of perennial human interest on which they argued do not admit of the same linear progress from one thinker to the next which can be detected in the more scientific theorizing of the Presocratics. It seemed best therefore to reproduce, so far as possible, the interplay of their minds on this topic or that. There is the further consideration that, as I have tried to bring out more than once during the discussion, it is not always possible on the evidence available to assign a particular view to its author with certainty. Salomon went so far as to say (*Sav. Stift.* 1911, 131) that 'the picture of the individual Sophists which we construct on the basis of such of their dicta as are preserved is, in so far as it is determined by the vicissitudes of the tradition, the result of pure chance.' At the same time there is something in Nestle's reasons (in the preface to *Vom Mythos zum Logos*) for choosing an arrangement by persons rather than by subjects, namely that 'otherwise much repetition would have been necessary and the contributions of the great personalities, whose unitary vigour was in fact responsible for the intellectual progress achieved, would have been dismembered'. An attempt to have the best of both worlds will obviously increase the risk of repetition, a point which must be borne in mind. One reason why, if the advantages of arrangement by subject seemed too great to miss, it is nevertheless advisable to attempt a short unified account of each individual is that in scattering the views of one man through several widely separated chapters—here his remarks on law or ethics,

and far removed from these a dictum on epistemology and another on the gods—it would be all too easy to overlook inconsistencies and attribute to the same philosopher views which no sane man could have held simultaneously. It will be salutary to see if together they add up to a credible character, and at the same time there remains some detail to be filled in about the evidence for the dates of these people, the events of their lives, and in some cases aspects of their teaching which in the previous general discussion have been omitted or dismissed with a bare mention. In what follows therefore I shall try to sum up what is known of each individual, with the briefest reference possible to what has already been said. I have confined myself to those who have appeared in the previous chapters, and omitted one or two minor figures about whom everything necessary has been said there.

(1) PROTAGORAS

Protagoras was a native of Abdera, the city in the remote north-east of Greece which also gave birth to Democritus.¹ Since for our purposes relative dates are more important than absolute, we may note first that Plato makes him say, before a company which included Socrates, Prodicus and Hippias, that he is old enough to be the father of any one of them (*Prot.* 317c). In the *Hippias Major* (282e), too, Hippias describes himself as a much younger man than Protagoras. This suggests a date of not later than 490 for his birth (which would make him about twenty years older than Socrates, probably the eldest of his auditors), and in the *Meno* (91e) he is said to have died at the age of about seventy after forty years as a practising Sophist. His death, therefore, may be assumed to have occurred about 420.² There was a story that he was a child at the time of the invasion of Xerxes (480), who in return for his father's hospitality ordered the magi to give him

¹ An isolated reference to him as Π. ὁ Τήϊος occurs in the comic poet Eupolis (*ap.* D.L. 9.50). Abdera was colonized from Teos (*Hdt.* 1.168), and the continuous long syllables of Ἀβδηρίτης would have been difficult to accommodate to the metre.

² The chronologist Apollodorus followed Plato (*D.L.* 9.56), and gave Ol. 84 (444–441) as his *floruit*, probably in allusion to his drafting of the constitution of Thurii in 444–443. According to D.L., some said he lived till nearly 90, but see on this Davison in *CQ*, 1953, 35. For references to other discussions of his date see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 6, n. 7, and for his life in general Morrison in *CQ*, 1941 and Davison in *CQ*, 1953.

instruction. This may be some corroborative evidence for a date of birth about 490.¹ The cause of his death is said by a number of late authorities (with some differences in detail) to have been drowning by shipwreck after leaving Athens where he had been tried and banished (or alternatively condemned to death) for the impiety of his agnostic assertion about the gods.² Plato says in the *Meno* (91e) that throughout his professional life, and indeed ever since, his high reputation had been continuously maintained, which is not necessarily inconsistent with trial and conviction: he would have said the same about Socrates.³

Protagoras was the most famous, and perhaps the earliest, of the professional Sophists, who trained others for the profession as well as for public life.⁴ He was well known in Athens, which he visited a number of times,⁵ and became a friend of Pericles. Plutarch tells a story that the two men spent a whole day discussing an interesting point of legal responsibility involving also, in all probability, a more philosophical question of causation. In an athletic contest a man had been accidentally hit and killed with a javelin. Was his death to be attributed to the javelin itself, to the man who threw it, or to the authorities responsible for the conduct of the games?⁶ A more practical

¹ Philostr. *V. Soph.* 1. 10. 1 (DK, 80 A 2), probably taken from the *Persica* of Dinon in the late fourth century B.C., who also says that he was a pupil of Democritus, which is chronologically impossible. See vol. II, 386, n. 2. The same story of education by magi was told of Democritus himself (D.L. 9. 34). For its evidential value see Davison, *loc. cit.* 34.

² D.L. 9. 54, 55; Philostr. 1. 10. 3 (A 2); Hesychius (A 3); Sext. *Math.* 9. 56 (A 12). D.L. and Eusebius (A 4) add the picturesque detail that copies of his books were collected from his possessors and publicly burned. The whole story is, perhaps rightly, rejected by Burnet, *T. to P.* 111 f.

³ See however Vlastos in Plato's *Protagoras* (1956), p. viii, n. 6, who thinks it compatible with prosecution but not condemnation.

⁴ See pp. 35 and 37 above. That he was the first to demand fees for his teaching is repeated by D.L. 9. 52 and Philostr. 1. 10. 4. (The latter approved it, on the sensible ground that we value what we pay for more than what is free.)

⁵ Plato in the *Protagoras* (310e) mentions two visits, and Eupolis in a play produced in 422-421 spoke of him as then present in Athens, i.e. later than the dramatic date of the *Protagoras*, which in spite of one anachronism must have been about 433. See Morrison, *CQ*, 1941, 2 f., and Davison, *CQ*, 1953, 37. The reference to the *Kolakes* of Eupolis occurs in Athenaeus 218c (A 11). The best summing-up of the evidence for the dates in Protagoras's life (not all mentioned here) is that of von Fritz in *RE*, xlv. Halbb. 908-11.

⁶ Plut. *Per.* 36 (DK, A 10). At Athens both animals and lifeless instruments which had been the cause of death were tried in the court of the Prytaneum. See Demosthenes 23 (*In Aristocr.*), 76, and cf. Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 57.4, Plato, *Laws* 873d ff.; and for the prevalence of the custom Frazer's long note, *Pausanias*, vol. II, 370-2. On the philosophical character of the discussion see Rensi and Untersteiner in the latter's *Sophs.* 30f.

outcome of their relationship was the invitation to Protagoras to collaborate in an exciting new enterprise. After the sack and destruction of Sybaris in South Italy by the Crotoniates, the surviving Sybarites appealed to Athens and Sparta to assist their return and share in the refounding of the city. Sparta refused, but the Athenians accepted with enthusiasm, and invited volunteers from any Greek city to join the new colony, which thus became a truly pan-Hellenic enterprise. All this is told by Diodorus, but Heraclides Ponticus in a study of the laws of Greek states added that Protagoras was the man chosen to draft a legal code for Thurii.¹ He was a familiar figure to the Western Greeks, for he also lived for a time in Sicily, where he made a reputation in his profession (Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 282d-e).

There is little point in trying to list the titles of his separate works. Diogenes Laertius (9.55) gives a catalogue, but many of the names will have been arbitrarily attached in later centuries. In the fifth century the custom of attaching titles to prose works was in its infancy, and for a long time those who quoted them would attach a descriptive name to what was only a section of a longer continuous work. There were at least two main treatises: (1) *Truth* (known alternatively, at least in later times, by a wrestling term as the 'Throws' or arguments to floor an opponent), which is cited as such by Plato several times; it opened with the 'man the measure' pronouncement; (2) *Antilogiae* or contrary arguments. *On the Gods* also sounds like a separate work, and it is certainly ineffective to argue that after the agnostic first sentence there would have been nothing left to say on the subject. It might, as already suggested (p. 235), have dealt with the value of religious cults as a part of civilized life, or alternatively have been an anthropological treatise describing the forms of belief and worship current among various peoples. There is also reference to a 'Great Logos', which may be the same as *Truth*, and a number of other titles.²

¹ Diod. 12.10, Heracl. Pont. Π. νόμων, fr. 150 Wehrli (ap. D.L. 9.50). There seems no reason to doubt Heraclides's information, though it is a little curious that Diodorus does not mention Protagoras with the others at 12.10.4. On the foundation of Thurii see Ehrenberg in *AJP*, 1948, 149-70. He speaks of the part played by Protagoras on pp. 168f.

² For the 'Ἀλήθεια in Plato see *Theaet.* 161c, *Crat.* 391c. The alternative title Καταβάλλοντες occurs in Sextus, *Math.* 7.60 (Prot. fr. 1). That Eur. *Bacch.* 202 is an allusion proving that it was already current in the fifth century has been denied outright by Wilamowitz (*Plat.* 1.80 n. 1), and asserted by Gigante (*Nom. Bas.* 216, n. 2) to be 'not merely possible but certain'. On

Much of our information about Protagoras's thought comes from Plato's dialogues, and our assessment of his philosophic achievement therefore depends to a considerable extent on the historical value which we are prepared to grant them. Many scholars have joined in the debate, and complete agreement will probably never be reached. One thing, however, which cannot be argued against Plato's veracity is that his aim was to blacken or destroy Protagoras's reputation. The respect with which he treats his views is all the more impressive for his profound disagreement with them. In the dramatic setting which is one of the chief charms of the dialogue *Protagoras*, the great Sophist is certainly portrayed as fully conscious of his own merits, with a harmless vanity and love of admiration which amused Socrates and tempted him to a little good-tempered leg-pulling; but in the discussion he remains consistently urbane in the face of considerable provocation, including fallacious and unscrupulous argument, on the part of Socrates, displaying at the end, as Vlastos well expresses it, a magnanimity which is 'self-conscious but not insincere'. His own contributions to the discussion are on a consistently high level both intellectually and morally, and leave no doubt of the high esteem in which Plato held him. Even Grote, the arch-castigator of Plato for his unfairness and animosity towards the Sophists (pp. 11 f. above), had to agree that 'that dialogue is itself enough to prove that Plato did not conceive Protagoras either as a corrupt, or unworthy, or incompetent teacher', and concluded that, on the evidence of the *Protagoras* itself, the ethical code of Protagoras appears as superior to that of the Platonic Socrates. 'Protagoras', said Grant, 'is represented by Plato throughout the dialogue as exhibiting an elevated standard of moral

Π. τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως see p. 63 above. For those interested in opinions on this minor and insoluble question here is a selection. Nestle identified the Μέγας Λόγος (fr. 3) with the Π. ἀρετῶν, Frey with the Προστακτικός, DK and Untersteiner with the Ἀλήθεια. See Nestle, *VΜΖuL*, 296 (but cf. his edition of the *Prot.* p. 31); DK, II, 264 n.; Unterst. *Sophs.* 14. Von Fritz (*RE*, xlv. Halbb. 920) thinks it an independent work. For Π. τοῦ ὄντος see p. 47 with n. 1 above. Untersteiner (*op. cit.* 10ff.) has an elaborate theory (charitably characterized by Lesky, *HGL*, 344, as 'too sweeping to be fully demonstrable') that all the titles in D.L.'s catalogue refer to subsections of the Ἀντιλογία, which contained four main sections: (1) on the Gods, (2) on Being, (3) on the Laws and other problems concerning the *polis*, (4) on the Arts (τέχναι, including π. πάλης and π. τῶν μαθημάτων). One of D.L.'s titles is Π. πολιτείας, commonly assigned to the Ἀντιλογία because of the scandalous story of Aristoxenus (*ap. D.L.* 3.37, and cf. 3.57) that almost all of Plato's *Politeia* was to be found in the latter work.

feelings', and no unprejudiced reader of the dialogue could disagree. Von Fritz, after pointing out the fairness with which Plato treats the 'man-the-measure' doctrine in the *Theaetetus*, adds: 'In other ways also Plato, in spite of all his opposition, has treated Protagoras with more justice than have other of his opponents.' Unlike Aristophanes, who interpreted 'weaker' as 'unjust' in Protagoras's claim to make the weaker argument prevail, Plato never accused him or other Sophists of flouting the established moral rules.¹

For many people one of the chief obstacles to believing in Plato's veracity has been the speech in which Protagoras gives a brilliant account of the origins of human society deliberately cast in the form of a myth (*Prot.* 320c-322d), though, as he has said (320c), it could equally well have been told as a rational *logos* without the mythical accretions.² What sticks in their throats is the statement that man is the only creature who believes in the gods and practises religious cult 'because of his kinship with the divine'. I hope I have disposed of this objection. That the instinct to believe and worship is fundamental to human nature is plain fact, and to attribute it to divine kinship no more than is to be expected in an account confessedly cast in the form of popular mythology to make it more entertaining (320c).³ That Plato reproduced Protagoras's teaching with complete accuracy is something we shall never know for certain, but with this proviso, so long as what he says is both internally consistent and not in conflict with the rest of our scanty information (and this I believe to be true), I shall prefer to make use of it as I have done in the earlier part of this book rather than assume, as we should have to do if Plato's testimony is rejected, that we know very little indeed about this stimulating and influential figure.

Protagoras's innovation was to achieve a reputation as a political and moral thinker without supporting any political party, attempting political reform, or seeking power for himself, but simply by lecturing and speaking and offering himself as a professional adviser and educa-

¹ Grote, *History* (1888 ed.), vii, 59-62; Grant, *Ethics*, I, 144; von Fritz, *RE*, xlv. Halbb. 917.

² For views on the authenticity of the myth see the references on p. 64, n. 1, above, especially, for objectors to the mention of divine kinship, Havelock, *L.T.* 408f.

³ See pp. 88 ff. above and *In the Beginning*, 88f. If my explanation is unsatisfying, readers have the choice of C. W. Müller's (p. 235, n. 3, above).

Protagoras's Teaching

tor to make others better and more successful in both their personal and political careers. It was a brilliant solution for an able and ambitious man born in an unimportant city in the remote north-east who longed for wealth, reputation and the company of his intellectual equals but could only find them in the leading cities of Greece, where his alien status debarred him from active participation in political life. His character evidently seemed to overcome, in the minds of many prominent Athenian citizens, the prejudice against his professionalism, and it was not long before others followed his example. (Cf. pp. 40f. above.) The aim of his teaching was above all practical, and in accordance with the needs of the day he based it largely on the art of persuasive speaking, training his pupils to argue both sides of a case and providing examples to prove his point that there are contrary arguments on every subject. The art of *logoi* was acquired by various exercises, including study and criticism of the poets (the Sophists' predecessors in education for life), and analysis and criticism of current forms of speech. The legitimacy of taking either side in an argument according to circumstances was founded on theories of knowledge and being which constituted an extreme reaction from the Eleatic antithesis of knowledge and opinion, the one true and the other false. There was no such thing as falsehood, nor could anyone contradict another or call him mistaken, for a man was the sole judge of his own sensations and beliefs, which were true for him so long as they appeared to be so. Since there was no absolute or universal truth, no one needed to consider, before attempting to make an individual, a jury or a state change its mind, whether or not he would be persuading them of a truer state of affairs. The personal nature of our sensations did not mean that all perceptible properties coexist in an external object but I perceive some and you others. It meant rather that they have no objective existence, but come to be as they are perceived, and for the percipient. Consistent with this was his attack on mathematicians for dealing in abstractions, describing straight lines, circles and so forth as no man perceives them and as, therefore, they do not exist. (See vol. II, 486.)

If each of us lives like this in a private world of his own, the attempt to change another man's world might be thought not only unobjectionable but impossible. This difficulty is overcome by substituting a

standard of advantage and disadvantage for that of truth and falsehood, and extending by analogy the case of sensations in health and sickness. The food that to a sick man tastes unpleasant *is* unpleasant, for him, but a doctor can change his world so that it will both appear and be pleasant to him. The doctrine becomes more difficult when applied to values in general. To be consistent, Protagoras must hold an extreme relative theory of values according to which not only may the same thing, or course of action, be good for *A* but bad for *B*, but also, just as what a man believes to be true is true for him, so also what he believes to be good is good for him, so long as he believes it. We have no record of how Protagoras applied this doctrine to individual morality, but of a state he certainly said that whatever customs or policies it believed in and embodied in its laws were right for it so long as it held them to be right. This difficulty he got over by equating 'just' or 'right' with 'lawful' but distinguishing it from 'the expedient', which was that belief or course of action which *will* produce better effects in the future. As the doctor, with the patient's consent, administers treatment which will improve the patient's condition (cause pleasanter sensations both to appear and be for him), so a wise Sophist or orator may, with the city's goodwill, convert it by argument and not by violence to genuine belief in the virtues of a new policy which will lead (e.g. by promoting a sounder economy or better relations with its neighbours) to a happier life for its citizens. At the root of this curious argument is Protagoras's invincible respect for the democratic virtues of justice, respect for other men's opinions and the processes of peaceful persuasion as the basis of communal life, and the necessity of communal life to the very survival of the human race. Law and order were not in our nature from the beginning, but the agreement which brought them into being was the fruit of bitter experience, for they are essential to our preservation. It follows that all men now living in society possess the capacity for moral and intellectual virtue, and those in whom it is inadequately developed may be punished, if persuasion fails, provided that punishment is designed to be one means among others of education in virtue.

One would hardly expect a religious spirit in a man of these views, and Protagoras confessed that on the existence of gods he personally

could only suspend judgment. This would not preclude an interest in the phenomena of religious belief and worship, and with his conviction of the value to society of established custom and law, he probably believed that this *nomos* ('for', as Euripides said, 'it is by *nomos* that we believe in the gods') was to be encouraged as much as others. Gods, after all, existed for those who believed in them.

A word may be added about Protagoras as a literary critic. There is evidence independent of Plato and Aristotle that his criticism of poetry was not confined to grammatical pedantry or moralizing. A papyrus of about the first century A.D., containing comment on *Iliad* XXI, shows him examining the poet's purpose and the structure of the poem in a surprisingly modern way. 'Protagoras', runs the comment, 'says that the purpose of the episode immediately following the fight between the river Xanthus and mortal men is to divide the battle and make a transition to the theomachy, perhaps also to glorify Achilles and . . .'¹

(2) GORGIAS

The other great member of the first generation of Sophists, almost exactly contemporary with Protagoras, was Gorgias son of Charmantides. Though a Western Greek, he too was an Ionian, for his city Leontini in Sicily was a colony of Chalcidian Naxos in the east of the island. He was born about 490 or a few years after, and all authorities are agreed that he lived to a great age: their reports vary between 105 and 109.² Tradition says he was a pupil of Empedocles (vol. II, 135), and this is likely, though he could have been only a very few years younger. Plato (*Meno* 76c) connects his name with the Empedoclean theory of pores, and he would also owe to Empedocles an interest in the arts of persuasive speech and of medicine. His brother Herodicus too was a doctor, and he claimed to be of service to medicine by bringing his powers of persuasion to bear on recalcitrant patients

¹ *Oxy. Pap.* II, 221. See Gudemann in *RE*, 2. Reihe, III. Halbb. 640.

² For the sources see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 97, n. 2. Plato (*Apol.* 19e) speaks of him as still active in 399, and from Pausanias (6. 17. 9, DK, A 7) it would seem that he ended his days at the court of Jason, who became tyrant of Pherae in Thessaly about 380. (Plato, *Meno* 70b, shows him as already a familiar figure in Thessaly by 402.) Athenaeus (505 d, A 15 a) tells a story which if true would mean that he lived long enough to read Plato's characterization of him in the *Gorgias*, written probably c. 385 (Dodds, *Gorg.* 24ff.).

of his brother or other practitioners.¹ Nor could he have failed to be in touch with the Syracusan rhetoricians Corax and Tisias (with whom Plato associates him, *Phaedr.* 267a), and his own oratory was of the flowery Sicilian type: his name is not connected, as were those of Protagoras and Prodicus, with the linguistic studies of *orthoepia* and 'the correctness of names' (p. 205 above). Like other Sophists he was an itinerant, practising in various cities and giving public exhibitions of his skill at the great pan-Hellenic centres of Olympia and Delphi, and charged fees for his instruction and performances. Besides Thessaly, there are reports of visits to Boeotia and Argos (where he was badly received and his lectures ^{not} banned).² A special feature of his displays was to invite miscellaneous questions from the audience and give impromptu replies. When he came to Athens in 427, on an embassy from Leontini, he was already about sixty, and took the city by storm with his novel style of oratory, as well as earning large sums by special performances and classes for the young (pp. 40 and 179, n. 3 above).

His written works included *Technai*, manuals of rhetorical instruction, which may have consisted largely of models to be learned by heart, of which the extant *Encomium of Helen* and *Defence of Palamedes* (fr. 11 and 11a) would be examples.³ Then there were his own speeches, epideictic, political and other. Aristotle quotes from the introduction to his Olympian oration, the subject of which was Hellenic unity (fr. 7-8a), which he also touched on in his funeral oration for Athenians fallen in war (fr. 5a-6). Also in Aristotle is a brief quotation from an *Encomium on the Eleans* (fr. 10), and the Pythian oration is mentioned by Philostratus (1.9.4, A 1). The only considerable extant fragment is one from the funeral oration, quoted by a late writer to illustrate his rhetorical style (fr. 6), which Aristotle stigmatizes more than once as being in bad taste (fr. 15 and 16). Apart from the speeches, we have paraphrases of the argument of the ironic

¹ There is not the slightest evidence for Schmid's topsy-turvy idea that Empedocles owed his fame as a teacher of rhetoric (see vol. II, 135) to his brilliant pupil (*Gesch.* 1.3.1, 58, n. 4). See Classen in *Proc. Afr. Cl. Ass.* 1959, 37f. For Gorgias's assistance to the doctors by his 'master-art' of rhetoric see Plato, *Gorg.* 456b. His interest in the *πρόποι* theory is also mentioned by Theophrastus (*Gorg.* fr. 5 DK).

² See Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 93 with notes, and Schmid, *Gesch.* 1.3.1, 59, n. 10.

³ On these two works see p. 192 with n. 2 above.

treatise On Nature or the Non-existent, in which he turned the Eleatic thesis upside-down.

All the Sophists indulged in disparagement of their competitors. Protagoras accused them of wasting their pupils' time on useless specialization, and Gorgias (no doubt with an eye particularly on Protagoras) disclaimed any intention of teaching *areté*. 'What about the Sophists,' Socrates asks Meno, 'the only people who profess to teach it? Do you think they do?' And the reply is (*Meno* 95 c): 'What I particularly admire about Gorgias is that you will never hear him make this claim; indeed he laughs at the others when he hears them do so. In his view his job is to make clever speakers.' In any case there was no one thing, *areté*, whose essence could be known and defined (pp. 253 f. above). What was virtue in a slave would not be virtue in a statesman, and the same course of action would in one set of circumstances exhibit *areté* and in another not. But if his sole accomplishment was to make his pupils masters of the art of persuasion, this, he claimed, was the queen of sciences and had all the rest in its power. Of what use was the surgeon's skill if the patient would not submit to the knife? Of what use was it to know the best policy for the city if the Assembly could not be persuaded to adopt it? Skill in *logoi* was the road to supreme power. It may be an art of deceit, but deceit, said Gorgias, can itself be employed in a good cause, as poetry—especially tragedy—shows (fr. 23). It can be, but it may not. This is the essence of Plato's complaint, the truth of which emerges not only from his criticisms but from Gorgias's own surviving compositions, namely that the art of Gorgias is morally neutral, concerned with means not ends. He himself was an upright man, who would not wish to see his instruction put to a bad use,¹ and so, after he has disclaimed responsibility for this, Plato's Socrates is able to force him into a contradiction. He cannot deny that right and wrong are part of the subject-matter of rhetoric itself, so he supposes he will tell a pupil about them 'if he happens

¹ Calogero in *JHS*, 1957 even claims to have found the Socratic principle that no one does wrong willingly, and the idea of the *psyche* as seat of consciousness and moral principle, in those egregious documents of the persuader's art, the *Helen* and *Palamedes*. As to the former, Socrates's position was that wrongdoing can only be due to ignorance of the good, for which the certain cure is knowledge; Gorgias's, that there is no such thing as knowledge and a man's conduct was in the hands of the most powerful persuader, however unscrupulous. I do not see much resemblance.

not to know already'—an admission which makes nonsense of his denial that he teaches *areté*.¹ He makes it only, of course, because he has been driven into a corner, and we cannot be certain that he would have said such a thing in real life. At any rate, whereas rhetoric was in the curriculum of every Sophist, Gorgias must have put it more prominently in his shop window than any of the others. He saw the power of persuasion as paramount in every field, in the study of nature and other philosophical subjects no less than in the law-courts or the political arena. One essential to the art was the sense of occasion, *kairos*, the right time or opportunity, for, as Disraeli also knew, 'the opportune in a popular assembly has sometimes more success than the weightiest efforts of research and reason'.² The speaker must adapt his words to the audience and the situation.³ He was, said Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the first to write about this, though neither he nor anyone later had yet developed it as a *techné*.⁴

His rhetorical practices were based on, and justified by, a relativistic philosophy similar to that of Protagoras. If there were any universally valid truth which could be communicated to another, then no doubt only that truth, backed by incontrovertible evidence, ought to be conveyed.

¹ Gorgias's disclaimer has naturally aroused discussion. Joël (*Gesch.* 669) drew attention not only to Plato, *Gorg.* 460a, but also to the epitaph written by his great-nephew Eumolpus for his statue at Olympia (mentioned by Pausanias, 6. 17. 7 = DK, A 7, and discovered in 1876). This speaks of him as having 'invented the best τέχνη for training the soul for the lists of virtue' (ἀρετῆς ἕξ ἀγώνος). Rensì, quoted by Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 182), forces this into agreement with the disclaimer by a (for its time) rather artificial distinction between theoretical exposition and practical training. Schmid (*Gesch.* 66f.), relying on a high-flown bit of rhetoric in the *Epitaphios*, claims Gorgias believed ἀρετῆ to be 'im vollen und höchsten Sinn' a gift of the gods, yet in the same paragraph says that, whereas for Protagoras αἰδώς and δίκη were part of a divine order, for Gorgias they were human and mutable! Were they not in his eyes ἀρεταί? I have ventured to connect the disclaimer with his denial that any single thing, *areté*, existed.

² Quoted by Robert Blake, *Disraeli*, 266.

³ In vol. II of his autobiography Lord Russell describes his visit to Russia soon after the First World War. He speaks of the utter horror with which he observed the cruelty, persecution and poverty, the spying and hypocrisy that prevailed. The shock, he says, was almost more than he could bear. Later in the same year, when he was on his way to China, the English on the boat asked him to give a lecture about Soviet Russia and, he continues (p. 125), 'in view of the sort of people they were, I said only favourable things about the Soviet Government'. This seems a good illustration of the Gorgian attitude to truth and *kairos*.

⁴ Dion. Hal. *De comp. verb.* 12 (Gorg. fr. 13). In Philostratus I. 1 (A 1a) ἐπιεῖς τῷ καιρῷ refers only to his gift of improvisation—'trusting to the inspiration of the moment', as the Loeb translation has it. Some have made a great deal of this 'καιρός-Lehre', in which among other things they see medical influence. See Schmid, *Gesch.* I. 3. 1, 58, n. 5, 65 with n. 2, 24, n. 3 (Protagoras); Nestle, *VM zu L.*, 316f.; Shorey, *TAPA*, 1909.

Gorgias: the Philosophy of a Rhetorician

If everyone had a memory of all that is past, a conception of what is happening at present and a foreknowledge of the future . . . ¹ But as it is, there is no easy way of either recollecting the past or investigating the present or divining the future, so that on most subjects most men have only opinion to offer the mind as counsellor; and opinion is slippery and insecure (*Hel.* 11).

To express, with all the intellectual force at his command, this thesis that we are all at the mercy of opinion and the truth is for each of us whatever we can be persuaded to believe, because there is no permanent and stable truth to be known, he cast it into the philosophical form of a challenge to the Eleatic assertion of a single changeless being grasped by an infallible reason as opposed to the changing world of appearance, or opinion, which was unreal. Nothing *is* as Parmenides used the verb, that is, exists as at the same time an immutable reality and the object of human knowledge. If there were such a reality we could not grasp it, and even if we could, we could never communicate our knowledge to others. We live in a world where opinion (*doxa*) is supreme, and there is no higher criterion by which it can be verified or the reverse. This leaves the Sophist-orator, master of the art of persuasion both private and public, in command of the whole field of experience, for opinion can always be changed. Only knowledge, based on unshakeable proof, could withstand the attacks of *peitho*, and there is no such thing. This was, in Plato's eyes, the arch-heresy which he must do his utmost to destroy. He must show, first, that there is such a thing as true and false opinion. Next, because if they are *only* opinions the true one will be as vulnerable as the false to the wiles of the persuader, he must restore the criterion of judgment and demonstrate how opinion can be converted to knowledge by 'thinking out the reason' (*Meno* 98a).

The influence of Gorgias was considerable, especially of course on literary style, where it was felt by writers as diverse as the historian Thucydides and the tragic poet Agathon. (For Agathon see Plato, *Symp.* 198c.) His most famous pupil was Isocrates. Among others who are said or thought to have been either his pupils or subject to his

¹ The apodosis, omitted here, is uncertain in text and meaning. For different solutions see DK *ad loc.* and Untersteiner, *Sof.* 11, 101 f. It does not affect the main point, that knowledge is in general impossible and fallible opinion the only guide. Cf. fr. 11 a, § 35, quoted on p. 180 above.

influence are Antisthenes and Alcidamas, and more doubtfully Lycophron, Prodicus, and Hippocrates the great physician; and among active politicians Pericles, Alcibiades, Critias, Proxenus and Meno.

(3) PRODICUS

To any reader of Plato the name of Prodicus inevitably recalls, before anything else, the picture of the unhappy professor, 'suffering grievous pains' as the sobriquet Tantalus suggests, lying on his bed wrapped in sheepskins and blankets ('and plenty of them'), his words drowned by the reverberations of his droning voice in the small room in the house of Callias where he holds forth to a select group of listeners. To draw such a picture, thought Sidgwick, was an act of 'refined barbarity' on Plato's part, whereas Joël, taking Plato's picture for the truth, denied that this miserable creature could possibly have been the author of the heroic fable of Heracles at the crossroads.¹ In Joël's psychology, a writer about Heracles should himself be wrapped in lion's skin, not sheep's. However that may be, since there is no other evidence for Prodicus's personal idiosyncrasies, we are free to accept Plato's if we wish as a not unkindly exaggeration (so at least it seems to me) of genuine traits.

He was a native of the Ionian city of Iulis on Ceos in the Cyclades, the home of the poet Simonides, as Socrates reminds him when that poet's works are under discussion (Plato, *Prot.* 339e ff.). The Suda (DK, A 1) calls him rather vaguely a contemporary of Democritus and Gorgias, which allows anything between 490 and 460 for his birth; but it must have been nearer the second, for the *Protagoras* tells us that he was much younger than Protagoras. One cannot do better than put it, with Mayer (*Prod.* 3) and others, between 470 and 460. He was, then, a few years older than Socrates, and all that can be said about the length of his life is that he outlived him, for with Gorgias and Hippias he is mentioned in the present tense at Plato *Apol.* 19e. Plato says that he often came to Athens on official missions from Ceos, and like Gorgias took the opportunity to earn some money by declaiming his compositions in public and giving instruction to the young men. If

¹ Plato, *Prot.* 315c-d; Sidgwick in *J. Philol.* 1873, 68; Joël, *Gesch.* 689.

we accept the obvious dramatic date for the *Protagoras*, he must have been well known in Athens before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, and Aristophanes could raise a laugh by mentioning his name in 423 and 414.¹

He was a Sophist in the full sense of a professional freelance educator, whose name is coupled with that of Protagoras as teaching the art of success in politics and private life. There seems to have been a standing joke about the difference between his one-drachma lecture and his fifty-drachma lecture (or course? See p. 42, n. 1) on semantics. In the *Cratylus* (384b) Socrates says that if he could have afforded the fifty drachmas he would now be fully expert on the 'correctness of names', but unfortunately he had to be content with the one-drachma lecture. Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1415b12), giving hints on how to recall the wandering attention of an audience by some striking pronouncement, says this is what Prodicus called 'slipping in a bit of the fifty-drachma when the audience begins to nod'.

As one of those present at the gathering of Sophists described in the *Protagoras*, he takes part in the conversation at various points, where the main emphasis is on a somewhat ironic treatment of his insistence on fine distinctions of meaning between words commonly regarded as synonyms. Socrates (of whose relations with Prodicus something has already been said, pp. 222f.) calls himself his pupil in this skill, and elsewhere in the dialogue speaks of him as a man of 'inspired wisdom', which he thinks may be 'ancient and god-given, going back to Simonides or even earlier'. In the *Meno* also he speaks of himself as having been trained by Prodicus as Meno by Gorgias, and in the *Charmides* says he has listened to 'innumerable discourses' of Prodicus on the distinction of names. In the *Hippias Major* he calls him his friend or companion. In the *Theaetetus*, after explaining his maieutic skill in aiding the birth-pangs of men whose minds are big with ideas, he adds that when he has judged that people are not pregnant (that is, presumably, are without a good idea in their heads), and so have no need of him, he has passed many of them on to Prodicus and other 'wondrously wise men' who are more likely to help them. The inference is not flattering. Undoubtedly Socrates thought of his own dia-

¹ Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 282c; Aristophanes, *Clouds* 361 and *Birds* 692.

lectic, whereby one man helps another to mature and formulate his own ideas, as the only genuinely philosophic method, and the implication is that sophistic education, as exemplified by Prodicus, treats the pupil rather as a passive receiver of ready-made facts or theories. In the *Laches*, on the other hand, it is Laches who, in opposition to Socrates, disparages Prodicus's accomplishment as 'the sort of cleverness that befits a Sophist rather than a statesman'. To extract from the nuances of Plato's literary portraits a prosaic and agreed account of the relations between the two men is practically impossible, or at least very much at the mercy of subjective impressions. There is no doubt that Socrates had close personal relations with him, attended his lectures on the importance of using words precisely, and (I should say) felt a certain affection for his donnish gullibility. To Socrates, as to Confucius (*Socrates*, p. 168, n. 1), correct language, 'the rectification of names', was the prerequisite for correct living and even efficient government, and it may well be that this truth first dawned on him while listening to the one-drachma discourse of Prodicus. But Prodicus, though his linguistic teaching undoubtedly included semantic distinctions between ethical terms, had stopped at the threshold. He was like the orators who 'when they have learned the necessary preliminaries to rhetoric think they have discovered the art itself, and that by teaching them to others they have given them complete instruction in rhetoric' (*Phaedr.* 269b-c). The complete art of *logoi* embraces nothing less than the whole of philosophy.¹

One would suppose from Plato that the essence of Prodicus's teaching was linguistic. 'The correctness of names' was the foundation of all else (*Euthyd.* 277e). The Suda however (A 1, DK) classifies

¹ Other references for this paragraph: Plato, *Prot.* 341a, 315e, *Meno* 96d, *Charm.* 163d, *Hipp. Maj.* 282c, *Theaet.* 151b, *Laches* 197d. Whether or not one agrees with Joël and Momigliano (see the latter in *Atti Torino*, 1929-30, 104) that the 'myth' of Prodicus as master of Socrates is Cynic in origin depends, of course, on how one chooses to interpret the many references to their relations which, since they come from Plato, are free from suspicion of such an origin. However, Momigliano does go further than I have ventured to go here in attributing to Prodicus an awareness of the consequences of his semantic teaching as it affected both ethics and epistemology, thus bringing him much closer to Socrates. (For more on this see pp. 224f. above.) To say that it led him to renounce the scepticism and relativism of his brother-Sophists is to pay him a compliment which I should be inclined to reserve for Socrates. For a summing up of the Socratic-Platonic picture of Prodicus see also Mayer, *Prod.* 18-22, who thought that the *Prot.* gives distortion, caricature and irony; elsewhere Plato acknowledges the scientific value of Prodicus's procedure.

him as 'natural philosopher and Sophist', and Galen (see DK, 24 A 2) includes him in a somewhat indiscriminate list of 'writers on nature', with Melissus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Alcmaeon, Gorgias 'and all the rest'. This finds some contemporary confirmation in Aristophanes, who in the *Clouds* (360) calls him μετεωροσοφιστής, an 'astronomical expert',¹ and in the *Birds* (692) implies that he produced a cosmogony. Galen mentions a work 'on the nature of man', in which he brought his linguistic interests to bear on physiological terms, insisting that the word *phlegm* should be applied to the hot humour because of its etymological connexion with the verb 'to burn', and assigning the name *blenna* to the cold humour commonly called *phlegm*.²

We possess at least the content, if not the actual words, of an *epideixis* of Prodicus, which seems to guarantee its genuineness by being exactly the sort of thing that one would expect a Sophist to compose for recital before a popular audience, conveying elementary moral commonplaces through the easily absorbed medium of a fable about one of the most popular figures of legend. Its influence has been surprisingly great. Xenophon describes it as 'the composition about Heracles which he delivered before the largest crowds', and puts the report in the mouth of Socrates as a counterweight to the hedonism and sensuality of Aristippus. At the end Socrates says that what he has given is 'approximately Prodicus's story of the education of Heracles by Virtue, though he clothes its sentiments in even more magnificent words than I have now'. It is presumably the work referred to by Plato when he speaks of 'the good Prodicus' as having written a prose encomium of Heracles (*Symp.* 177b). Impeccable as are its sentiments, few would nowadays accord it the enthusiastic eulogy of Grote, beginning:

Who is there that has not read the well-known fable called 'The Choice of Heracles' . . . ? Who does not know that its express purpose is to kindle the

¹ One cannot altogether discount this on the ground that he applied the same word to Socrates, for there is every likelihood that Socrates's earlier years were in fact marked by an interest in natural philosophy sufficient to give some factual basis to the description. (See *Socrates*, 100 ff.) For Cicero's reference to Prodicus, together with other Sophists, as having written *etiam de natura rerum*, see p. 46 above. Gellius on the other hand contrasts him with Anaxagoras as a *rhetor*, not a *physicus* (15. 20, DK, A 8).

² Galen, *De virt. phys.* 3. 195 Helmreich (Prodicus fr. 4). Galen adds a reference to his linguistic innovations as described by Plato.

imaginings of youth in favour of a life of labour for noble objects, and against a life of indulgence? If it be of striking simplicity and effect even to a modern reader, how much more powerfully must it have worked upon the audience for whose belief it was specially adapted, when set off by the oral expansions of the author?

It is, Grote thought, a vindication of Prodicus and a warning against putting confidence in the sarcastic remarks of Plato. One might rather say that if all sophistic teaching were like this it would confirm the view expressed by Plato in the *Republic* (493a) that the so-called wisdom of the Sophists boils down to a rehash of the conventional opinions of the crowd.¹ There is no need to repeat every detail of the well-known tale. When Heracles as a young man is pondering which path of life to take, he is accosted by two tall women representing Virtue and Vice, who compete for his allegiance. Each is suitably described, Virtue handsome and noble in mien, her body clothed in purity and her eyes in modesty, her whole appearance suggesting self-control, and Vice plump and soft, with a complexion not left to nature, a wandering eye, and a dress revealing rather than concealing her charms. She speaks first, and the pleasure and ease that she promises can be imagined. Virtue by contrast promises a life of severe training, hard work and simplicity, which will however be rewarded with honour, true friendship and, if he wishes it, wealth and power, which can only be won by toil and sweat. Idleness, pleasure and vice on the other hand will weaken his body and destroy his mind. His later years will be a burden to him, whereas if he has followed virtue he can bask in the memory of past glories and enjoy the happiness that his efforts have merited.²

¹ Grote, *History* (1888 ed.), VII, 57. For a more balanced criticism see Grant, *Ethics*, I, 145 f., who makes some telling points. This is not to deny that it may have become, as Schmid calls it, 'One of the most influential pieces of world-literature' (*Gesch.* 41; see his n. 9 for bibliography). Its basic idea of the choice of two ways in life, the primrose path and the arduous climb to virtue, was already in Hesiod (*Erga* 287-92). Schultz's article *Herakles am Scheidewege*, in *Philol.* 1909, goes further into the mythical affinities of the tale, especially its relation to the Y symbol as (a) crossroads and (b) tree of life.

² The full text, from Xen. *Mem.* 2. 1. 21-34, is printed as fr. 2 of Prodicus in DK. It appeared in a work called *Horai*, a title of dubious meaning which if it was the author's own (Lesky, *HGL*, 348) was doubtless explained somewhere in the work itself. On this work see especially Nestle in *Hermes*, 1936 and H. Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 97-101. Joël took the extreme view, which has not been generally followed, that the fable was not by Prodicus at all, but an Antisthenean work Cynic in character. (See his *Gesch.* 686-9.) This is refuted by the reference to it in a scholion

Prodicus's outlook, like that of other Sophists, was humanistic, and he took a purely naturalistic view of religion (pp. 238ff. above). His theory was that primitive man, to whom many aspects of nature must have appeared hostile, was so impressed with the gifts that she provided for the furtherance of his life, welfare and enjoyment—such as the sun, earth and water, air and fire, foodstuffs and the vine—that he believed them either to be the discovery and especial benefaction of divine beings or themselves to embody the godhead. This theory was not only remarkable for its rationalism but had the additional merit of discerning a close connexion between religion and agriculture. This was based on observed fact, since fertility-cults are not only widespread at an early stage of civilization but were especially common in Greece, where moreover it was customary to trace all the benefits of civilized life to an origin in the invention of agriculture.

The only recorded titles of works by Prodicus are *On Nature*, *On the Nature of Man*, and *Horai*, and about these we must remind ourselves of what was said earlier (p. 264) about the dubious authority of such titles in general. Some have thought that the *Horai* was a universal work including as internal sections his views on nature, human and otherwise, his theory of the origin of religion, a panegyric on agriculture leading to thoughts on moral virtue and the education requisite to attain it, and even the doctrine of synonyms.¹

to Aristophanes (Prodicus fr. 1), whose independence seems assured by its mention of the title and final choice of Heracles, which are not in Xenophon. There is of course no means of knowing how close Xenophon has kept to the original. I have ventured what can be no more than an opinion. Grote, Grant and Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 207) also regard it as authentic in substance; others (Wecklein, Blass, Schacht, Mayer in *Prod.* 8f.) suppose him to have handled the tale very freely. In this connexion attention has been drawn to the use of words of closely related meaning which some have connected with Prodicus's 'synonymic' while to others they have appeared as mere stylistic variations à la Gorgias and entirely unlike Prodicus, who insisted that no two words ought to be used as if they had identical meanings. See Spengel in Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 101, n. 225, Mayer, *Prod.* 10f. Although such arguments can never lead to certainty, there is more to be said for Spengel and Gomperz. The first set quoted (κατασκοπεῖσθαι, ἐπισκοπεῖν, θεᾶσθαι, ἀποβλέπειν) neither have nor appear intended to have the same meaning, but give the impression of being carefully chosen for their context.

¹ See Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 207 and (for Nestle's reconstruction) 225, n. 74. For Untersteiner the *Horai* was 'his greatest work, in which the cycle of things and the ethical law which governs all found one of their unifying visions'. This would be difficult to substantiate. His insistence on the correct use of words naturally permeated all his work, but it is plain from Plato that instruction in the subject was given in an independent lecture or course of lectures. The inclusion of the Heracles fable involves, as Gomperz frankly says (*S. u. R.* 100f.), assuming that much in Xenophon's description of it as an *epideixis* is fiction.

Finally one may mention references to Prodicus in two pseudo-Platonic dialogues. Their date is uncertain, and the views attributed to him cannot be regarded as certainly authentic. In the *Eryxias* (397d ff.) he is reported as saying that wealth, like everything else, is a blessing to a good man who knows how to use it properly, but a curse to the ignorant and evil. If he did say this, he was remarkably in harmony with Socrates, who argues for it in the *Meno* (87e ff.), though the author of the *Eryxias* makes him take part in the discomfiture of the Sophist, who, he says, seemed to everybody to be talking nonsense. But the thesis itself was perhaps a commonplace, and something very like it appears in the 'Anonymus Iamblichi' (DK, II, 401, 16-19). In the *Axiochus* (366c ff.) 'Socrates', after some boorish and ill-phrased criticism of Prodicus's greed for fees, says that he has heard him, in an *epideixis* delivered at the house of Callias, give vent to such depressingly pessimistic comments on the worthlessness of life that he himself felt a strong urge for death. The mention of an *epideixis* is circumstantial, and the allusion to Prodicus as Tantalus in the *Protagoras*, together with his bedridden state (until he was hauled out of it by the others), may suggest that he was inclined to a gloomy view.¹ When all is said, however, the only facets of his teaching about which we know enough to make it of philosophic interest are his passion for the exact use of language and his theory of the origin of religion.

(4) HIPPIAS

Hippias son of Diopeithes was another of the younger generation of Sophists, contemporary with Socrates rather than with Protagoras and Gorgias. His widowed daughter married Isocrates in the latter's old age.² The only authority for his date is Plato, who simply says that he was much younger than Protagoras,³ and implies that he was alive

¹ H. Gomperz has a long discussion of both these passages in *S. u. R.* 102-10. For the first, see also the references in Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 226, n. 82.

² For authorities see DK, A 3 and 4.

³ *Prot.* 317c, *Hipp. Maj.* 282 d-e. Untersteiner's belief that he was not born until about 443 depends on his theory that he wrote the proem to Theophrastus's *Characters*. (See *Sophs.* 272 and 274, n. 3.) Untersteiner also claims that he is the Anonymus of Iamblichus and wrote Thucydides 3.4 (on events in Corcyra). I cannot follow his argument (*Sof.* III, 76) that, because according to Pausanias 5.25.4 (a) Hippias wrote an inscription for the statues by

in 399. Coming from Elis, he was, as Nestle has pointed out (*VMZuL*, 360), unlike most Sophists in being a Dorian, and hence travelled more to Dorian cities than to Athens, most often to Sparta (Plato, *Hipp. Maj.* 281 b) but also to Sicily (*ibid.* 282 e). He boasts (in Plato) that the Eleans always turn to him as the ideal man to represent them abroad, and of the vast sums of money which he has earned on these visits by his outstanding virtuosity as a Sophist, which he also displayed at Athens and Olympia and no doubt elsewhere. At Olympia, 'at the festival of all Hellas', he offered both prepared discourses and extempore answers to questions put to him on the spot (*Hipp. Min.* 363 c-d).

Most of our information about Hippias comes from Plato, who in two dialogues made him the only interlocutor of Socrates¹ as well as including him in the *Protagoras*. Those therefore who are convinced that Plato was possessed by a hatred of the Sophists which blinded him to their real character may ignore it and conclude that we know little or nothing about him. On the other hand there is a marked difference between his treatment of them as individuals. When one thinks of the respect which he accords to Protagoras, his tactful handling of Gorgias, whereby the real onslaught on what to Plato were the disastrous effects of his teaching was reserved for other, less sympathetic characters, and even his mildly ironical attitude to the pedantic side of Prodicus's semantic distinctions, the consistency with which he makes broad fun of Hippias surely justifies a suspicion that he was in fact a somewhat bombastic, humourless and thick-skinned character.² He is given to breath-taking remarks like 'I have never found any man who

Calon of the drowned Messenians which was later than the statues themselves, (b) the inscription on the base of a different statue by Calon (which has been excavated) shows lettering of 420-410, therefore the inscription by Hippias is to be assigned to that decade. This is not the inference of Frazer, to whom Untersteiner refers.

¹ I will not at this point enter into the question of the genuineness of the two *Hippias* dialogues. For modern authorities pro and con see Friedländer, *Plato*, II, 101 with 316 n. 1, 146 with 326 n. 6, and for the *major* D. Tarrant's ed. pp. ix-xvii (she believed it to be probably by a pupil of Plato) and E. Edelstein, *X. u. P. Bild*, 24, n. 7. The *minor* is quoted by Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1025 a 6, though without mention of its authorship.

² Nestle drew a different conclusion from the variety of treatment (*VMZuL*, 360): because Plato liked Protagoras but felt a deep antipathy for Hippias, the picture of him in the *Hippias* dialogues is just a caricature, though (Nestle admits) Plato does take him more seriously in the *Protagoras*. This, he thought, makes Hippias's character the most difficult to grasp of any Sophist's, but the difficulty seems to be of his own making.

was my superior in anything', and the unsuspecting innocence with which he laps up the most blatantly ironical flattery from Socrates is almost attractive. Certainly he is a man with whom it would be difficult to be angry.

That he had something to boast about is equally certain. Plato speaks of his Macaulay-like memory, whereby he could retain a list of fifty names after a single hearing, and his astonishing versatility. Well might Xenophon call him a polymath. He was evidently one of those who absorb learning easily and quickly, some of it such as to demand high intellectual gifts. Subjects that he was prepared to teach included astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, grammar, rhythm, music, genealogy, mythology and history, including the history of philosophy and mathematics.¹ He also wrote declamations on the poets, which in the hands of a Sophist were more likely to deal with moral questions than with what we should call literary criticism. In the *Protagoras* (347a) he lays claim to a *logos* on Simonides (which he will recite to the company if requested), and at the beginning of the *Hippias Minor* he has just finished an epideixis on Homer. Most of his subjects are listed by Plato without any illustrations, a few of which have come down in later writers. He spoke of Thales drawing from the behaviour of amber and the loadstone the conclusion that inanimate objects had soul,² and of Mamercus, brother of the poet Stesichorus, as a successor of Thales in geometry. As a historian he noted that the word *tyrannos* was not used before the time of Archilochus, spoke of Lycurgus's military talent, and published a list of Olympic victors, as Aristotle did later of the Pythian victors. (Olympia was of course on his home territory.) Anthropological interests are suggested by a work called *Nomenclature of Tribes*. In mythology he differed from Pindar over the name of Phrixus's stepmother and claimed that the continents of Asia and Europe were called after Oceanids of these names. The only astronomical pronouncement that has come down is that he put the

¹ Xen. *Symp.* 4.62, Plato, *Prot.* 315c, 318e, *Hipp. Maj.* 285c-e.

² Aristotle introduces this cautiously at *De an.* 405a19 in the form: 'Thales too seems to have supposed, from what is reported about him . . .', and D.L. (1.24) attributes the information to both Aristotle and Hippias. Snell, and following him Classen, have deduced that for this and all his other references to Thales Aristotle made use of the work of Hippias mentioned by Clement in fr. 6, of which they have detected further traces in Plato *Craz.* 402b and *Symp.* 178a. See Classen in *Philol.* 1965.

number of stars in the Hyades group at seven.¹ His prodigious memory was cultivated by a deliberate technique of mnemonics which he also taught to others.² Not content with all this he wrote tragedies and dithyrambs as well as prose, and was as clever with his hands as his brain, according to the story in Plato that he appeared at Olympia wearing nothing that he had not made himself, not only clothes but also a ring, oil-flask and strigil (*Hipp. Min.* 368b-d). The Suda says (A I, DK) that he set up self-sufficiency as the goal of life, and this passage would certainly bear it out if it is not in fact the basis of the tradition.

He was an omnivorous reader, and incorporated the results of his reading in a comprehensive work called the *Synagogé*, that is, collection or miscellany. The title is mentioned by Athenaeus, and an interesting quotation in Clement of Alexandria (the only one extant which claims to give anything like Hippias's own words) must surely be his own description of this work.³ It runs:

It may be that some of this has been said by Orpheus, some briefly, here and there, by Musaeus, some by Hesiod and some by Homer, some in other poets and some in prose-writers both Greek and foreign. For my part, I have collected from all these writers what is most important and belongs together to make this new and composite work.

The only bit of its contents vouchsafed to us concerns a certain Thargelia of Miletus, a 'wise and beautiful woman' who had fourteen husbands.

One mathematical discovery is attributed to Hippias which, if the attribution is correct, 'differentiates him', as K. Freeman says (*Com-*

¹ Mamerus, *Hipp.* fr. 12 (Proclus); *tyrannos*, fr. 9 (schol. Sophocles); Lycurgus, fr. 11 (Plut.); Olympic victors, fr. 3 (Plut.); Phrixus, fr. 14 (schol. Pind.); 'Εθνῶν ὀνομασίαι, fr. 2 (schol. Apoll. Rhod.); Hyades, fr. 13 (schol. Arat.).

² Besides the reference to his μνημονικὸν τέχνημα in *Hipp. Min.* 368d, see Xen. *Symp.* 4.62 (Callias learned τὸ μνημονικόν from Hippias). *Diss. Log.* 9 (DK, II, 416) may be an echo of Hippias. (According to Cicero, *De or.* 2.86.351-4, the first to evolve a mnemonic technique was Simonides. He and Hippias are mentioned together by Aelian, *Hist. Anim.* 6.10 and Amm. Marcell. 16.5.8, both quoted by Tarrant, *Hipp. Maj.* xxvii.)

³ Fr. 6, from Clem. *Strom.* 6.15 (II, 434 St.). Clement commits himself to no more than ὧδέ πως λέγοντα, but gives it as a direct quotation. (His object is to prove that Greeks are incorrigible plagiarists.) The phrase ἐν συγγραφαῖς τὰ μὲν Ἑλληνιστὶ τὰ δὲ βαρβάρους is interesting. Even if, as Nestle thought (*VMuL*, 364), Hippias only knew the latter at second hand, perhaps from Hecataeus, it challenges the oft-repeated but improbable claim that Greek writers knew no language but their own. For the title see fr. 4 (Ath. 608f).

panion, 385), 'from all other Sophists and places him in the ranks of the scientific discoverers'. This is the curve called *quadratrix* (τετραγωνιζουσα), which as its name implies was used for squaring the circle, and also for trisecting an angle or dividing it according to any given ratio.¹ In mentioning it as Hippias's work Proclus does not add 'of Elis', and since the name is not uncommon (there are eighteen in the *Real-Encyclopädie*) some have been sceptical, thinking it scarcely credible that our universal virtuoso could have achieved such original work in any single field. Others argue that Proclus had earlier in his work attributed the remark about Mamercus to Hippias of Elis, and if he now meant a different man would have said so. This is not very cogent (particularly as the Mamercus passage comes nearly 200 Teubner pages before the earlier of the two references to the *quadratrix*), but most modern opinion is in favour of the attribution to the Sophist.²

Grote remarked (*History*, 1888 ed., VII, 63f.) that Plato, for all his 'sneer and contemptuous banter', never accuses Hippias, as he did some other Sophists, of preaching 'a low or corrupt morality'. In the *Hippias Major* (286a) Hippias mentions a *Trojan Discourse* which he has recited at Sparta and intends to repeat at Athens. Its theme is a discourse by Nestor in reply to Neoptolemos, who has asked him (as Grote puts it) 'what was the plan of life incumbent on a young man of honourable aspirations', and Grote suggests that for high moral purpose it was probably not unworthy to be set beside Prodicus's *Choice of Heracles*. That may or may not be so (we know nothing of its content), but in any case Hippias has better claims to be accepted as a serious ethical thinker. He was one of those who contrasted law and nature and upheld the latter on moral and humanitarian, not selfish and ambitious, grounds. He held a form of the social-contract theory of law: positive law, being a matter of human agreement and frequently

¹ The sole authority is Proclus, *Euc.* pp. 272 (= Hipp. fr. 21) and 356 Friedländer, whose source is Eudemos.

² Among the sceptics were Wilamowitz (*Platon*, I, 136, n. 1) and Schmid (*Gesch.* 54 f.). Björnbo in *RE*, VIII, 1708f., mentions four objections to the attribution to Hippias, and finds none of them cogent; but he makes no reference to the silence of Simplicius, who at *Phys.* 54ff. seems to be giving as complete an account as he can of attempts to square the circle, and says nothing of Hippias. This might be thought significant. The authorship of Hippias was accepted by Heath, *Hist. Gr. Math.* I, 23. For details of the *quadratrix* see Freeman, *Comp.* 386-8, or Björnbo, *loc. cit.*

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altered, was not to be regarded as providing fixed and universal standards of conduct. It could be 'a tyrant doing violence to nature'. He believed however that there were unwritten laws, divine in origin and universal in application, concerning such things as the worship of the gods and respect for parents. With belief in universal, natural laws (and for Hippias natural and divine appear to be the same) went belief in the fundamental unity of the human race, whose divisions are only a matter of *nomos*, i.e. positive law and established, but mistaken, conventions or habits (p. 163 above).

As witness to his ethical views we have, finally, some remarks on envy and slander which were quoted by Plutarch.¹ There are, said Hippias, two sorts of envy, a right and a wrong. It is right to feel envy when honours go to bad men, wrong when they go to good. Moreover the envious have a double share of suffering: they are grieved, like all men, by their own troubles, but also by the good fortune of others. Of slander he said that it is a curse because the law prescribes no punishment for it as it does for robbery, though in fact it is robbery of the best thing in life, namely friendship or goodwill (*philia*). Its underhand nature makes it worse than open violence. Here is a concrete instance of his censure of *nomos*, and in this respect at least he would regard today's laws as an improvement.

(5) ANTIPHON

Antiphon was a very common name,² especially in Attica, and the identity of Antiphon the Sophist, whose views have been discussed in earlier chapters of this book, has been the subject of endless scholarly controversy. The main question is whether he is the same man as the orator Antiphon of Rhamnus who figures in Thucydides as a member of the Four Hundred and was the author of an extant collection of oratorical exercises called the *Tetralogies* and three forensic speeches. The position is further complicated by references to Antiphon as a

¹ Frr. 16 and 17. Actually we have them from Stobaeus, who found them in a work of Plutarch *On Slander*, now lost.

² For instance Plato had a half-brother called Antiphon, whom he introduces as narrator of the dialogue *Parmenides*. Blass (*Att. Bereds.*² 1, 93 ff.) distinguishes six in addition to the orator (summarized in Loeb Plut. vol. x, 346 note d).

tragic poet, as the author of a work on dreams, and as a soothsayer. Thus Heinimann (*N. u. Ph.* 134) pronounced: 'It must be taken as certain that the Sophist, the oligarchic orator and the tragedian are three different people.' It has even been suggested that the works *On Truth* and *On Concord* are by different men.¹ Whatever the answer, one thing must be borne in mind throughout: references in our authorities to 'Antiphon the Sophist' do not suffice to distinguish a Sophist from an orator, since in ancient times the word *sophistes* would be applied equally to both. In any case Origen says that the Antiphon who wrote *On Truth* was known as an orator (Antiphon, fr. 12). The question is of minor interest for the history of philosophy, and discussion of it has been relegated to a note (pp. 292-4 below), which may be thankfully omitted by all but classical specialists.

The oratorical works, whoever wrote them, are not our present concern. About the external circumstances of the Sophist's life (if he is different from the orator) nothing is known, nor is there any precise information about his date, though he was obviously a contemporary of Socrates. The orator is said (pseudo-Plut. *Vit. or.* 832f) to have been born about the time of the Persian Wars, and to have been a little younger than Gorgias, and this certainly does not militate against their identity.² Antiphon never appears in Plato's dialogues, possibly because, as Schmid suggested (*Gesch.* 159), Plato thought him only second-rate.

There is another problem to be faced. Twenty-nine fragments are grouped by DK under the title *On Concord*, but few of them are

¹ Schmid (*Gesch.* 100) said 'Die grösste Wahrscheinlichkeit spricht dafür' that the Sophist wrote both. Nestle (*VMuL*, 1942, 387f.) does not mention Schmid, but says with a choice of phrase that is surely deliberate, 'Es spricht daher die grösste Wahrscheinlichkeit dafür', that the author of *Concord* is not the Sophist, who wrote *Truth*, but the orator.

² Attempts have been made to date the Sophist's writings. Π. δμ. has been put close to 440 on the rather shaky ground of 'echoes' in Euripides (Altwegg and J. H. Finley), and Π. δλ. about a decade later also on echoes of his ethical doctrines in drama plus Aly's analysis of the relation of his mathematical work to that of contemporaries. See Greene, *Maira*, 232 with n. 74 and 236 with n. 94. Heinimann (*N. u. Ph.* 141f.), adding to the other arguments one from the style of the papyrus fragments, puts Π. δλ. in the twenties. He rejects the idea (see p. 114 above) that it is satirized in the *Clouds* in 423. Antiphon was not of course 'the Sophist against whom Aristophanes is especially tilting', but that he as well as Protagoras (and perhaps others) contributed to the Sophistic morality which is the target does seem at least likely. Schmid (*Gesch.* 159) says that the conversation of Antiphon with Socrates in Xenophon is to be dated in the last decade of the century (i.e. after the orator's death) and his writings should be put no later than the thirties.

explicitly attributed to that work, and none of them deal with the subject of concord.¹ The strength of the case for so assigning them may be judged from Schmid's contention (*Gesch.* 163, n. 1) that, because some of them (those in Stobaeus) are in the form of maxims, and Philostratus says in his life of Antiphon (of *Rhamnus*) that his work on concord included collections of maxims (*gnomologiai*), therefore we may safely assign these fragments to the Sophist's work of that name. Even if we could, the word *gnomologia* does not give much encouragement to suppose that they express his original thought, but in fact the genuineness of these snippets from John of Stobi's anthology (there are twelve of them, each headed simply 'from Antiphon') has been challenged.² Comparison with the papyrus fragments, thinks Havelock (*LT*, 419), makes their rejection inevitable, with the partial exception of fr. 49.³ W. C. Greene, on the other hand (*Moirā*, 239), saw no real inconsistency between the ethical doctrines in the supposed fragments of *Concord* and those of *Truth* as seen in the papyri.⁴

Most of the 'fragments' expressly attributed to *Concord* come from the lexicon of Harpocration and consist of single words.⁵ Three of them (fr. 45-7) refer to mythical tribes, the Sciapods, Macrocephali and dwellers under the earth or Troglodytes, which with fr. 48 ('man calls himself the most godlike of animals') show an anthropological

¹ Some have thought Antiphon intended the word (which does not occur at all in the fragments) in the sense of *inner* harmony (what Iamblichus many centuries later, and with Plato behind him, called τὴν ἐνὸς ἐκάστου πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ὁμογενωμοσύνην, *ap.* Stob. 2.33.15), which they equate with his emphasis on σωφροσύνη and self-mastery. See Stenzel in *RE*, suppl. iv, 40f. Nestle denied this (*VMZuL*, 381), while Praechter (Ueberweg-P. 129) thought to have it both ways.

² Compare the case of Democritus, vol. II, 489ff.

³ This fragment deals with the cares of marriage, and appears to Havelock to be compatible with the outlook of Antiphon, provided we assume that a later writer has contaminated what he wrote with 'moralizing reflections borrowed from the *Medea* and the *Phaedo*'. It does indeed contain phrases reminiscent of both these works (some have thought Euripides was influenced by Antiphon), and (as Havelock also notes) remarkable coincidences with fr. 275-7 of Democritus, but this does not deter him from dissecting the passage in confidence that we know the mind of the Sophist well enough to sift the true from the false.

⁴ That there were two separate works is undoubted, but we must remind ourselves at some stage, as Havelock (*op. cit.* 418) pertinently does, that the titles of pre-Platonic works were probably bestowed not by the author but by Alexandrian scholars with the conceptions of the Academy, Lyceum and other schools in mind.

⁵ An astounding amount has been built on the entries in Harpocration, especially fr. 4-8, which afford no justification at all for crediting Antiphon with an Eleatic belief that all things are one, and sense-experience (sight, smell etc.) is illusory, as Freeman does (*Comp.* 395, cf. Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 258, n. 5).

interest.¹ Fr. 52 makes the 'philosophical' observation that you can't take back your life like a move at draughts,² others comment in a commonplace vein on misplaced hesitation (55) and on consorting with flatterers instead of true friends (65). Fr. 63 reads 'When they know the *diathesis* (setting in order, arrangement) they listen', and Momigliano in his article in *Riv. di filol.* (1930) built on this, in conjunction with certain fragments of the *Truth*, an interesting and very probable reconstruction of a basic tenet underlying and uniting Antiphon's philosophy of the universe and of man. In fr. 24a we read: 'Antiphon applied the word *diathesis* to mind (*γνώμη*) or intelligence . . . In the second book on Truth he also uses it for the ordering of the universe (*διακόσμησις*); and in fr. 2: 'For all men mind (*γνώμη*) controls their body in matters of health and disease and everything else.' With these goes fr. 14: 'Deprived of material she would order (*διαθεῖτο*) many good things badly.' (The subject is generally taken to be nature, but could now equally be mind or *γνώμη*.) Momigliano's conclusion is that Antiphon saw a single active rational principle at work in both man and nature, an idea which he could well have taken from the *Nous* of Anaxagoras.³ I feel some difficulty in reconciling this with his alleged denial of providence (fr. 12), but from such sorry fragments we cannot hope for anything like a complete insight into his thoughts. Momigliano himself thinks this active principle, which otherwise would be a completely autonomous *natura naturans*, must be distinct from the supremely self-sufficient being mentioned in fr. 10, and it is just conceivable that this possibility may conceal (for one cannot say it reveals) the solution.

Of the Stobaeus extracts, three express deep pessimism. Fr. 49

¹ θεοδέστατον, not θεαδέστατον ('god-fearing'), must surely be correct (*pace* Nestle *VMZuL*, 382), in view of Photius's lemma. Momigliano (*Riv. di filol.* 1930, 129) thought that in 45-7 Antiphon was giving examples of those living closest to the state of nature, his ideal, whereas for Altwegg (see Greene, *Moirs*, 233, n. 78) they were 'types of man's wretchedness'. (Both views existed earlier, Nestle, *VMZuL*, 382, n. 50.) Bignone (*Studi*, 86) connected them with Antiphon's assertion in *O.P.* 1364 that there was no difference between Greeks and barbarians: Antiphon's purpose, he thought, was probably to bring out that among the most barbaric peoples there were traces of humanity and social life. The names in Harpocration afford not the slightest evidence for any of these conjectures.

² From Harpocration. The worthy anthologizer Stobaeus quotes a longer version of the same sentiment under the name of Socrates! See Untersteiner, *Sof.* IV, 131.

³ Antiphon's interest in cosmology and natural philosophy has already been noted (p. 203 above).

Antiphon's Moral Aphorisms

is on marriage (see p. 287, n. 3, above). If a wife proves unsuitable, divorce is tiresome and makes enemies of friends, but keeping her is painful. A good wife brings joy, but pain lurks round the corner. It is bad enough to have to look after one's own health, daily needs and good name, but care is doubled when there are two. Children bring nothing but worry, and soon take the spring out of your step and the bloom from your cheeks. Life, says fr. 50, is like a day on watch-duty—just a single day to look at the light, then we hand it over to our successors; and fr. 51 abuses it roundly: it has no greatness or nobility, nothing but what is small, weak, short-lived and shot through with grievous pains. 53 and 53a attack misers and those who live in the present life as if preparing for another, and so let the time slip by (and 'time', he says in fr. 77, 'is the most costly thing that one expends'), and 54 simply retells a fable of Aesop on the same theme and concludes that if God gives a man wealth but not sense he in fact deprives him of both. Two more are merely commonplaces, 62 (character formed by the company kept) and 64 (old friendships more necessary than new). Fr. 58, already noted (p. 259 above), has more individuality, with its warning that indulgence in the immediate impulse may get one into greater trouble than self-mastery. (A young man's urge to marry might be an example of this, as well as the urge to assault a neighbour.) It could well have stood in the same context as 59, that a man cannot be called self-controlled if he has never been tempted. Fr. 61 is the strongest card in the hand of those who want to argue that the teaching of *On Concord* (from which they assume it to come, though Stobaeus does not say so) is irreconcilable with that of the *Truth*, but it is hardly a trump. It begins by paraphrasing a line of Sophocles which says that there is no greater evil than anarchy,¹ but goes on to apply this solely to the upbringing of children: it is the reason why 'the men of old' accustomed children from the start to submit to control and do as they are told, to save them from getting too great a shock when they grow to manhood and find things very different. Hence the importance of education (fr. 60), for a good ending depends on a good beginning.

¹ *Ant.* 672. Bignone (*Studi*, 140) thought Sophocles dependent on Antiphon. We shall never know.

If we may assume the fragments to be genuine, or at least those which bear an individual stamp, one thing that seems certain about Antiphon is that, for his time, he was a considerable psychologist. He was certainly ahead of the advocates of the 'do-as-you-like' theory of education, especially popular with the intelligentsia of the 1930s, in realizing that this was no preparation for adult life, in which if one does not submit to the discipline imposed by the community one is in for some harsh experiences (fr. 61). His philosophy of life is a refined and intellectual hedonism. One must plan to get the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of suffering from our brief and imperfect existence, and this could not be achieved in a completely anarchic society, where everyone was free to act on the impulse of the moment, and assaulted his neighbour at every opportunity. Such behaviour would very soon bring its own nemesis. To acknowledge this is not to deny that (as he says in fr. 44 A) laws are artificial and often bad, or that while living in such a way as not to destroy their framework a man may disregard the law for his own ends whenever he can do so undetected and with impunity.

It is in this psychological connexion that one must see the 'art of painless living' (τέχνη ἀλυπίας), as to which I should like to go on the assumption (deviating perhaps, as an occasional luxury, from the strictest standards of scholarly criticism)¹ that the story in the *Lives of the Orators* (ps.-Plut. 833 c, DK, A6) is founded on fact and refers to the same Antiphon who wrote *On Truth*.² If there were several Anti-

¹ I was seriously taken to task by a reviewer of vol. 1 for reporting without comment Cicero's statement that Anaximander gave the Spartans warning of an earthquake, and suggesting that he might have done it by a method still employed (according to *The Times*) in modern Greece. I confess that in this comparatively unimportant matter I thought readers might like to know the titbit about the storks without caring too much about the verification (no longer possible) of Cicero's remark.

² H. N. Fowler (Loeb Plut. x, 347 n.) and most others have supposed that the Sophist is meant. There is no other authority except that Philostratus, also in a life of the Rhamnusian, says that he 'announced a course of sorrow-assuaging (νηπιανθείς) lectures, claiming that no one could tell him of a grief so terrible that he could not expel it from his mind'. 'Consolation-literature' later became a regular genre (cf. Greene, *Moirā*, 232), and many have supposed the word τέχνη in τ. ἀλυπίας to have been used in the sense of a written work, which Altwegg even identified with Π. ὀμοσιός ('irrig' Stenzel, 'haltlos' DK), but the context makes this highly improbable, and in Plato (*Symp.* 186e) συνέστησεν τὴν ἡμετέραν τέχνην means 'founded our (the physicians') art'. (Cf. συνέστησαστο in pseudo-Plut.) Morrison (*Proc. Camb. Ph. Soc.* 1961, 57) conjectures that the 'clinic' was originally a comic invention like the *phrontisterion* of the *Clouds*.

phons, the writer has probably confused them. His subject is Antiphon of Rhamnus, and, after saying that sixty orations are ascribed to him, he adds that he also wrote tragedies and 'invented an art of painlessness comparable to the medical therapy of the diseased. In Corinth he fitted up a room near the agora and advertised that he could cure the distressed by words. What he did was to bring consolation to those in trouble by questioning them as to the causes.' To suggest that Antiphon set up the first psychiatric clinic is at any rate no more improbable than some proposed explanations, e.g. that the *techné* in this case was a written work. He knew, after all, that the roots of physical illness were to be sought in the mind (fr. 2) and that it could sometimes be explained as an escape-route from active life (*praxis*, fr. 57). It is in keeping with Antiphon's philosophy of the hedonic calculus, his advocacy of self-mastery and deprecation of yielding to the pleasures and impulses of the moment, that the ideal sought should be a negative one, freedom from pain. Bignone (*Studi*, 83) justly compares this state of calm content (*alypia*) with the *euthymia* of Democritus and the *ataraxia* of Epicurus. A utilitarian hedonism, he adds, was undoubtedly the basis of Antiphon's ethics, but in the moderate form upheld by these two other philosophers.

Of the ethical doctrines of the *Truth*, which have been expounded in earlier chapters and of necessity referred to in the present account, we need only remind ourselves that they were based on a sharp contrast between *physis* and *nomos* to the advantage of the former. Nature compels us to avoid pain and seek the maximum of pleasure, for pain is harmful and pleasure beneficial. One should therefore follow the dictates of convention and the laws only in so far as flouting them for one's immediate pleasure would bring more pain in the form of punishment or disgrace. (There is no suggestion of destroying them by open rebellion.) Moreover nature knows no distinctions of class or race. So far as we know anything about *Concord*, it may seem to show a different emphasis, but nothing to make one suppose that it was not written by the same man, perhaps at a different stage of life, but involving no conversion to contrary convictions. In fact, however, in spite of many attempts, the attested fragments of this work, or testimonies to its contents, are insufficient to provide the basis of any continuous argument.

There is no need to repeat his views on language, which, like his ethics and doubtless not unconnected with them, seem to have been based on the *nomos-physis* antithesis (p. 204) and linked with an ontology allowing a place to both reality and appearances (pp. 202f.). As yet unnoticed are his interesting observation about time (fr. 9), that it has no substantive existence but is a mental concept or means of measurement,¹ and his attempt to square the circle by a method of exhaustion which Aristotle criticized as not based on geometrical principles.²

ADDITIONAL NOTE: THE IDENTITY OF ANTIPHON

Hermogenes (3rd century A.D., DK A 2) is the first extant writer to distinguish two Antiphons, though he says that Didymus did so some 200 years earlier. There were several of the name, but 'two who practised sophistry', (a) the orator, cited as author of speeches on homicide cases, political speeches, and suchlike *logoi*, (b) the one who is also said to have been a diviner and interpreter of dreams, to whom are ascribed *On Truth*, *On Concord*, and a *Politicus*. Hermogenes himself is convinced on grounds of style that these are different people, but when he reads what Plato and others say (Plato, *Menex.* 236a, mentions Antiphon of Rhamnus as a teacher of rhetoric) he is again thrown into doubt. Many call Thucydides a pupil of the Rhamnusian, whom he knows as the author of the forensic speeches, yet he finds Thucydides's style more like that of the *Truth*. In any case he thinks it necessary to treat the two as separate, because the difference between the two groups of writing is so great.

Of the many modern discussions, I summarize Bignone's, which is the fullest and most judicious.³ After citing Hermogenes, he remarks that it is strange that no contemporary distinguishes between two such famous men living in Athens at the same time. Moreover we are told the orator's deme

¹ This is the earliest extant Greek definition of time, for that ascribed to Archytas (Iamblichus, *ap. Simplicius. Phys.* 786, 11), even if genuine, would be a little later. Aristotle (*Phys.* 223a21) also doubted whether there could be time without thinking beings, for time, he said, is not simply succession but 'succession in so far as it is numbered' (*ibid.* 219b2), and nothing can be numbered or counted if there is no one to count. He says in agreement with Antiphon that time is a measure ('the measure of motion and rest', *ibid.* 220b32, 221b22), but also that the relations between time and motion are reciprocal: 'we not only measure motion by time but also time by motion, because they are defined by each other' (*ibid.* 220b14).

² *Phys.* 185a14. It is explained in detail by Simplicius (*Phys.* 54, see Antiphon fr. 13 DK), whose description is summarized by Freeman, *Comp.* 397.

³ 'A. oratore ed A. sofista', in *Studi*, 161-74.

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and his father's name, but not those of the Sophist (Gomperz, *S. u. R.* 58), and pseudo-Plutarch, writing about the Rhamnusian orator (832c), says that he had conversations with Socrates as recorded by Xenophon. That Xenophon called him 'Antiphon the Sophist' is not against the identity, and Croiset supposed him to be distinguishing the orator-cum-Sophist from others including the tragedian.¹ Aristotle always refers to 'Antiphon' simply, without feeling the need for a distinguishing title. The chronology of both is about the same. The orator died in 411 (Thuc. 8.68), and the dispute with Socrates in Xenophon is probably earlier than this, because Plato, who became Socrates's follower after this date, says nothing about it. [I should not attach much weight to this argument.] The orator was born c. 480 (Blass, *Att. Bereds.* 1², 94ff.) and probably wrote the extant orations late in life, after 427, because they show the influence of Gorgias. Could he not have been Sophist-philosopher first and orator later? (Croiset thought it probable.) The orator shows marked sophistic characteristics, and both of them taught the young and had schools (for the orator of Rhamnus see Plato, *Menex.* 236a, for the Sophist Xen. *Mem.* 1.6) and took fees. (Bignone's references for this are Xen. *ibid.*, pseudo-Plut. 833 [doubtful?], Diod. *ap. Clem. Al.* 1.365, 2.66 D., Amm. Marc. 30.4 and the papyrus of Antiphon's *Apology* published by Nicole, *REG*, 1909, 55.) The orator had an active political life, and the Sophist rebuked Socrates for taking no part in politics (Xen. *loc. cit.*).

On the argument from style, already used by Hermogenes, Bignone says that the papyrus fragments, the most extensive that we have of the Sophist, do in fact suggest that he was not also the orator, but on the other hand this is a somewhat subjective criterion and the same man might have changed his style during his lifetime. However, there is also a strong historical argument. The orator was a pugnacious aristocrat and oligarch (Thuc. 8.68, 89, 90, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 32), whereas fr. 44 B of the Sophist expresses extreme democratic sentiments. Also the orator was an emphatic upholder of the laws, as is shown by many passages in his speeches, which again contrasts strongly with the Sophist. Bignone's final conclusion therefore was that orator and Sophist were different persons (though he thought that the Sophist could well be the diviner and writer on dreams).

¹ As to the tragedies, it is by no means impossible that a Sophist should write them, and it is interesting that one line employs a form of the νόμος-φύσις antithesis, of which Antiphon the Sophist was such an enthusiastic exponent (fr. 4 Nauck: τέχνη κρατούμεν ὦν φύσει νικώμεθα). On the other hand the tradition associates the tragedian (as the Rhamnusian) with Dionysius I of Syracuse, which some have thought puts him later than the Sophist (*Vit. or.* and *Gnomol. Vindob.* A 6 and 9 DK), though Wilamowitz felt this no objection (*Platon*, 1, 84, n. 1.). The Rhamnusian was killed in 411, but we know nothing of how long the Sophist lived if he is a different man.

This is the conclusion which has found most favour, so that Stenzel could begin his article in the *RE* (suppl. iv, 33) 'Antiphon, of Athens, to be distinguished, as is now generally recognized, as a Sophist from the orator of Rhamnus', and Untersteiner (*Sophs.* 228 f.) simply refer to Bignone and add 'I do not think that there is any occasion to re-examine the question'. However, J. S. Morrison in 1961 reopened it, and maintained that the orator whose speeches we possess was identical with the Sophist who wrote the *Truth* and the *Concord* and is shown arguing with Socrates in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon. This provoked a sharp retort from S. Luria, who quoted freely from the speeches to show that the orator, whom Thucydides (8.90.1) named as an extreme oligarch, and singled out among the Four Hundred as one who was particularly strongly opposed to democracy, could not possibly have held the left-wing views expressed in the papyrus fragments of the *Truth*. These are by one who rejects the laws in favour of 'nature', and is a fervent preacher of egalitarianism. The speeches reveal an ultra-conservative, who upholds the laws in the traditional manner as sacred, and all the better for having lasted through centuries unchanged (*Or.* 5.14, 6.2). 'It does not do', he continues, 'to start from the accuser's speech and ask whether the laws are well founded or not; we must rather judge the accuser's speech by the laws, and see whether he is setting forth the matter rightly and lawfully.' The speech-writer is moreover an enthusiastic supporter of the traditional religion, praising the gods and exhorting to worship and sacrifice in terms impossible (says Luria) for one who denied divine providence as did the author of *Truth* (fr. 12).¹

(6) THRASYMACHUS

Thrasymachus came from Chalcedon on the Bosporus, a colony of Megara. The only fixed points from which to judge his date are (1) *The Banqueters* of Aristophanes, produced in 427, in which he is made fun of (DK, A 4); (2) a sentence from one of his speeches (fr. 2) which shows it to have been written during the rule of Archelaus of Macedon over Thessaly (413-399). There is an obscure hint that he may have

¹ Morrison in *PCPS*, 1961, Luria in *Eos* 1963. Of course, if Kerferd were right in supposing that the views expressed in the papyrus fragments were not Antiphon's at all (p. 108 above), most of Luria's argument would fall to the ground; but I find no evidence in them that Antiphon is simply setting forth the ideas of others for examination, and Kerferd seems sometimes to raise imaginary difficulties in order to dispose of them by this hypothesis (especially on p. 28). Nestle (*VΜ7uL*, 394) adopted an unusual division, attributing *Truth* and the tetralogies to the Sophist, and *Concord* to the Rhamnusian. For further references see Morrison, *loc. cit.* 50, n. 1, and for an excellent brief survey, culminating in a *non liquet*, Lesky, *HGL*, 353f.

committed suicide.¹ He was known primarily as a teacher of rhetoric, in which he was something of an innovator, and most of the extant references to him are concerned with his style. In writing his handbooks and model speeches he paid great attention to the technical details of the art, and experimented with the use of prose-rhythms, as well as developing the appeal to the emotions of an audience (Plato, *Phaedr.* 267c). Aristotle (*Soph. el.* 183b 31) called him a successor of Tisias, and Theophrastus named him as the inventor of the so-called 'middle style' (fr. 1). The only considerable fragment of his writing which has survived was preserved by Dionysius of Halicarnassus solely as an example of his style. He was a Sophist in the full sense, who charged for his instruction (*Rep.* 337d), travelled to foreign cities, and though specializing in rhetoric was prepared to answer ethical questions also. His teaching on justice seems to have been well known. In the *Republic* (*loc. cit.*) he claims a fee for it, and in the *Clitophon* the young man threatens to desert Socrates for Thrasymachus, who, he thinks, is better informed on this subject.

The surviving passage of his works (fr. 1) is the opening of a speech to the Athenian Assembly. As a foreigner he could not have delivered it himself, but it reads like a genuine contribution to a debate held in the later stages of the Peloponnesian war rather than a mere school-piece. The speaker feels it necessary to begin by apologizing for his youth.² The rule that young men should keep silence was a good one so long as the older generation were managing affairs competently, but those for whom the prosperity of the city is only hearsay and its disasters their own experience³—disasters moreover which cannot be blamed on heaven or chance but only on the incompetence of those in charge—must speak out. He cannot submit to deliberate mismanagement or carry the blame for the unprincipled plotting of others. We have seen, he says, the city pass from peace to war and peril and from internal harmony to quarrelling and confusion. Elsewhere it is pros-

¹ Nestle (*VΜχυL*, 348) states this as a fact, but it depends on a corrupt line of Juvenal (7. 204), in which some editors prefer the reading 'Lysimachi', with the comment of the scholiast 'rhetoris apud Athenas qui suspensio perii' (DK, 85 A 7).

² That the *proimion* should engage the audience's sympathy was a textbook maxim. See Theodectes in Rose, *Arist. frr.*, Berlin ed. vol. v, 1499 a 27 and 32, and Arist. *Rhet.* 3, chapter 14.

³ In this imperfectly preserved clause I have followed Havelock's rendering, which seems to combine Blass's τὰς μὲν εὐπραξίας with the πάσχων of Diels. This makes good sense.

perity that leads to arrogance and faction,¹ but we kept our heads in the good times and have lost them in adversity. The parties are simply fighting mindlessly for power. They may think their policies are opposed but in fact there is no real difference between them. What, if one goes back to first principles, are both sides looking for? In the first place it is the question of the 'ancestral constitution' which throws them into confusion, though it is the easiest thing to grasp and more than anything else the concern of the whole citizen body. Then in the last sentence of the extract, presumably with his own comparative youth still in mind, the speaker says that for matters going back beyond our experience we must rely on the accounts of former generations or, when they are within the memory of older men, learn direct from them.

The speech is mainly of political interest, and the reference to the 'ancestral constitution' suggests that it was written by an oligarch, 'some young aristocrat of Spartan sympathies'. Havelock however is impressed by its 'non-partisan quality, its air of objectivity, its plea for clarity of thinking', and sees in it 'a serious intellectual position, a rationale of political behaviour and method, if not a theory of politics'. Certainly its main plea is the timeless one for efficiency and principle in government, and for reconciliation between the parties to that end.² Its counsel would be no less useful today, and the point that party struggle is based on the thirst for power rather than on fundamental differences of policy has an uncomfortably familiar sound.

This is the only independent passage by which we can hope to judge the fairness or otherwise of Plato's sketch of Thrasymachus in the *Republic* (pp. 88ff. above). The speech is composed for a client to deliver, but let us give Thrasymachus the credit for not writing anything that was against his own principles. It may fairly be supposed that he could only put the argument in so convincing a form if his own mind was behind it. Everything, of course, depends on what view we

¹ This accords with the common Greek view that κόρος breeds ὕβρις, but Thucydides would not have agreed with the speaker. Cf. 3.82.2: 'In peace and prosperity cities and individuals behave more sensibly because they are not forced to act against their will, but war which deprives them of their daily cheer is a harsh schoolmaster and reduces the temper of most men to the level of their circumstances.'

² ἁμόνοια, concord or consensus. On the importance of this concept cf. pp. 149f. above. For Havelock's analysis and appraisal of the piece see his *L.T.* 233-9.

take of the scene in the *Republic*. That Plato disliked him is plain enough from the outbursts of rudeness and bad temper in which he makes him indulge (though his pugnacity and sharp tongue are almost the only other things independently recorded of him).¹ If however my interpretation has been correct, that he speaks there in a mood of bitter disillusionment as well as opposition to what in his view is the facile optimism of Socrates, and if we allow for a certain exaggeration due to Plato's desire to present two human characters in dramatic contrast, the incompatibility between the dialogue and the speech is at least mitigated. Governments, he declares in the former, rule for their own aggrandizement and justice is the name given to obedience to their laws: it means serving the interests of others. According to his angry logic, if a subject seek power for himself, this is injustice. To be just, he should obey the laws which the rulers have laid down in their own interests. If however his 'injustice' is successful and he becomes a ruler and lawgiver himself (and the tyrant, says Thrasymachus, is the supreme example of injustice), everyone will flatter rather than blame him.

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?

For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

Justice, then, does not pay, and the man who observes it is noble but a simpleton (348c). These, he says brutally, are the facts, and you cannot get away from them. He is only describing, with cynical realism, what he sees around him. Athens, as Thucydides constantly reminds us, reached the height of her power, and endeavoured to maintain it, by acting on the belief that 'the only law in earth or heaven is that the strong should subdue the weak' (Thuc. 5.105.2). But, by the later years of the Peloponnesian War, the pursuit of this philosophy in external relations and domestic politics was threatening to lead to defeat from outside and internal disintegration. The policy of domination and oppression no longer worked to the advantage of Athens, and, as it broke down, internal faction and struggles for power only made things worse. The Thrasymachus of the political speech does not deny that the earlier policy was right for its time, indeed he calls it *sophrosyne*²—'in the good times we kept our heads'—but it no

¹ Arist. *Rhet.* 1400b19 and 1413a7.

² Just as in the *Republic* he calls injustice 'good counsel', εὐβουλία (p. 90 above).

longer works. He is no less of a realist, but the Athenians must learn to adapt themselves to changed circumstances. They cannot afford the luxury of an internal struggle for power. To quote Havelock again (*L.T.* 234):

To begin with, he assumes that the purpose of government is to be successful and efficient; this is the criterion by which it should be judged . . . He assumes that prosperity and disaster are not god-given but man-made; and, secondly, that it is the purpose of any government to preserve the one and avoid the other . . . Traditional piety, and the archaic fatalism of the Greek temper, seem to be rejected.

The character depicted by Plato would not have quarrelled with these assumptions, nor would the man who, to quote a final bit of independent evidence (fr. 8, p. 97 above), affirmed that the gods took no heed of human affairs, or they would not allow justice to be set aside as it is. Plato has shown his worst side, perhaps relying on things that he said or wrote when Athens was at the height of her power and arrogance (the most likely dramatic date for the *Republic* is about 322), but we need feel no doubt that it was one side of the real man.

(7) CRITIAS

Critias¹ would seem to provide Plato with the perfect example of a fine nature ruined by the society of his day, and by sophistic teaching with its emphasis on the attainment of power and indifference to the moral consequences of rhetorical and debating skill. Wealthy, high-born and handsome, he was also richly endowed with philosophic and literary gifts and an eager listener to Socrates, yet deserted him to play power-politics and ended up as the most bloodthirsty and unscrupulous member of the Thirty. These men, elected at the end of the war to draw up a constitution, made themselves tyrants instead and massacred their opponents. He was personally responsible for the death of Theramenes, an oligarch like himself and a personal friend, who was unwilling to go to such extremes. In the eyes of the democracy the fact that Socrates had associated with men like Critias told strongly against

¹ Where references to authorities are not given in the following paragraphs they can be found in the accounts of Critias given by Diehl, *RE*, XI, 1902-12, and Nestle, *VMZuL*, 400-20.

him. He seems exactly to fit the role of a Callicles, or might, one would think, be designed to prove Plato's point in the *Republic* (491d) that 'the finest nature given the wrong nurture will turn out worse than the commonest' and that (495a) 'the very qualities which make a philosophic nature will, with bad upbringing, be the cause of his falling away, no less than wealth and other external advantages'. But does Plato speak of him like this? On the contrary, he shows him only as an intimate member of the Socratic circle, with no hint that he was worse than the rest, and every indication of a genuine interest in philosophy. In the *Timaeus* and *Critias* he has a leading role, and the whole story of Atlantis is told through his mouth. Though writing years after his death, Plato still thinks of his uncle Critias with respect and affection.¹

There is a mystery here which the evidence does not allow us to solve completely. It is lessened, of course, if we believe with Sir Karl Popper that Plato 'betrayed Socrates, just as his uncles had done' (*O.S.* 194). We cannot decide that here, but in any case no one would accuse Plato of condoning the murderous excesses of the Thirty, nor did he, if the *Apology* and the Seventh Letter (324c-d) are any evidence at all. There are however certain points to take into account, beginning with their relationship. The family was an old and distinguished one, including Solon among its earlier generations, and family feeling would be strong. Critias was the son of Callaeschrus and cousin of Plato's mother Perictione, whose father Glaucon was Callaeschrus's brother, and when Glaucon died her brother Charmides became Critias's ward. Plato would also be attracted by his brilliant intellect and literary and artistic gifts, and undoubtedly they shared the conviction that unbridled democracy was the ruin of the state. Aristotle was of the same mind, and there is a curious discrepancy between his references to Critias and the Thirty and the account of Xenophon in his *Hellenica* which is our sole contemporary source for the leading part played by Critias. In the *Constitution of Athens* (35 ff.) he frankly

¹ Besides the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, he has a part in the *Charmides* and *Protagoras*, and also in the pseudo-Platonic *Eryxias*. On the question whether the speaker in the *Critias* was the same one or his grandfather see Diehl in *RE*, xi, 1901 f., Levinson, *Defense*, 359 f., and Rosenmeyer in *AJP*, 1949. It is only fair to add that in Plato's picture of him in the *Charmides* M. J. O'Brien sees 'a self-assertive man more concerned with honour than with truth' (*Socr. Parad.* 124 f.).

relates the atrocities of the Thirty and the execution of Theramenes for attempting to curb them, but with no mention of Critias, and in the *Politics* (1305b26) he names Charicles as their leader. In the *Rhetoric* (1416b26), on the subject of eulogies, he says, with seemingly deliberate intent, that if you want to praise Achilles you need not recount his deeds, because everyone knows them, but in praising Critias you must, because they are little known. This may have been true.¹ Philostratus, writing in the time of the 'second Sophistic', said that his philosophy was not taken seriously by the Greeks because his words were difficult to reconcile with his character. Xenophon's account of his relations with Socrates (*Mem.* 1.2.12ff.) is that he and Alcibiades were consumed with ambition, and, knowing Socrates's mastery of argument, thought that his teaching would help them to gain their ends. They had no desire to be converted to his way of life, and left him as soon as they thought they had learned enough to attain their political ambitions. In spite of this, such was Socrates's influence that so long as they were with him their worst passions were held in check. The break came when Socrates publicly reprimanded Critias for trying to seduce a youth in their circle, a hurt for which Critias never forgave him. When the Thirty came to power, he was in trouble with Critias and Charicles for his outspoken criticism of their conduct, and as we learn from Plato's own version of his *Apology* (32c), deliberately disobeyed an order from them which was designed to implicate him in their guilt.

Considering all this, Plato may indeed have thought of him as the type of brilliant young man whom he describes in the *Republic*, with the roots of philosophy in him and an immense capacity for good but also for harm if his environment corrupted him. Unfortunately it did, and the story of his evil latter days was on everyone's lips. To redress the balance, and out of regret for one who was his relative and at one time a companion of his master Socrates, Plato on this hypothesis will have concentrated on the earlier, happier years of hope and promise. He reserved his attack for the corrupting forces which he considered responsible for the downfall of such promising young men, the licence and mob-oratory prevailing under the democracy and the rhetorical

¹ See Diehl in *RE*, xi, 1910f.

Critias: Character and Beliefs

teachers who claimed that the art of speaking had nothing to do with moral standards.¹

Critias died in civil war against the democrats in 403, when he is generally believed to have been about fifty. He first appears in politics in 415, when with others of his persuasion he was imprisoned for complicity in the mutilation of the Hermae. He was both a bitter opponent of democracy and violently pro-Spartan, and may have been, with his father, a member of the Four Hundred in 411.² However, he was not immediately exiled after their fall, and helped to engineer the recall of Alcibiades. Later the democracy did exile him and he went to Thessaly, where if he did not consort with Gorgias personally the intelligentsia were steeped in his teaching.³ After the capitulation of Athens in 404 he returned, and was elected one of the commission of Thirty, with the consequences that have been mentioned.

Critias was not of course a Sophist in the full sense of a paid teacher, but it has been fairly said that 'in his personality we find a union of all the impulses of the sophistic movement, whose period of *Sturm und Drang* reached a symbolic end in his dramatic death' (Lesky, *HGL*, 357). We have seen that he shared with Protagoras, Democritus and others a belief in the progressive evolution of mankind by their own efforts, that he thought of laws as neither inherent in human nature from the beginning nor a gift of any gods, and of religion as a purely human invention aimed at preventing lawless behaviour. Religion was for the subject, to ensure his obedience, not for the enlightened ruler. His interest in technical progress comes out also in a set of elegiacs in which he assigns inventions to particular peoples or countries. They include chariots, chairs, beds, working in gold and bronze, writing, ships, the potter's wheel and (curiously enough) the game of *Kottabos* (fr. 2). Perhaps for this reason, coupled with the close relationship

¹ According to Philostratus, *ep.* 73 (Critias A 17), Critias learned from Gorgias but turned his teaching to his own purposes.

² See Diehl in *RE*, xi, 1903, Nestle, *VMZuL*, 401. The only evidence is [Dem.] 58.67. Nestle speaks of his 'striking reserve' vis-à-vis the Four Hundred, which he interprets as a concession to the demos to facilitate Alcibiades's return.

³ ἑγοργαζον ἐν Θεσσαλίᾳ μικραὶ καὶ μείζους πόλεις, Philostr. *V.S.* 1.16 (Crit. A 1). Cf. Plato, *Meno* 70a-b. Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.2.24) claimed that it was the Thessalians that corrupted him. Plato's opinion of the country was that it was full of ἀταξία καὶ ἀκολασία (*Crito* 53d). But Philostratus concluded (*V.S.* 1.16) that it was rather Critias who corrupted the Thessalians.

between *areté* in general and the craftsman's skill, his aristocratic sympathies did not prevent him from saying that more men become good by practice than through natural endowment.¹ His literary output was large and diverse, including both poetry and prose. His poem in praise of Alcibiades revives the political elegy of his ancestor Solon and of Theognis, though with characteristic boldness, since the name of Alcibiades resisted inclusion in dactylic verse, he substituted an iambic for the customary pentameter. There is no record of his speeches, but Hermogenes (see A 19) mentions a collection of 'prooemia for public speakers'. We have fragments of two sets of *Politeiai*, so called, one in prose and one in verse. The prose set included one on the Thessalians (fr. 31),² where he mentioned their extravagant ways, and one on the Spartans, of which the only extant fragments do not deal with their constitution but with their way of life. He mentions their drinking habits and cups (made suitable for use on campaigns), dress, furniture, dancing, and the precautions which they take against the Helots, and praises the eugenic effects of the hardy regime imposed on men and women alike (fr. 32-7). His poem on the Spartans also deals mainly with their drinking habits, emphasizing their moderation, and attributing to Chilon the saying 'nothing too much' (fr. 6-8).³ Literary interest is shown in his hexameters on Anacreon (fr. 1) and his prose works. It is combined with aristocratic pride when in fr. 44 he takes Archilochus to task for exposing his humble birth and weaknesses in his verse.

Two books of *Homilies* must have been more philosophic in content, and a quotation from the first touches on the relation between the mind and the senses. At least the context in Galen makes it fairly certain that 'they' are the senses in the sentence (fr. 40): 'If you yourself study to become strong in intellect, you will be least wronged by them.' This comes in a passage where Galen is quoting examples to prove his point that *gnomé* in earlier times was used with the same meaning as other words for mind or thought. He adds two more quota-

¹ See pp. 251 and 256 above.

² The manuscripts give the author's name as Cratinus, but the alteration has been accepted since Casaubon.

³ A prose 'Constitution of Athens' has been inferred as the likeliest home for two unassigned quotations. In one, Critias characteristically gives the exact amount of the fortunes made out of politics by Themistocles and Cleon, and in the other he has the effrontery to criticize Cimon for his pro-Spartan policy. (Frr. 45 and 52. See Diehl in *RE*, xi, 1908, and Nestle, *VMZuL*, 405.)

tions which he says are from the *Aphorisms* of Critias (fr. 39): 'Neither what he perceives with the rest of his body nor what he knows with his mind' and 'Men have awareness when they have accustomed themselves to be healthy in their mind'. Aristotle (*De an.* 405 b 5) says he was one of those who identified the *psyche* with blood: regarding sensation as the most typical characteristic of *psyche*, they believed that it was due to the nature of the blood. Philoponus in his commentary (after identifying Critias as 'one of the Thirty') attributed to him the line of Empedocles (fr. 105. 3) which says that 'the blood around the heart is thought (νόημα)'. (See Critias, A 23. He may have learned of Empedoclean theory from Gorgias.) In fact Empedocles, and evidently also Critias, distinguished thought from sensation, though considering both to be equally corporeal phenomena. The Hippocratic treatise on the heart uses the word *gnomé* when it declares that the mind rules the rest of the *psyche* and resides in the left ventricle. (See on this vol. II, 229 with n. 2.)

Critias also wrote dramas. We have excerpts from three tragedies, the *Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys* and *Peirithous*, and the long passage from the satyr-play *Sisyphus* containing the theory of the origin of religion.¹ The *Rhadamanthys* (fr. 15) contains a list of the various objects of men's longing. Similar lists were commonplace,² but Critias's has some touches of the sophistic age. Health is missing, and we have, besides high birth and wealth, the power and audacity to persuade one's neighbours of what is unsound. The speaker then declares that his own choice is to have a fine reputation. Two choric fragments of the *Peirithous* are cosmological. Fr. 18 speaks of unwearied Time endlessly bringing itself to birth in unceasing flow, and in fr. 19 the epithet 'self-born' suggests that it is again Time that is addressed as embracing all nature in the heavenly whirl, while light and darkness, and the innumerable host of stars, perform their endless dance around him. Clement of Alexandria, who quotes the passage, took 'the

¹ Pp. 243ff. above. The reader should be warned that all were commonly attributed to Euripides in antiquity, though the *Vita Eur.* rejected the tragedies (Critias fr. 10), and the *Sisyphus* is given to Critias by Sextus. They were rescued for him by Wilamowitz, *N. Jbb.* 1908, 57; *Hermes*, 1927, 291f.; and *Analecta Eurip.* 166. Schmid still had reservations about Critias's authorship (*Gesch.* 176).

² Cf. the scholion on the good things of life, Diehl, *Anth. Lyr.* no. 7 (II, 183) with the various authorities cited.

self-born' to be 'the demiurgic *nous*',¹ no doubt with Plato rather than Anaxagoras in mind, but most scholars have seen a suggestion of Anaxagoras in the passage as a whole. More prominent is the effect of Orphic cosmogonies or of Pherecydes of Syros, where Chronos (Time) appears as a primeval creative power. Evidently Critias (assuming that he and not Euripides is the author) shared Euripides's interest in cosmological speculation.² A few further quotations from this play in Stobaeus's anthology are easy to reconcile with Critias as we know him:³ fr. 21 'He had no unpractised mind who first said that fortune fights on the side of the wise'; fr. 23 'Better not to live at all than to live miserably'; and fr. 22 on the superiority of character to *nomos* (p. 69 above).

We are left with the picture of a man of brilliant intellectual and artistic gifts, plunging eagerly into the philosophical discussions of his time, all the more so as many of them had a direct bearing on political life. But some of the headier theories conspired with his own ambitious, headstrong and unstable character, the product of generations of politicians and poets, to lead him away from the wisdom of Socrates to violence, cruelty, and death in civil strife.

(8) ANTISTHENES

Antisthenes is one of those interesting bridge-figures who serve to remind us how much happened in a short space of time between the manhood of Socrates and the death of Plato. As a pupil of Socrates, and reputed teacher of Diogenes and founder of the Cynic school, his proper place in the history of thought might seem to be as a 'Socratic', after an account of Socrates himself. Yet he lived in the heyday of the Sophists, probably a little older than Prodicus and Hippias, and, as we have seen, was deeply involved in the argument about the use of language and the possibility of contradiction which formed part of the theoretical background of fifth-century rhetoric, and in which Protagoras played a leading part. Since this has

¹ *Strom.* 2.403.14 Staehlin, quoted by Nauck on Eur. fr. 593.

² For Chronos in Orphic cosmogonies and Pherecydes see Guthrie, *O. & Gk. Rel.* 85-91 and Kirk in KR, 56.

³ Even if we ignore our complete ignorance of the dramatic context and the speakers.

Antisthenes, a Bridge-figure

brought him into our discussion already, it seems appropriate to make some general observations about him now. Before coming under the influence of Socrates, he was himself a rhetorician and pupil of Gorgias. In recent times he has been the subject of very varied judgments. Popper's verdict, that he was the only worthy successor of Socrates, the last of the 'Great Generation' (*O.S.* 194), was foreshadowed by Grote: 'Antisthenes, and his disciple Diogenes, were in many respects closer approximations to Sokrates than either Plato or any other of the Sokratic companions' (*Plato*, III, 505). On the other hand Schmid considered that 'in spite of his enthusiasm for Socrates in Socrates's last years, his own philosophy went the way of an undisciplined free-thinking against which Plato had to be emphatically on his guard' (*Gesch.* 272f.), and to Campbell, relying on Xenophon and Aristotle, he 'seems to have been the butt of the Socratic school, a sort of mixture of Ajax and Thersites . . . He followed rather the form than the spirit of the Socratic teaching' (ed. of *Theaet.* xl-xli). Karl Joël's verdict is also interesting (*E. und X. S.* 257):

What in Socrates was an unconscious miracle of his nature became in Antisthenes a set purpose, a basis for variety and an artificial product. He copied the Socratic mode of life and fanaticized the Socratic teaching, trusting thereby to seize upon the essence of his master, to whom he stood in the relationship of flagellants imitating a genuine saint, or better of the Romantics—the poet of Lucinde—to Goethe.

Perhaps the truest statements are those of Popper (*O.S.* 277), that 'Very little is known about Antisthenes from first-rate sources', and Field, that there has been 'an immense amount of conjecture and hypothesis about him' (*Plato and Contemps.* 160).

Most of our information about his life and circumstances comes from many centuries later, and must be treated with corresponding reserve.¹ It was believed that he had founded the Cynic school and through it influenced the Stoics, and a certain amount of hindsight may have crept into accounts of his teaching written after these

¹ The source-material is collected in Caizzi's *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, the arrangement of which is unusual. After the title 'Frammenti' the passages are numbered continuously throughout, but divided into three parts: 'Frr. 1-121' are the testimonia and actual fragments (or what are reckoned as such), 122-44 are 'notizie biografiche' and 145-95 anecdotes. There is also a full bibliography.

schools became famous. He was said to be the son of an Athenian and a Thracian slave, and hence not an Athenian citizen,¹ and to have fought at Tanagra (D.L. 6.1), which must refer to the battle there in 426 (Thuc. 3.91). Diodorus (15.76) speaks of him as still alive in 366 and Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 30) quotes a remark which he made on the battle of Leuctra (371). Xenophon (*Symp.* 4.62) says that he introduced the Sophist-lover Callias to Prodicus and Hippias, and speaks of him in general as an older man than himself and Plato, so (although we have no certain information) about 455–360 will not be far out for the span of his long life. He was a rhetorician and pupil of Gorgias, whom he afterwards attacked, and some have seen in him the influence of other Sophists as well.² Later he became a friend and fanatical admirer of Socrates. That at least is certain, and Plato (*Phaedo* 59b) mentions him among the few intimates who were with Socrates in prison in the last hours of his life.

He was especially attracted by the ascetic side of Socrates's life and his independence of worldly goods, and carried this to such lengths that in later antiquity he was commonly regarded as the founder of the Cynic school, with Diogenes 'the Dog' for his pupil. (See fr. 138 A–F, 139 Caizzi.) Nowadays it is generally held that the Cynics owed their most distinctive features, as well as their name, to Diogenes. There never was a Cynic school in the literal sense in which the Academy, Lyceum and Stoa were schools. Antisthenes himself may have had a sort of school, or at least a group of pupils with a fixed place of meeting, for Diogenes Laertius (6.13) says that he used to converse (or 'use dialectic') in the gymnasium of Cynosarges,³ but

¹ D.L. 6.1, 2.31; Seneca *De const. sap.* 18.5. But Field notes (*Plato and Contemps.* 160 n.) that in the *Phaedo* Plato speaks of him as an ἐπιχθόνιος with no hint that he was different from Crito, Aeschines and the rest. D.L. introduces the fact to give point to two probably apocryphal anecdotes.

² Antisthenes and Gorgias, D.L. 6.1, Athen. 220d (from the *Archelaus* of Antisthenes). For Protagoras and the impossibility of contradiction see p. 182, n. 2, above. Dümmler (*Akad.* 194) argued that Antisthenes's denial that one can call a statement false originated with Gorgias (*MXG* 980a10), and claimed also to see the influence of Prodicus and Hippias (*ibid.* 158, 161, 256, 274).

³ This was the gymnasium assigned to bastards, or men of mixed descent (Demosth. 23.213 and later sources), which tallies with the report of his half-foreign origin. But D.L. or his source is trying by every means to represent him as the founder of Cynicism. 'Cynosarges' is brought in as an alternative origin for the name, and D.L. immediately goes on to say that Antisthenes himself was called Ἀπλοκύων (just as he was also called Κύων by Herodicus in the first century B.C.

Antisthenes and the Cynics

this certainly does not bring him closer to the Cynics, who never adopted such methods. Antisthenes was probably horrified at some of Diogenes's principles and behaviour. There is every reason to think that they were acquainted, and the stories about them are all to the effect that Diogenes was far from a favourite of his, but won him over by sheer importunity and persistence. Nevertheless the portrait of Antisthenes in Xenophon's *Symposium* does show traits which, developed to an extreme, were characteristic of the Cynics.¹ He called himself the richest of men, because wealth resided in men's souls, not in their pockets, and equated poverty with independence. Men who went to all lengths to increase their fortunes he pitied as diseased. They suffered as much as men whose bodies were never satisfied however much they ate. Happiness lies not in having great possessions but in losing the desire for them. All this he claims to have learned from Socrates. There is a specially Cynic touch in his reference to sex as a purely bodily need, for whose satisfaction any woman will do (*Symp.* 4. 38). Cynic also was his anti-hedonism. Later sources may perhaps be suspected, because they had already adopted him as the founder of the sect, when they report him as declaiming that he would rather go mad than enjoy pleasure (fr. 108 A-F); but the bias is already there in Xenophon (*Symp.* 4. 39), when in speaking of the appetite for sex—which he regards as a natural one like that for food—he says that he would prefer to satisfy it without pleasure, since the intense pleasure derived from it is harmful. Similarly one should eat and drink solely to banish hunger and thirst. The only pleasure to be recommended is that which follows from hard work (fr. 113) and which brings no

ap. Ath. 216b), whereas there can be little doubt that the original Dog was Diogenes. Aristotle already knew him by that name (*Rhet.* 1411 a 24), but spoke of the followers of Antisthenes as 'Ἀντισθένησι. The story in D.L. (*loc. cit.*) that he had few pupils because as he said he 'drove them away with a silver rod', if it has any basis in fact, implies that in spite of his Socraticism he charged high fees which many were unwilling to pay. He would have learned to do so as a rhetorician and pupil of Gorgias.

¹ Cf. *Socrates*, p. 21. (Cynics were notoriously 'difficult' characters.) This has been most recently argued by Caizzi, *Stud. Urb.* 1964, 73 f. Wilamowitz made a vigorous protest against the 'legend' of Antisthenes the Cynic in *Platon*, II, 162-4, and many have followed him, e.g. Taylor, *Comm. on Tim.* 306, Dudley, *Hist. of Cyn.* 1 ff., Field, *Plato and Contemps.* 162 f., and the references collected in Burkert, *Weish. u. Wiss.* 197, n. 69. But see also Popper, O.S. 277, and, for an older view on the other side, Ueberweg-Praechter, 160 n. For Zeller too Antisthenes was 'the founder of Cynicism' (*Ph. d. Gr.* 280-1). Chroust in his *Socrates Man and Myth* speaks of a unitary philosophy which he calls 'Antisthenean-Cynic', but not everyone would follow him.

repentance (fr. 110). The virtues of hard work he recommended through the examples of Heracles and Cyrus in books called after them (fr. 19–28).¹

Through the Cynics he was supposed also to have been a founder of Stoicism before Zeno, and the succession-writers, represented for us by Diogenes Laertius, assumed a direct line of master and pupil: Antisthenes—Diogenes—Crates—Zeno. If, as is generally supposed nowadays, this is not strictly historical, it is probably true that he gave the impulse to an outstanding characteristic of each: that is, as Diogenes Laertius puts it, ‘the indifference of Diogenes, the self-control of Crates, and the endurance of Zeno’—all traits which he himself would claim to have found in Socrates. In his doctrine of virtue as the end of life (fr. 22) he certainly anticipated Zeno. Virtue can be taught and once acquired cannot be lost (fr. 69, 71). It needs a Socratic strength, is taught by deed and example rather than argument and erudition, and is sufficient in itself to ensure happiness (fr. 70). Education is necessary (fr. 68), but it is the kind of education that Chiron gave Heracles (fr. 24). Virtue has no use for long speeches (fr. 86). The sage is self-sufficient, for his wealth includes that of all other men (fr. 80, a particularly Stoic touch). So far as our evidence goes, it seems that his ethical teaching was purely practical. There is no trace of systematic theory nor of any connexion with his logical doctrine such as we have found in some of the Sophists. The *nomos-physis* antithesis (also to be found in his theological pronouncement, p. 248 above) is echoed in the dictum that the wise man acts not according to the established laws but to the laws of virtue (fr. 101, p. 117 above). Otherwise all that one can say of his political views is that he was no egalitarian, as appears from his reference to what the lions thought when the hares made public speeches in favour of equal rights for all. (This comes from Aristotle, *Pol.* 1284a15.) His *Politikos Logos*, we are told, attacked ‘all the demagogues of Athens’,² and he made a special target of Alcibiades (fr. 43, 29, 30). His *Archelaus* attacked his former master Gorgias, a natural consequence of his conversion to

¹ For Antisthenes’s views on pleasure Caizzi has collected references in her notes to fr. 108–13.

² Compare his advice that they ought to vote asses to the position of horses, p. 212, n. 1, above.

The Teaching of Antisthenes

Socrates.¹ He may have argued that rhetoric was not simply the creator of persuasion, but the criterion and vehicle of truth.²

The foregoing account has made use of late as well as early sources, but the result is a consistent ethical standpoint. Apart from this, on the philosophical side we know of his logic and his assertion of the unity of God, which have been discussed in an earlier chapter. There is nothing else save the report of a Johnsonian riposte to Parmenides's assertion of the impossibility of motion: not being able to counter the arguments in words, he simply stood up and walked.³

The interpretation of poetry, usually for its ethical lessons, was part of the business of a Greek teacher, and Antisthenes was no exception. A number of quotations from his studies in Homer have survived, mainly ethical in tendency and sometimes trivial, as when he said that the reason why old Nestor was the only man who could raise the cup (*Il.* 11. 636) was not that he was exceptionally strong but that he was the only one who was not drunk. In a lengthy analysis of the epithet *polytropos* applied to Odysseus, he said that it applied both to character and to speech, which gave him the opportunity of introducing the contemporary definition of a *sophos* as a clever speaker, and hence *polytropos* because master of many *tropoi* or turns of speech and argument. He also brought Homer up to date by introducing into the poems the distinction between truth and opinion. It would appear that his Homeric interpretations were set as squarely in the ambit of the fifth-century enlightenment as the argument over Simonides in the *Protagoras*, though he did not agree with Protagoras and Gorgias that opinion was everything and there was no objective criterion of truth. Dio Chrysostom, our authority here, does not enlarge on the distinction between truth and opinion in Homer, indeed he says that Antisthenes did not develop it and it was only worked out in detail by Zeno. In Xenophon's *Symposium* (3. 5) he is made to laugh at the claim of

¹ Fr. 42. This Archelaus was the tyrant of Macedon whom Gorgias's pupil Polus held up to Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* (470d ff.) as a man who was both wicked and supremely happy. He was arguing against the Socratic teaching that it is better to be the victim of wrong than to commit it. (Dümmeler, in *quellenkritisch* vein, claimed to have discovered the content of the Archelaus in the thirteenth speech of Dio Chrysostom. See his *Akad.* 1-18.)

² See Caizzi, *Stud. Urb.* 1964, 54.

³ Fr. 160. This seems worth mentioning, though it is attributed to Diogenes by D.L., 9. 39. Probably the attribution of some other 'fragments' is equally open to doubt. Though a few are assigned to named writings of Antisthenes, many in Caizzi's collection are simply given as 'sayings'.

Niceratus that he is a better man because he knows the Homeric poems by heart: so does any rhapsode, he retorts, and there is no more foolish set of men than the rhapsodes. Ah, says Socrates, but Niceratus has been to school with the allegorizers and knows all the hidden meanings. Later (4.6) Antisthenes asks Niceratus ironically if he could take over a kingdom because he knows all about Agamemnon. These exchanges are in a light post-prandial vein, but it does not look as if in his references to Homer as writing now 'opinion' and now 'truth' he was beguiled either by the craze for finding allegorical meanings or by the current idea that Homer was a practical guide to all the subjects mentioned in the poems.¹

Many scholars, particularly in Germany, have claimed to discover veiled attacks on Antisthenes in various dialogues of Plato, sometimes under other names, and by this means to reconstruct much of his teaching. Great labour and considerable ingenuity have been expended in this attempt, and there is good reason to assume hostility between the two. Apart from anecdotes, Antisthenes wrote a dialogue abusing Plato under the opprobrious name of Sathon.² Nevertheless the results are in no case certain, and in recent times a more cautious attitude has prevailed.³ The same may be said of K. Joël's theory that Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates had no historical value because it made him into an essentially Antisthenean and Cynic figure. In Joël's book the importance and influence of Antisthenes grow to enormous proportions, and Plato himself is put heavily in his debt.⁴ So long as we know no

¹ The Homeric interpretations are in Caizzi's frs. 51-62, and discussed by her in *Stud. Urb.* 1964, 51 ff. There has been controversy over the question whether Antisthenes was an allegorist: see the references in Caizzi, *loc. cit.* 59, n. 47.

² See Antisthenes frs. 36-7. Its second title was 'On contradiction' (D.L. 6. 16), lending colour to the anecdote that he wrote it as a counterblast to Plato's criticism that his denial of contradiction could be turned against itself. Σάθων, applied to babies, was a diminutive of σάθη meaning penis.

³ See e.g. Field, *Plato and Contemps.* 160. Such speculation went very far. In 1894 Natorp could claim it as 'proved repeatedly' that the *Theaet.*, *Euthyd.*, *Crat.* and probably also *Hipp. Maj.* and *Min.*, *Ion* and *Euthyphro*, were chiefly devoted to polemic against Antisthenes, either anonymously or under another name. On the *Ion* see now Caizzi, *Antisth. Frs.* p. 109. On *Theaet.*, *Crat.* and *Soph.* pp. 213-15 above, and for *Crat.* von Fritz in *Hermes* 1927. *Rep.* 495c-d was supposed by Dümmler to refer to him, but see Adam *ad loc.* For the same possibility elsewhere in the *Rep.* Popper, *O.S.* 277. For Socrates's 'dream' in *Theaet.* Gillespie in *Arch. f. G. d. Phil.* 1913 and 1914.

⁴ Joël, *Der echte u. d. Xenoph. Sokr.* Joël held the remarkable theory that Prodicus in both Xenophon and Plato was not Prodicus but a mask for Antisthenes, to whom even the fable of

more than we do about Antisthenes from independent sources, the only topic on which such theories can claim anything like a firm basis is his logic. Plato says no more of him than the bare mention of his name among the intimate friends who were present with Socrates in prison up to the moment of his death.

He was a prolific writer, both rhetorical and philosophical. Diogenes Laertius lists about seventy-four titles divided into ten volumes. In his rhetorical period, like his teacher Gorgias he composed declamations on mythical themes, two of which have survived, in which Ajax and Odysseus defend in turn their claims to the arms of Achilles.¹ A defence of Orestes is also mentioned. According to Diogenes Laertius (6. 1), his rhetorical style overflowed into his dialogues, and Aristotle gives an example of his somewhat extravagant metaphors.² Of the dialogues, some, though not all, were Socratic (D.L. 2. 64). The *Heracles* and *Cyrus* were ethical in content, extolling the virtues of hard work, and the *Aspasia* contained scurrilous attacks on Pericles and his sons. The *Sathon*, *Archelaus* and *Politicus* have already been mentioned, and we hear of a *Physiognomicus* and a *Protrepticus*, as well as the works on Nature, which contained the statement on monotheism, and 'On Education or on Names' (pp. 248, 209 above).³

(9) ALCIDAMAS

According to the Suda, Alcidas was a native of the Aeolian city of Elaea, the port of Pergamon.⁴ The only indication of his date is that, like Antisthenes and Lycophrion, he was a pupil of Gorgias.⁵ Gorgias

the choice of Heracles must be transferred. (See on this H. Mayer, *Prod.* 120.) The book has been criticized by many, including Joël himself (see his *Gesch.* 731, n. 3), and a reappraisal of the question has now been undertaken by Caizzi, *Stud. Urb.* 1964, 60-76.

¹ Their authenticity has been queried, but see Caizzi, *loc. cit.* 43.

² Arist. *Rhet.* 1407a 10. He compared a likeable but thin and weakly man to frankincense, which gives pleasure as it is consumed!

³ I have mentioned some which occur outside D.L.'s comprehensive list. References will be found in Caizzi's *Fragmenta*. According to the list, the *Physiogn.* was given the subtitle 'on the Sophists'.

⁴ For general information about him see Brzoska in *RE*, 1, 1533-9. The surviving remains are in Baiter-Sauppe, *Orat. Att.* pt. II (1850), 155-62, and Radermacher, *Artium Scriptores*, 132-47.

⁵ Shorey (*TAPA*, 1909, 196) discussed the possibility of dating him through coincidences between his work on the Sophists, Plato's *Phaedrus*, and Isocrates's *Panegyricus*, but concluded that 'these facts hardly suffice to date Alcidas relatively to either Plato or Isocrates'.

himself had dealt both in carefully prepared written declamations and in impromptu speeches, but his 'school' evidently divided itself on this point, with Alcidamas as the champion of improvisation, emphasizing Gorgias's doctrine of *kairos* or the opportunity of the moment, and Isocrates of the written speech. We still possess a short piece by Alcidamas entitled 'on those who compose written speeches, or on Sophists', in which he begins by attacking some of those called Sophists for neglecting research and culture (or education) and having no technique of public speaking. They parade their cleverness in written words and think themselves masters of rhetoric when they possess only a small fraction of the art. He will censure them not because the written word is alien to oratory but because it should be no more than a *parergon*, not a thing to pride oneself on, and those who spend their lives on it ignore a great deal of rhetoric and philosophy and do not deserve the name of Sophists. When this is taken with passages from Isocrates's works it is evident that they are conscious rivals and foes.¹ His little treatise shows that we are among the *epigoni*, and that Sophists have changed their methods since the great days when Protagoras and Gorgias were in their prime.²

Alcidamas has acquired great, and perhaps justifiable, fame among the moderns for his bold assertion that 'God has set all men free, Nature has made no man a slave' (p. 159 above). He was however primarily an orator and a faithful pupil of his master in defining rhetoric as 'the power of the persuasive'. Demosthenes is said to have studied his speeches.³ Apart from the one complete pamphlet against written speeches⁴ almost all our quotations from him occur in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, who cites most of them not for their content but as examples of faulty style.⁵ As an instance of inappropriate metaphor he mentions

¹ For their opposition see the references in Lesky, *HGL*, 353, n. 4.

² Cf. Morrison in *D.U.J.* 1949, 56.

³ Plut. *Demosth.* 5, 7 (Radermacher, p. 154) and [Plut.] *Vit. orat.* 844c.

⁴ There is also a speech against Palamedes, one of those exercises on mythical subjects which the teachers of rhetoric provided for their pupils to learn, but its authenticity is doubtful. It is a poor thing, and bears no relation to the *Palamedes* of Gorgias.

⁵ An exception is the sentence about slavery in the Messenian oration, introduced to illustrate the difference between legal and natural justice. (The actual quotation we owe to the scholiast.) He also gives at 1397a 11 and 1398 b 10 examples from Alcidamas of types of argument (argument from the opposite and inductive argument) as used in oratory. Elsewhere he castigates him for his use of poetical compounds (1406a 1), of exotic vocabulary (1406a 8), of redundant epithets or descriptive phrases (e.g. 'damp sweat', 'laws the monarchs of cities', 1406a 18 ff.) and in-

'philosophy, a bulwark against the laws (*nomoi*)' (*Rhet.* 1406b11), and we may take this, together with the declaration that slavery is against nature and the plea that Sophists should return to philosophy, as indications that Alcidamas aspired to be a Sophist of the old school, in which rhetoric and philosophy went hand in hand, and was comparable to Antiphon as a champion of nature against convention.¹

Of his other works we hear of a *Mousion* or miscellany, which included a contest between Homer and Hesiod and perhaps also the 'encomium of death' mentioned by Cicero as containing a catalogue of the ills of human life. The whole collection was probably a source-book of material for orators.² Athenaeus (592c) mentions an encomium of a hetaera called Naïs, and according to Diogenes Laertius (8.56) he also wrote a work on natural philosophy containing historical assertions which, for a champion of *historia* and *paideia*, have generally been thought rather wild, unless they have been mangled in transmission. On this however see now D. O'Brien in *JHS*, 1968, 95 f.

(10) LYCOPHRON

Lycophron has already found mention in these pages for his theory that law was a means of guaranteeing an individual's rights against his fellow-citizens but had no concern with positive morality, his disparagement of noble birth, and his theory of language and epistemology. Though the challenge to aristocracy was common enough at or before his time, as we see from Antiphon and Euripides, these dicta are collectively sufficient to make him appear a highly interesting figure, and it is unfortunate that we know scarcely anything else about him. Aristotle referred to him as a Sophist,³ and he is generally agreed to

appropriate metaphor (1406b11). Cicero thought better of him, calling his redundancy *ubertas* and judging him *retor antiquus in primis nobilis*, while admitting that the subtleties of philosophic reasoning were beyond him (*Tusc.* 1.48.116).

¹ Nestle (*VMtuL*, 344f.) constructs a theory of the relation between politics and philosophy in Alcidamas by translating a poorly attested reading $\nu\omicron\mu\iota\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ for $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ in *Ar. Rhet.* 1406a23. No editor prints this, and it would weaken Aristotle's point about redundancy, but Nestle adopts it without comment or hint of another reading. (He has in fact silently taken it over from Salomon in *Savigny-Stift.* 1911, 154.)

² Cic. *Tusc.* 1.48.116. See Radermacher, 155.

³ *Pol.* 1280b11. This is presumably why DK include him in the *Vorsokratiker* but not Alcidamas with his striking statement about slavery. The testimonies occupy just a page (DK no. 83, vol. II, 307f.).

have been a pupil of Gorgias, which, though it is nowhere expressly stated,¹ we may take as extremely probable, as also that he was roughly contemporary with his fellow-pupil Alcidas. Aristotle criticizes all three for similar faults of style. Of Lycophron's birthplace, date and life-history nothing whatever is recorded.

(II) ANONYMOUS WRITERS²

(a) The 'Anonymus Iamblichus'³

Of the content of this work I have spoken above (pp. 71 ff.). The *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus is a cento of unacknowledged borrowings from earlier philosophers, as one may see from its incorporation of word-for-word extracts from the *Phaedo*. It is universally agreed (however much opinions may differ in detail) that Bywater was correct in detecting in it considerable portions of the lost *Protrepticus* of Aristotle. There is then no *a priori* difficulty in supposing that other parts are taken straight from an otherwise unknown writing of the late fifth or early fourth century, and this was demonstrated by Friedrich Blass in 1899, though that is not to say that the paragraphs in question form either one continuous extract or the whole of the work.

Many attempts have been made to assign the fragments to a known author, but none has won general assent. Blass, whose acumen first detected their origin in the period of the *Aufklärung*, thought of Antiphon the Sophist, but this was disproved by the later discovery of the papyrus fragments of Antiphon's *Truth*. For K. Joël he was Antisthenes (and it is true that Antisthenes wrote a *Protrepticus*, which Iamblichus could have plundered as he did Aristotle's); Wilamowitz surprisingly thought Critias 'not impossible' (though he had earlier considered Protagoras); Cataudella saw the work as a collection of extracts from an ethico-political treatise of Democritus,

¹ DK say 'vielleicht Gorgiasschüler' (II, 307n.). The argument for placing him in the school of Gorgias (and it is a strong one) depends on Aristotle's criticisms of his style. See ZN, 1323, n. 3, and Nestle, *VMtuL*, 343. On his date and relation to Alcidas see Popper, *O.S.* 261, who frankly admits that all this, like anything to do with the circumstances of Lycophron's life, must be highly speculative.

² Of the 'Anon. π. νέμων' enough has been said above, pp. 75 ff.

³ Text, from Iamblichus, *Protr.* chapter 20, in DK, II, 400 ff.

Nestle thought of Antiphon of Rhamnus; Untersteiner is convinced that the author is Hippias. H. Gomperz also inclined to this view but did not, in Untersteiner's opinion, go far enough in proving it. (Contrast Nestle, *VMZuL*, 430: the writer is 'in evident opposition to the *nomos*-doctrine of Hippias'.) Most modern critics however would admit that we cannot now hope to put our finger on the author. He could well be some pupil of Protagoras, acquainted with the teaching of other Sophists and with Socrates, and probably not himself a professional Sophist. H. Gomperz thought he was one (*S. u. R.* 79), but on shaky grounds, and Nestle (*op. cit.* 424) thought of him as an educated layman like Critias. What makes it especially unlikely that he was a Sophist is his low opinion of rhetoric.¹

Estimates of the date of the work on which Iamblichus drew have varied from the later years of the Peloponnesian War, the time of the 'post-Periclean extreme democracy' (Nestle, *op. cit.* 430; Dodds, *Gr. and Irrat.* 197, n. 27, makes a similar guess), to some time in the first half of the fourth century. Thus Gigante (*Nom. Bas.* 177) thought of it as having already a Socratic-Platonic basis. Paul Shorey struck a note of caution in *TAPA*, 1909, 192, n. 1. He pointed out that since Blass's time the fragments have been pruned by the rejection of some material taken from Plato and Isocrates, and claimed to see echoes of Plato here and there in what remains. He thought therefore that we should limit the amount of directly quoted fifth-century prose still further, and admit the hypothesis that what remains came to Iamblichus through an intermediate Platonizing source. In making use of the extracts earlier I have tried to confine myself to indubitably fifth- and fourth-century matter.

For bibliography on the subject see ZN, 1328, n. 2; DK, II, 400 n. (with the *Nachträge* in later editions); Untersteiner, *Sof.* III, 110f.; Gigante, *Nom. Bas.* 177; and the notes to A. T. Cole's article in *HSCP*, 1961.

¹ A. T. Cole has recently (in *HSCP*, 1961) argued strongly for a modification of Cataudella's view, according to which the writer is 'an Athenian follower of Democritus, much more influenced than his master by late fifth-century rhetoric'. His article is especially interesting about the influence of the 'Anon.' on later philosophy.

(b) *The 'Double Arguments'*¹

This curious little work in a mainly Doric dialect appears at the end of manuscripts of Sextus Empiricus with no indication of author or title. It is obviously incomplete, and the ultimate purpose of the writer is not clear. Stephanus christened it the *Dialexeis*, but in recent times it has been known as the *Dissoi Logoi*, 'Double (or Twin) Arguments', from the opening words, which recur later, 'Double arguments are maintained (or 'two views are taken') concerning...'² It has no literary or philosophical merit, and is most plausibly thought to be a pupil's notes from a teacher who had adopted Protagoras's methods or alternatively something written by a teacher for his pupils. As such it is of interest for the type of teaching current in the second generation of Sophists and also as showing how the argument about the teachability of virtue had degenerated into a school commonplace. The date is fortunately fixed at about 400 B.C. by a reference to the victory of the Spartans over the Athenians and their allies as 'very recent'.

Protagoras, we know, maintained that there are two contrary arguments on every subject, and himself composed two books of 'Antilogies'. In this way he set his pupils to debate, reconciling the opposing views or justifying one against the other. The present lecture—or series of textbook examples—looks like an imitation of this method. Many of the chapters start off by saying that 'two views are taken' about good and evil, or justice and injustice, fair and foul, truth and falsehood: the one that they are the same, the other that they are different. The writer sets out the arguments, and adopts one view himself. Thus in chapter 1, 'On Good and Evil', we have the relativist view of good and bad set forth in a way similar to Protagoras's in Plato's dialogue (*Prot.* 334, pp. 166 f. above), but with some ridiculous argu-

¹ For a fuller account see Taylor, *Var. Socr.* 1, chapter 3, 91–128. Attempts to assign the work to a particular author have not been successful. For various views on this, and on its general character, see Untersteiner, *Sophs.* 308, n. 2, and *Sof.* III, 148 f. Further bibliography will be found in O'Brien, *Socr. Paradoxes*, 75, n. 47. Text in DK, II, 405 ff.

² If the conception is Protagorean, the phrase itself seems to be an allusion to Euripides, fr. 189 (from the *Antiope*):

ἐκ παντός ἄν τις πράγματος δισσῶν λόγῳ
ἀγῶνα θεῖτ' ἄν εἰ λέγειν εἴη σοφός.

For other echoes of Euripides see Taylor, *Var. Socr.* 1, 96.

The 'Double Arguments'

ments added. The writer sides with those who say that the same thing is both good and bad, being good for some and bad for others, and for the same man in some circumstances good and in others bad. After adducing the Protagorean instance of the different effect of food and drink in health and sickness, he goes on to say things like this: a life of dissoluteness and extravagance may be bad for the dissolute man but good for trade, sickness bad for the sick man but good for the doctors, death bad for the man who dies but good for the undertakers, and so on. The identity of honourable and disgraceful is argued by appealing to the different customs and beliefs of Athenians and Spartans, Greeks and barbarians, with instances taken from Herodotus (p. 16 above).

The little work repeats all the sophistic tricks with which Plato was familiar: a talent is heavier than a mina but lighter than two talents, therefore the same thing is both heavy and light: what is here is not in Libya, therefore the same thing both is and is not, and so forth.¹ The sixth chapter is headed 'Concerning wisdom and virtue, whether teachable', and begins: 'There is a certain argument neither true nor novel, that wisdom and virtue cannot be taught or learned.' It then enumerates five arguments used by supporters of this view and proceeds to refute them.

1. If you hand over something to another, you cannot possess it yourself.

2. If it were teachable, there would be recognized teachers of it, as of music. (This appears in the *Meno*.)

3. The wise men of Greece would have taught their skill to those near and dear to them. (So Socrates argues at *Protagoras* 319 that Pericles could not teach his own sons his wisdom and at *Meno* 90 that no great statesman has done so.)

4. Some have gone to Sophists and got no good from it. (At *Meno* 92, Anytus claims that the Sophists do their pupils more harm than good.)

5. Many have become distinguished without going to Sophists.

¹ Cf. *Rep.* 479ff., *Theaet.* 152d, 155b-c, and *Euthyd.* 283c-d and *passim*. In the *Theaet.* the idea of the same thing being both heavy and light is put forward as a 'secret doctrine' of Protagoras, i.e. as a necessary consequence of his teaching even if he himself was not aware of it.

These evidently form a series of stock objections to the sophistic profession. The writer proceeds to reply to them one by one.

1. This argument, he thinks, is 'very silly' (κάρτα εὐήθη), for he knows that teachers of writing and lyre-playing do retain the knowledge they impart.

2. In reply to the argument that there are no recognized teachers of virtue, what, he asks, do the Sophists teach, if not wisdom and virtue? (In the *Meno* Socrates suggests that the Sophists are the right men to teach virtue. Anytus is furious at the idea, and Meno admires Gorgias because, unlike the other Sophists, he makes no claim to teach it.) And what, he goes on, were the Anaxagoreans and Pythagoreans? (Meaning presumably that they were pupils who learned wisdom and virtue from Anaxagoras and Pythagoras.)

3. Against the third argument, he simply says that Polyclitus did teach his sons to make statues (thereby imparting his particular *sophia* and *areté*). (Polyclitus was instanced at the very end of Protagoras's speech, *Prot.* 328c, with the suggestion that, if a man's sons did not turn out to equal him at his own *areté*, this was not necessarily for lack of teaching.) Moreover, if someone has failed to teach, this is no argument, whereas, if a single one has taught it, that is proof that it can be taught.

4. If it is true that some have not learned wisdom from Sophists, it is also true that many who have been taught to read and write have not learned these arts.

5. Against the fifth argument he says that after all natural talent (*physis*) does count for something. One who has not learned from the Sophists may do very well, if he has a gift for picking things up easily, after learning a little from those who teach us language—that is, our parents. One may learn from his father, another from his mother, one more, one less. If anyone believes that we do not learn language but are born with a knowledge of it, let him consider that, if a newborn child were sent straight to Persia and brought up there, he would speak Persian and not Greek. We learn language without knowing who are our teachers.

In the same way Protagoras at *Prot.* 327 introduces the notion of natural bent (εὐπείρα, cf. εὐφυΐς in *Diss. Log.*), suggesting that some

have a greater talent for virtue just as for flute-playing, and goes on to introduce the analogy of language, which we learn without knowing who are our teachers. A child's education in virtue begins at birth with his parents and nurse and is continued by the school and in later life by the city itself through its laws (325c ff.). The Sophist does not claim to be the sole teacher of virtue, but only to carry this education further than others.

Since we may assume this document to have been written before Plato's *Protagoras*, it shows that the objections to the thesis that virtue is teachable, which Socrates raises in that dialogue in order to draw Protagoras out, are based on well-known material from current and earlier controversy. When we add the points in common between the writer's reply and that of Plato's *Protagoras*, it lends support to what one would in any case think probable, that the long speech which Plato assigns to Protagoras reproduces substantially the views of the Sophist himself.¹

Chapter 7 argues that the use of the lot rather than election in appointment to office is neither efficient nor truly democratic, chapter 8 is an attempt to maintain that the good speaker knows everything about everything,² and the final, incomplete section deals with the value of a good memory. The argument that magistrates ought not to be appointed by lot because expert knowledge is as necessary for government as for any other occupation is one used by Socrates. That which follows it, however, that the lot is undemocratic because it leaves it to chance whether a friend of democracy or an oligarch is appointed, would not have commended itself to Socrates, who had grave doubts about the wisdom of democratic government. It recurs in Isocrates.³

¹ P. 64 above, with notes. Cf. Nestle in his edition of the *Protagoras*. He takes it for granted that the obvious connexions of *Dissoi Logoi*, chapter 6, with the speech in the *Prot.* are connexions of both with the original work of Protagoras on which they are based, and suggests that it was the *Περὶ ἀρετῶν* mentioned in D.L. 9.55, just as the story of human nature and progress in the dialogue was based on his *Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως*.

² I cannot agree with Taylor that the purpose of this chapter is to establish the Socratic thesis that the dialectician is also the philosopher who is identical with the 'true' statesman and orator. Its claim is far more like that of Hippias (whom Taylor mentions in a footnote, *VS*, 127, n. 1) that the Sophist-orator is omniscient.

³ See Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.9, Arist. *Rhet.* 1393b4, Isocr. *Areop.* 23, Taylor, *VS*, 123f.

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THE SOPHISTS

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The illustration on the cover is based on a mosaic from Torre Annunziata (now at the National Museum, Naples), believed to depict the 'Seven Sages'