PART I

THE THEORY OF THE CITY-STATE

1

the context of political theory

Political Theory and the Evolution of Man

Science in the final third of the twentieth century allows us, with a high level of confidence, to describe man as a member of that order of the animal kingdom called the primates. Men, like other primates—and for that matter like all other animals and plants—constantly face the myriad problems of adaptation to the conditions of life on this earth. For the human animal adaptation may mean a genetic alteration in skin color or lung capacity or ability to withstand cold, but it also means discovering and inventing ways and means of dealing with nature, other men, and, above all perhaps, with the inner man.[1]

What we call political and social organization—the customs, practices, and procedures that with varying degrees of firmness hold men together in interrelated groups—is perhaps the most important form of human adaptation to environment, both external and internal. Students of anthropology and of animal behavior are making it increasingly clear that in man, most of the other primates, and in many other animal species as well, social life and organization are primary biological survival devices. Man has no leathery armor like a turtle or spines like a porcupine, but he does have social life and the capacity to organize it effectively for survival purposes.

It is against this background and in this context that we must begin our understanding of political theory. Political theory is, quite simply, man's attempts to consciously understand and solve the problems of his group life and organization. Thus, political theory is an intellectual tradition and its history consists of the evolution of men's thoughts about political problems over time.

Anthropologists like to speak of man as a "culture-bearing" animal, and communications theorist Marshall McLuhan describes media of communication and cultural devices as "extensions" of man.[2] Political theory is part of this culture that man "bears" or carries with him. It is an extension of man and it is stated in and conditioned by extensions of man such as speech, writing, printing, and more recently, radio and television.

If we were to define political theory as broadly as "any thinking about politics or relevant to politics" we would come close to including all human thinking for all time. But political theory as we shall

mean it in this book is the "disciplined" investigation of political problems and as such it was invented at a particular place, namely among the Hellenes in what we now call Greece, and at a more or less specific time, during the fifth century before Christ.

If we borrow a way of talking from biology, we can say that just as nature at a certain time and place evolved mammals, so did the culture-bearing animal at a certain time and place evolve and come to carry with him disciplined, self-conscious political inquiry. We must carry this evolutionary image a little further. The "invention" of mammals by nature meant not that the whole mammalian line emerged instantaneously and full-blown upon the world, but rather that a threshold was crossed from which the extremely varied mammalian order exfoliated itself.

From the crossing of that threshold—whether it happened once or several times—mammals developed and spread around the globe. We could from this perspective speak of a history of mammalian development. In this same way we speak of an intellectual tradition, of the culture-bearing animal carrying a certain kind of extension of man, of—finally—a history of political theory.

Political Theory and Political Institutions

Political theory as the "disciplined investigation of political problems" has in the main been the province of philosophical writers, most of them distinguished in philosophy and literature considered more generally. Thus, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx are great names in the history of the Western intellectual tradition generally as well as in its political aspect.

One of the most important things we must grasp early in our study of the history of political theory is that our primary object of study is a collection of writings and not, even if this were possible in more than a loose sense, of actual political institutions, practices, and customs. This means that considerations of literary and logical analysis will inevitably be important, but it does not mean that any political writing can be considered apart from the political practices to which it is related.

Both political institutions and political theories are part of culture; they are extensions of man the physical entity. Groups of humans create institutions and practices whether political philosophers are there to philosophize or not; but when a Plato or a Locke has in fact

written his reflections down, those reflections can and have become a part of the way societies create institutions and practices.

Political institutions and political theories merge into one another in the sense and to the degree that both aim to *relate* people, objects, and happenings under some notion of common good or common interest. An important function of political theory is not only to show what a political practice is but also to show what it *means*. In showing what a practice means, or what it *ought* to mean, political theory can alter what it *is*.

We are accustomed to thinking in terms of a wholly "objective" relationship between the theorist and the aspect of nature he is theorizing about. Thus, the physicist or the chemist is ideally conceived as making completely accurate statements about—or giving a completely accurate picture of—elements or atoms or molecules from which he is completely detached. Galileo, so this account goes, merely observed the ball rolling down the inclined plane; his presence had no effect on the ball, the rolling, or the plane.

A good many philosophers of science and scientists themselves are inclined to doubt this purely objective, "detached observer" description of the relationship between theorist and nature. They suggest that no man can get at nature except through human terms, tools, and concepts and thus, that no man ever *merely* observes. However this may be, it seems safe to say that political theory is always elaborately and subtly intertwined with "political nature" if for no other reason than that "political" nature is itself largely man made.

If this seems confusing, it can perhaps be clarified by answering the question, "How does something become a part of political nature?" The institutions in a society that we would be likely to designate political represent an arrangement of power and authority. Certain institutions in the society are regarded as legitimate exercisers of the authority to make decisions for the community as a whole. (If such institutions are not present in a given area or among a given group of people, then it would be difficult to say that a genuine society or political community exists there.) The attention of groups and individuals whose interests and purposes will be affected by these institutions is naturally attracted by decisions taken in or by these institutions.[3] When the interested groups or individuals take actions directed toward the political institutions, such acts become part of the political aspect of society or part of political nature—this would be true whether the acts were primarily physical or primarily verbal or some combination of the two. What happens here is that men, by acting toward the political institutions, *connect* themselves and their

interests to political nature and thus, in some measure at least, become a part of it.

This political "connecting" may, and often does, originate with the men who operate the political institutions. Some sort of public decision, for example, one regulating automobile exhaust emission, has the effect of turning this previously mostly chemical phenomenon into a political one. Countless similar examples could be presented, but the main point lies in the relating or connecting character of political institutions. In this sense political nature about which the political theorist will theorize is a sort of man-made fabric or web that relates or connects men, objects, and events in a way involved with common or public interests in a society. The example we have used stresses connections made in *space,* but we must also recognize that the connections can be made over *time* as, for example, when employer-employee Social Security contributions are collected by government and dispersed decades later as retirement benefits.

It is easy enough to see, given this view of political nature, that the political actor is the "connecter" or the "relator." It is he who weaves the political fabric in the immediate sense. The political theorist observes him and what he does, and advises and recommends what he might do and what he should not do.

When the true political theorist observes and comments on some connection "out there" in political nature, he will usually say more than simply, it is there. He will also seek to show what the connection *means.* This may involve seeking answers to why it was originally made, what its effects have been, and what its effects are likely to be. In so pointing up a connection and seeking to illuminate its meaning, the theorist can also act in political nature by refocussing political circumstances for his readers.

In this respect the political theorist is a kind of super politician—he thinks through and presents persuasively the nature and desirability of certain connections that the work-a-day political leader may not have time to understand or analyze on his own. The French theorist Montesquieu, for example, discussed the British government of his time in terms of a separation of powers or functions. His text became an important influence on the writers of the American constitution, instructing them in the meaning and desirability of a separation of powers arrangement, even though, as many commentators have argued, Montesquieu misunderstood the nature of the British institutions. Nonetheless, Montesquieu, acting as a political theorist, was a more important political actor in American history surely than Cornwallis and perhaps even than Washington.

Political Theory as an Attribute of the Western Cultural Tradition

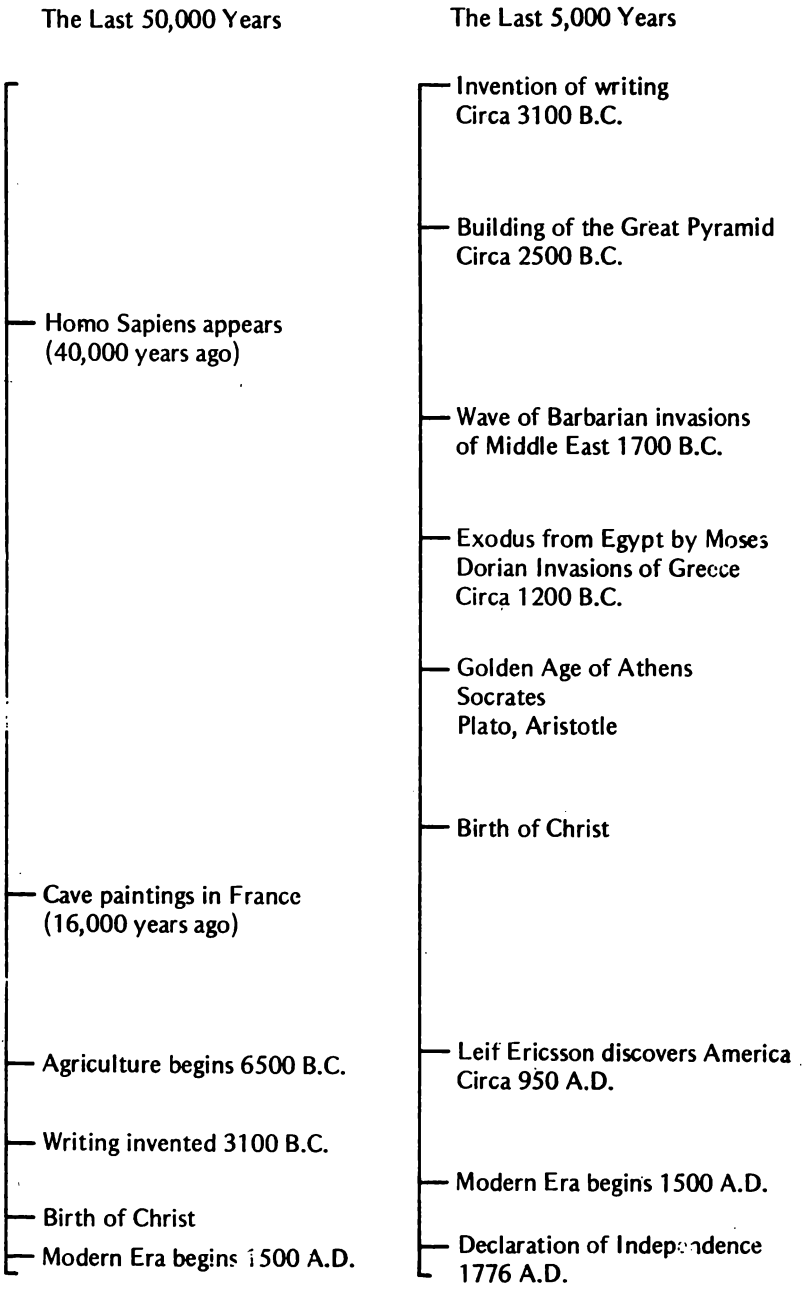
As the preceding discussion makes clear, political theory is not primarily part of a poetic, musical, or artistic tradition. On the contrary, it is for the most part to be associated with a philosophic-scientific tradition and style of discourse. Indeed, political theory is more often than not characterized by what has been called an "architectonic" stance with respect to its subject matter. Thus, the political theorist stands "outside" the edifice as an architect might. He sees it as a whole, plans its whole development, and adjusts this or that aspect with an eye to the success of the whole.

This philosophic-scientific style of thinking of which political theory is a part began, as was suggested earlier, among what we call the Ancient Greeks. We talked about political theory having its origins in the fifth century B.C. To the modern student this seems a very long time ago—so long in fact as to bring into question its revelance for contemporary concerns. We think of these Greeks as "ancient" just as our term for them indicates. From another and in many respects true perspective, however, we would be more accurate to call them "moderns," if not quite contemporary. Consider the charts on page 8.

The Golden Age of Athens, or of Pericles, which we look back upon with reverence, is accurately to be thought of as the beginning of *European* civilization—or as we now usually say, of *Western* civilization—but from the broader point of view of the history of mankind the flowering of Athens was a rather late and peripheral development. It is easy enough to grasp that we in the twentieth century stand some 2400 years from the Age of Pericles, but it is also important to see that Pericles stood roughly an equal number of years from the builders of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, with their highly sophisticated mathematical astronomy and engineering techniques.[4]

Greece is the place where Europeans contacted the civilization of the ancient Middle East and it was there that man crossed the threshold of science, philosophy, and political theory. It is part of the provinciality of contemporary Western man that he judges Plato, Aristotle, and Greek science and philosophy in general only in contrast to contemporary Western science and philosophy and almost never in contrast to what went before them.[5]

Understanding the nature of political theory as an extension of man demands that we see it in the context in which it developed. We need, therefore, to do two things before moving in the next chapter into a discussion of the Greek city-state which served as an immediate


The Last 50,000 Years
Homo Sapiens appears (40,000 years ago)
Cave paintings in France (16,000 years ago)
Agriculture begins 6500 B.C.
Writing invented 3100 B.C.
Birth of Christ
Modern Era begins 1500 A.D.
The Last 5,000 Years
Invention of writing Circa 3100 B.C.
Building of the Great Pyramid Circa 2500 B.C.
Wave of Barbarian invasions of Middle East 1700 B.C.
Exodus from Egypt by Moses
Dorian Invasions of Greece Circa 1200 B.C.
Golden Age of Athens
Socrates
Plato, Aristotle
Birth of Christ
Leif Ericsson discovers America Circa 950 A.D.
Modern Era begins 1500 A.D.
Declaration of Independence 1776 A.D.

context for Socrates and Plato. We must set the stage for the coming of Greek civilization and we must examine, even if briefly, the intellectual style and form that preceded the invention of philosophy and political theory.

The Development of Civilization Before the Greeks

Archaeological research over the last several decades—and this research has by no means come to an end—has greatly increased our knowledge of the ancient world. While man in the broad sense seems to have been born in Africa,[6] a threshold crucial to our discussion was crossed somewhere in the neighborhood of 6500 B.C. in the Middle East. Here man the hunter, the gatherer, the herder became for the first time and in a very simple way man the farmer. The simple farming techniques seem to have spread steadily until by 3000 B.C. grain-growing argicultural communities could be found along the coast of North Africa, in Europe and India, and across the plateau of Iran into Central Asia.

Agriculture became civilization only under particularly favorable circumstances, growing on the flood plain of great rivers—the first of which was apparently that of the valley of the Tigris-Euphrates Civilization by definition requires social activities above the level of reproduction and subsistence farming, so it is easy to see that the greater fertility created by spring floods of a great river could provide an agricultural surplus capable of supporting characteristically "civilized" forms of human activity.

More important perhaps than mere increased fertility, the flood plain provided a circumstance in which man could employ his ever-present ingenuity to develop relatively elaborate systems of irrigation. Irrigation projects required coordinated effort on a large scale, which means the development of a group of "managers," whether priests, chiefs, or military leaders, who would presumably have some claim on the surplus created by the irrigation. Once the surplus falls into managerial hands, men can be hired not only to dig irrigation canals but also to perform as craftsmen or artists or musicians, that is to say, as professionals devoted to perfecting and developing activities that had always been characteristically human to a level we call civilized.

It is no accident, therefore, that one of the most important of the extensions of man, writing, was developed somewhere around 3100 B.C. by the Sumerians riding on the back of an agricultural surplus in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

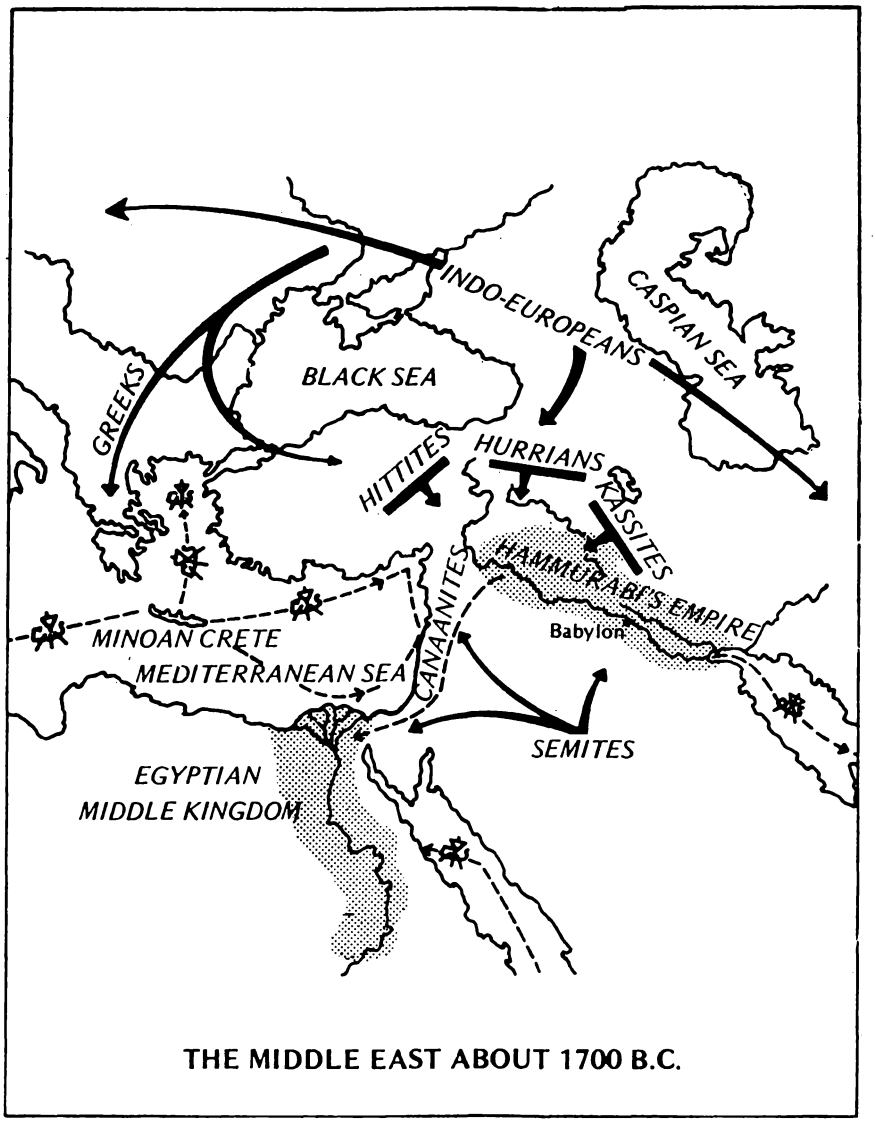
Simple subsistence farming could spread steadily out from the

Middle East into Africa, Europe, and Asia. Once basic agricultural skills had been acquired, there was no special problem involved in carving out new fields. Given the presence of minimally suitable soil and climatic conditions, a continuous agricultural belt might be developed over time. Civilization in its original form was, however, quite different because it was tied to special conditions. Civilization had to leap-frog from one irrigable flood plain to another and there were in fact relatively few areas where such conditions were present. While a number of cities[7] that could for awhile stave off the onslaught of the hill and desert barbarians developed along smaller rivers, only the Nile and Indus (adjacent to the Middle East but accessible by sea from Sumer) could sustain massive civilized communities. It is possible that the Oxus-Jaxartes valley beyond the Caspian Sea was the scene of a parallel development, but so far little is known of the area. Comparable development came later on the banks of the Yellow in China and much later still along river banks in what is now Cambodia.

Inevitably, considerable contact and conflict occurred over time between these highly developed river bank areas and their less developed neighbors. Elements of the civilization that were detachable tended to spread. When the quest for development among the surrounding barbarians took the form of armed attack on the civilized areas, resistance was a necessity, but it did not always succeed. Political arrangements in the Tigris-Euphrates valley changed focus repeatedly during the period 3000 B.C. to 1700 B.C.; the general pattern seems to have been a northward expansion of the area of civilization as successive circles of barbarians first attacked and were then absorbed by the irrigation civilization. Thus, around 3000 B.C., the political center was Sumerian and very close to the river mouth in the south; but by 1700 B.C. the center was a good many miles to the north in Babylon under the hegemony of the Amorite "barbarian" Hammurabi.

While much less is known of the people of the Indus, they too presumably had their problems with surrounding groups. The Egyptians, however, were relatively isolated along the Nile and were thus able to perfect a relatively static style of life and thought. The Egyptian style of thought provides an important and illuminating contrast to the Greek invention of philosophy. We shall return to it shortly, but first we need to be clear about the circumstances under which the Greeks came onto the world stage.

Beginning around 1700 B.C., a wave of invasions from the north opened a new phase in the development of mankind. Men speaking one of a common family of languages—the Indo-European—swept into the Indus valley and destroyed the developments there. They moved



THE MIDDLE EAST ABOUT 1700 B.C.

into the Middle East where ultimately, leading a collection of local tribesmen, they conquered Egypt. To the West, the Indo-European language was an early form of Greek and these warriors moved into Attica and the Peloponnesus.

These invasions that lasted roughly two hundred years drastically altered the situation in the Middle East. Egypt could no longer remain

isolated and, with the breakdown of ancient cultural and geographical barriers, what can perhaps be called a cosmopolitan civilization incorporating Egypt, Mesopotamia, and everything in between came into being. While the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultural, intellectual, and political styles remained powerful and in some measure separate, nonetheless in the years between 1500 B.C. and 500 B.C. a common "great society" came to extend from the Nile to the Tigris-Euphrates and beyond. It was early in this period—around 1200 B.C.—that the leader of a desert tribe, trained and educated by Egyptian priests, led his people out of Egypt across the Sinai in search of a Promised Land. At about the same time another group of Semites on the fringes between Egypt and Mesopotamia, apparently unable to grapple successfully with the complex Egyptian and Mesopotamian writing styles, simplified writing into twenty to thirty marks that represented basic sounds and in so doing invented the alphabet.[8] At about the same time, a new wave of barbarian Greek speakers, the Dorians, descended from the north. The battle for Troy recorded in the *Illiad* of Homer is traditionally dated at 1184 B.C.

In the first half of the first millenium B.C., while the Middle East continued its cosmopolitan unification, moving toward actual political unification under the Persians around 500 B.C., the future was developing in the form of three peripheral civilizations: China that produced Confucius, India that produced the Buddha, and Greece that eventually produced Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Discussing Persian hegemony over the Middle East under Cyrus and Cambyses (shortly before 500 B.C.), historian William H. McNeill concludes:

> *With this achievement, the political evolution of the ancient Orient came to a logical, if not to a historical conclusion. The anciently civilized world was united under one administration; the barbarian world was effectively overawed. But on their northwest frontier, the Persians faced a problem that turned out to be beyond their power to solve. Even before Cyrus' time, a cluster of petty Greek city-states had begun to create a civilization which, while drawing upon the Orient for many of its elements, was nevertheless profoundly different in quality. This civilization soon became a lodestar for barbarian peoples in Macedonia, Thrace, and southern Russia, and indeed, began to be admired even in Persia. As early as 479 B.C., unexpected Greek victories in the battles of Salamis and Platea forced the Persians onto the defensive. A century and a half later, Hellenized Macedonians and their*

Greek allies broke into the Persian empire and destroyed it (334–330 B.C.), thus bringing a new and very powerful cultural force to bear upon the age-old civilization of the Middle East.

The rise of Greek civilization from the status of a peripheral offshoot of the Middle East to equality with and superiority over that ancient center marked a fundamental turning point in civilized history. The era of Middle Eastern dominance thereby came to an end; and a complicated cultural interplay began among the major civilized communities of Europe, the Middle East, India, and China. Something like a balance of cultures arose in Eurasia, a balance which was to last until after 1500 A.D., when Europe began to assert a new dominance over all of the peoples and cultures of the world.

Any termination date assigned to the era of Middle Eastern pre-eminence must of course be arbitrary. But 500 B.C. offers a convenient round number, representing the high point of Persian power and prestige on both the Greek and Indian frontiers of the ancient Oriental world, before the Ionian revolt of 499 B.C. challenged the Great King's might. By 500 B.C. also, the civilizations of Greece, India, and China had attained many of their distinguishing characteristics. Greek art and philosophy had put in an appearance; while Confucius in China and Buddha in India were then bringing to expression much that remained distinctive of Chinese and Indian civilization.[9]

The Invention of Political Philosophy

It is important to stress that Greece was *peripheral* to Egypt and Mesopotamia but not isolated from them. India by contrast was substantially more isolated and China nearly wholly separated.

The Chinese, although they started later, seem to have in many respects moved through stages of development similar to that of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Thus there is a considerable similarity between a Chinese emperor and his dominion and a Mesopotamian emperor or an Egyptian Pharaoh and his. The Greeks, however, seem to have done something fundamentally different, to have, as we suggested earlier in evolutionary language, crossed a threshold in the development of mankind.

In Greece politics began to be differentiated from religion and philosophy and/or science began to be differentiated from myth. These are distinctions contemporary Western man takes for granted. The

distinctions indeed are, even today, much sharper in the West than in the East and this is no accident, for it is Western man and not Eastern man who is the direct cultural descendant of the Greeks.

In the contemporary world we can easily make a distinction between an account of the sun's transit across the sky that describes a chariot of fire being driven along a certain path in the heavens, and an account that describes a gigantic, extremely hot ball of gas that appears to move because of the earth's rotation on its axis. The former account is mythological, the latter scientific.

The form of the myth is that of a story: the chariot is drawn by eight horses or by four oxen; it is driven by some specific individual; it is swallowed by a giant bird (during an eclipse) and later reemerges. The form of science is abstract principle, precise objective description. No attribution of personality is involved in the strictly scientific account. Note carefully that in true myth the story is not a *symbolic* account, it is a literal description. For the ancient Egyptians the sun did not stand for or represent a god, it was not controlled by a personal all-powerful but invisible god (this was the discovery of the Hebrews), the sun (Ra) *was* a god. It is the mark of a modern mind to be able to explicitly create a "myth" as a way of influencing others (as, for example, Plato does in the *Republic*). In its original sense myth is a literal description.

Anthropology and children's stories make us think of myth as merely a collection of simplistic, fanciful stories. The evidence suggests, however, that in the case of the ancient Egyptians and in some measure the ancient Mesopotamians, while their understanding of the relationship between man, the earth, and the heavens was very much in the form of myth, their actual handling of this fundamental subject matter was extraordinarily precise and sophisticated.

The ancient astronomers of Egypt and Mesopotamia observed that all varying activity in the sky takes place in a celestial pathway 14° wide—around what astronomers call the plane of the ecliptic. The sun, the moon, and the planets move across the sky in this path while the remainder of the sky constitutes a "vault of the heavens" providing a background to this activity. The familiar constellations of the zodiac occupy this celestial pathway—thus astrological expressions such as "Jupiter rising in Sagittarius." The behavior of the sun, moon, and planets in the various constellations was expressed in mythic form, but it was observed and calculated in an exact and highly imaginative mathematical way.

These circumstances built up an extremely complex occult religio-scientific set of teachings preserved by a priesthood whose members were masters of mathematics, astronomy (which was un-

differentiated from what we would call astrology), a complex style of writing, and the interpretation of the myths.

The evidence suggests that the residents of the river valley civilizations understood their rivers as earthly reflections or earthly aspects of the ecliptic or path of the sun across the sky. Their king *was* the sun who was a certain god personality. Residents connected the earthly realm with the heavenly one by temple-towers (of which the Tower of Babel and perhaps the great pyramid of Cheops are examples). The Greeks were to call these tower-temple places "omphalos," meaning navel. Apparently they served as a sort of umbilical cord connecting earth and sky. That this is the stuff of myth is easy to see, but nonetheless the astronomical-mathematical precision and sophistication of the building, the placement of the towers, the calendars, the astronomical records represented considerably greater advancements than the Greeks with their more "scientific" approach were able to achieve. Some scholars suggest that Egypt was carefully surveyed and laid out according to the celestial model and that the Great Pyramid of Cheops was an *astronomical observatory and indeed a precise model of the northern hemisphere!* [10]

For all of the turmoil and imperfection that characterized the history of the ancient Middle East, a kind of political model is nonetheless discernible. The political order is focussed in a god-king, supported and surrounded by a priestly bureaucracy whose members interpret the world through the form of myth refined into a mathematical astronomy-astrology.

The barbarian Greeks contacted this civilization with its ancient wisdom late in its life and long after the zenith of its perfection. Just as the Greeks learned to write using an alphabet that is a vastly simplified adaptation of cuneiform or hieroglyphics, they discerned the power of a celestial, mathematical–geometrical, "natural" grounding for political order. But they grasped this style of thinking in demythologized form. McNeill has argued that the Greeks read their master social institution, the polis or city-state (which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter), into the cosmos:

> *Contact with Oriental and barbarian societies acquainted the Ionians with the diversity of existing religious doctrines; and though they had outgrown Homer's theology, they retained his concept of an impersonal and inexorable Fate, brooding over and ultimately controlling both gods and men. But the really decisive factor takes us right back to the polis. In sixth-century Ionia, human affairs were regulated quite successfully by impersonal, uniform, necessary, and—hopefully—just laws. Obviously, the-*

laws of nature, which the Ionian philosophers thought they could detect in the universe at large, bore a striking resemblance to the laws of the polis, which surely, though invisibly, governed their own individual lives. The beginnings of Greek philosophy, therefore, may be viewed as a naive but enormously fruitful projection upon the cosmos of the busy, ordered world of the polis.

Earlier thinkers, both Greek and barbarian, had likewise projected their social environment upon the cosmos. But in nearly all earlier societies, men had been narrowly subjected to the vagaries of nature, or to the arbitrary will of social superiors, or most often,

to both at once. As long as the food of the community depended upon capricious weather, while the common welfare hung upon the good pleasure of some perhaps distant overlord, and life itself was constantly exposed to the chance arithmetic of raid and pestilence, any view of the universe which did not emphasize the irregular and unpredictable nature of things was evidently absurd. But in a prosperous and independent city like Miletus, the lives and welfare of the citizens depended primarily upon their own co-ordinated activity, regulated by law. Local crop failures lost part of their terror when ships, trading afar, could bring grain to the city as needed. No distant monarch held the fate of the Milesians in the hollow of his hand. Even the chances of war depended largely upon the training and discipline of the citizen soldiers. The polis thus interposed a cushion between its members and the whims of nature, wove a strait jacket around the arbitrary impulses of magistrate and ruler, and, through military training, even succeeded in reducing the risks of war to a minimum. A citizen of such a city was as free as a man can be from subjection to any alien will; yet his life was rigorously bound by law. Thus it is scarcely surprising that a few speculatively inclined citizens imagined that the universe might be similarly governed. Yet this implausible guess gave a distinctive bent to all subsequent Greek (and European) thought. This was remarkable enough; far more remarkable is the fact that behind all the variety of particular occurrences, laws of nature do in fact seem to exist.[11]

It is in the polis that political theory began and it is to the polis that we now turn.

Footnotes

1 Anthropologist Weston La Barre persuasively discusses the necessity of understanding not only the human animal's need to adapt to the external, objective environment, but also his need to adapt to the world of his fears, dreams, and phantasies. Weston La Barre, *The Ghost Dance* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1970).

2 Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1962) and *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

3 See the interesting discussion of the essence of political leadership as "attention demanding" in Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

4 See Peter Tompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramid* (New York: Harper and Row 1971).

5 The same point might be made with respect to Christianity. The contemporary

intellectual contrasts Christian teaching with present day scientific rationalism but rarely with the mythological thought styles with which it originally competed.

6 See Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis* (New York: Atheneum, 1962); L. S. B. Leakey, "The Origin of the Genus Homo," in Sol Tax ed., *Evolution after Darwin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), II, pp. 17–31; Björn Kartèn, *Not From the Apes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

7 For example, Jericho on the Jordan had a burst of development 2000 years before Old Testament times.

8 Egyptian hieroglyphics and Mesopotamian cunieform pictured not sounds but, like Chinese, a complex combination of ideas, things, syllables, and sounds. The alphabet has proved infinitely more flexible and adaptable. See the discussion in Thomas Landon Thorson, *Biopolitics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) pp. 156–60.

9 William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 116.

10 See Tompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramid.*

11 McNeill, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–5.

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2
the city-state

Most modern political ideals—such, for example, as justice, liberty, constitutional government, and respect for the law—or at least the definitions of them, began with the reflection of Greek thinkers upon the institutions of the city-state. But in the long history of political thought the meaning of such terms has been variously modified, and always that meaning has to be understood in the light of the institutions by which the ideals were to be realized and of the society in which those institutions did their work. The Greek city-state was so different from the political communities in which modern men live that it requires no small effort of the imagination to picture its social and political life. The Greek philosophers were thinking of political practices far different from any that have prevailed commonly in the modern world, and the whole climate of opinion in which their work was done was different. Their problems, though not without analogies in the present, were never identical with modern problems, and the ethical apparatus by which political life was evaluated and criticised varied widely from any that now prevails. In order to understand at all accurately what their theories meant, it is necessary first to realize at least roughly what kind of institutions they had in view and what citizenship connoted, as a fact and as an ideal, to the public for whom they wrote. For this purpose the government of Athens is especially important, partly because it is the best known but chiefly because it was an object of special concern to the greatest of the Greek philosophers.

Social Classes

As compared with modern states the ancient city-state was exceedingly small both in area and in population. Thus the whole territory of Attica was only a little more than two-thirds the area of Rhode Island, and in population Athens was comparable with such a city as Denver or Rochester. The numbers are exceedingly uncertain but a figure somewhat in excess of three hundred thousand would be approximately correct. Such an arrangement of a small territory dominated by a single city was typical of the city-state.

This population was divided into three main classes that were politically and legally distinct. At the bottom of the social scale were the slaves, for slavery was a universal institution in the ancient world.

Of all the inhabitants of Athens perhaps a third were slaves. Consequently as an institution slavery was as characteristic of the city-state economy as wage-earning is of the modern. It is true of course that the slave did not count politically in the city-state. In Greek political theory his existence was taken for granted, just as the feudal ranks were taken for granted in the Middle Ages or as the relation of employer and employee is taken for granted now. Sometimes his lot was deplored and sometimes the institution (though not its abuses) was defended.

But the comparatively large number of slaves—and still more the exaggeration of their numbers—has given rise to a myth that is seriously misleading. This is the idea that the citizens of the city-state formed a leisure class and that its political philosophy was therefore the philosophy of a class exempt from gainful labor.

This is an almost complete illusion. The leisure class in Athens could hardly have been larger than it is in an American city of equal size, for the Greeks were not opulent and lived upon a very narrow economic margin. If they had more leisure than the moderns, it was because they took it—their economic machine was not so tightly geared—and they paid for it with a lower standard of consumption. The simplicity and plainness of Greek living would be a heavy burden to the modern American. Certainly the overwhelming majority of Athenian citizens must have been tradesmen or artisans or farmers who lived by working at their trades. There was no other way for them to live. Consequently, as with most men in modern communities, their political activities had to take place in such time as they could spare from their private occupations. It is true that Aristotle deplored this fact and thought it would be desirable to have all manual work done by slaves, in order that citizens might have the leisure to devote themselves to politics. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of this ideal, it is certain that Aristotle was not describing what existed but was proposing a change for the improvement of politics. Greek political theory sometimes idealized a leisure class, and in aristocratic states the governing class might be a landed gentry, but it is quite false to imagine that in a city like Athens the citizens were typically men whose hands were unsoiled by labor.

The slaves being put aside, the second main group in a Greek city was composed of the resident foreigners, or metics. In a commercial city like Athens the number of such persons might be large and many of them would not be transients. But there was no form of legal naturalization, and residence extending over several generations would still leave a metic outside the citizen-body, unless indeed he were taken in by inadvertence or connivance. It was as if the original Anglo-

Saxon American colonists had admitted immigrants from various lands but not extended them citizenship. The metic like the slave had no part in the political life of the city, though he was a freeman and his exclusion implied no social discrimination against him.

Finally, there was the body of citizens or those who were members of the city and entitled to take part in its political life. This was a privilege attained by birth, for a Greek remained a citizen of the city to which his parents belonged. Moreover, what citizenship entitled a man to was *membership*; that is, some minimum share of political activity or participation in public business. This minimum might be no more than the privilege of attending town-meeting, which itself might be of greater or less importance according to the degree of democracy that prevailed, or it might include eligibility to a narrower or a wider range of offices. Thus Aristotle, obviously thinking of Athenian practice, considered that eligibility to jury-duty is the best criterion of citizenship. Whether a man were eligible to many offices or only a few would again depend upon the degree of democracy that prevailed in his city. But the point to be noted is that, for a Greek, citizenship always meant some such participation, much or little. The idea was therefore much more intimate and much less legal than the modern idea of citizenship. The modern notion of a citizen as a man to whom certain rights are legally guaranteed would have been better understood by the Roman than by the Greek, for the Latin term *ius* does partly imply this possession of private right. The Greek, however, thought of his citizenship not as a possession but as something shared, much like membership in a family. This fact had a profound influence upon Greek political philosophy. It meant that the problem as they conceived it was not to gain a man his rights but to insure him the place to which he was entitled. Somewhat differently stated, it meant that, in the eyes of Greek thinkers, the political problem was to discover what place each kind or class of men merited in a wholesome society so constituted that all the significant sorts of social work could go on.

Political Institutions

The institutions by which this body of citizen-members undertook to transact its political business can be illustrated by taking Athens as the best-known type of the democratic constitution.[1] The whole body of male citizens formed the Assembly or Ecclesia, a town-meeting which every Athenian was entitled to attend after he had reached the

age of twenty years. The Assembly met regularly ten times in the year and in extraordinary sessions at the call of the Council. The acts of this town-meeting corresponded, as nearly as anything in the system did, to modern enactments in which the whole public authority of the body-politic is embodied. This is not to say, however, that the formation of policies and the effective discussion of measures took place, or was intended to take place, in this body. Direct democracy conducted by the whole people assembled is rather a political myth than a form of government. Moreover, all forms of Greek government (except extra-legal dictatorship), whether aristocratic or democratic, included some sort of assembly of the people, even though its share in government might actually be small.

The interesting thing about Athenian government is therefore not the Assembly of the whole people but the political means which had been designed to make the magistrates and officials responsible to the citizen-body and answerable to its control. The device by which this was effected was a species of representation, though it differed in important ways from modern ideas of representation. What was aimed at was the selection of a body sufficiently large to form a sort of cross-section or sample of the whole body of citizens, which was permitted in a given case or for a short term to act in the name of the people The terms were short; there was usually a provision against re-election and thus the way was open for other citizens to have a turn at the management of public affairs. In line with this policy the magistracies were held as a rule not by individuals but by boards of ten, one chosen from each of the tribes into which the citizens were divided. The magistrates, however, had for the most part little power. The two bodies which formed the keys to popular control of government in Athens were the Council of Five Hundred and the courts with their large popular juries.

The manner in which the members of these governing bodies were chosen explains the sense in which they could be said to represent the whole people. For purposes of local government the Athenians were divided into about a hundred demes, or, as they might be called, wards or parishes or townships. These demes were the units of local government. There was one respect, however, in which they were not comparable strictly to local units; membership in them was hereditary, and even though an Athenian moved from one locality to another, he remained a member of the same deme. Accordingly, though the deme was a locality, the system was not purely one of local representation. The demes had, however, some measure of local autonomy and certain local police-duties of rather trifling importance. They were, moreover, the door by which the Athenian entered into citizenship, for

they kept the register of their members and every Athenian boy was enrolled at the age of eighteen. But their really important function was the presentation of candidates to fill the various bodies by which the central government was carried on. The system was a combination of election and lot. The demes elected candidates, roughly in proportion to their size, and the actual holders of office were chosen by lot from the panel thus formed by election. To the Greek understanding this mode of filling offices by lot was the distinctively democratic form of rule, since it equalized everyone's chances to hold office.

There was, however, one important body of Athenian officials which remained outside this scheme of choice by lot and which retained a much larger measure of independence than the others. These were the ten generals who were chosen by direct election and were, moreover, eligible to repeated re-elections. The generals were, of course, in theory purely military officers but especially in imperial days they actually exercised not only important powers in foreign parts of the Athenian Empire but also very great influence over the decisions of the Council and the Assembly at home. The office therefore was not really a military post but in certain cases a political office of the highest importance. It was as general that Pericles acted year after year as the leader of Athenian policy, and his position with reference to the Council and Assembly was much more like that of prime minister in a modern government than that of a mere commander of troops. But his power lay in the fact that he could carry the Assembly with him; a failure to do so would have disposed of him as effectively as an adverse vote disposes of a responsible minister.

As was said above, the really essential governing bodies at Athens were the Council of Five Hundred and the courts with their large popularly chosen juries. Some sort of council was a characteristic part of all forms of the Greek city-state but in the aristocratic states, as at Sparta, the council was a senate composed of elders chosen for life and without responsibility to the assembly. Membership in such a council would normally be the prerogative of a well-born governing class and hence quite different from the popularly chosen Council at Athens. The Council of the Areopagus was the remnant of an aristocratic senate which had been shorn of its powers by the rising democracy. In substance the Council of Five Hundred was an executive and steering committee for the Assembly.

The actual work of government was really centered in this committee. But five hundred was still far too large for the transaction of business and it was reduced to a working size by the favorite device of rotation in office. Each of the ten tribes into which the Athenians were divided furnished fifty of the members and the fifty members from a

single tribe were active for one-tenth of the yearly term of office. This committee of fifty, augmented by one councilman from each of the nine tribes not in office, was in actual control and transacted business in the name of the entire Council. A president was chosen by lot from the fifty for a single day and no Athenian could hold this honor for more than one day in his entire life. The Council was charged with the very important duty of proposing measures for the consideration of the general Assembly of the citizens, which only acted upon matters coming to it through the Council. At the time when the Athenian constitution was at its best, it would appear that the Council rather than the Assembly was the body which effectively formulated measures. At a later date it seems to have confined itself rather to the duty of drafting measures to be debated in the Assembly. In addition to these legislative duties the Council was also the central executive body in the government. Foreign embassies had access to the people only through the Council. The magistrates were largely subject to its control. It could imprison citizens and even condemn them to death, acting itself as a court or committing offenders to one of the ordinary courts. It had entire control of finances, the management of public property, and taxation. The fleet and its arsenals were directly controlled by it, and a multitude of commissions and administrative bodies or servants were attached more or less closely to it.

The great powers of the Council, however, were always dependent upon the good will of the Assembly. It passed upon matters which the Council presented to it, enacting, amending, or rejecting them as it saw fit. A proposal originating in the Assembly might be referred to the Council, or the latter body might present a proposal to the Assembly without recommendation. All major matters, such as declarations of war, the concluding of peace, the forming of alliances, the voting of direct taxes, or general legislative enactments, were expected to go before the Assembly for popular approval, but it was apparently not expected, at least in the best days of Athenian politics, that the Council should be a mere drafting body. At all events decrees were passed in the name of the Council *and* the people.

It was through the courts, however, that popular control both of magistrates and of the law itself was consummated. The Athenian courts were undoubtedly the keystone of the whole democratic system. They occupied a position not comparable to that held by the courts in any modern government. Their duty, like that of any other court, was of course to render judicial decisions in particular cases either civil or criminal; but in addition they had powers vastly beyond this, which to modern ideas were clearly of an executive or legislative rather than of a judicial nature.

The members of these courts, or jurymen, were nominated by the demes, a panel of six thousand being elected each year, and were then told off by lot to sit in particular courts and upon particular cases. Any Athenian citizen thirty years old might be chosen for this duty. The court was a very large body, scarcely ever less than 201, commonly as many as 501, and sometimes much larger. These citizens were indifferently judge and jury, for the Athenian court had none of the machinery that goes with a technically developed form of law. Parties in litigation were obliged to present their cases in person. The court simply voted, first upon the question of guilt, and then, if the verdict had been guilty, upon the penalty to be assessed, after each party had proposed a punishment which he deemed just. A decision by a court was final, for there was no system of appeals. This was indeed perfectly logical, for it was the theory of the Athenian courts that the court acted and decided in the name of the whole people. The court was not merely a judicial organ; it was conceived to be literally the Athenian people for the purpose in hand. A decision in one court was therefore in no way binding upon any other court. In fact, a court was in some respects coordinate with the Assembly itself. Both the Assembly and the court were the people. Hence the courts were utilized to secure a popular control both over officials and over the law itself.

The control of the courts over magistrates was secured in three main ways. In the first place, there was a power of examination before a candidate could take office. An action might be brought on the ground that a given candidate was not a fit person to hold office and the court could disqualify him. This process made the choice of magistrates by lot less a matter of chance than it might at first appear to be. In the second place, an official could be made subject at the conclusion of his term of office to a review of all the acts performed by him, and this review also took place before a court. Finally, there was a special auditing of accounts and a review of the handling of public money for every magistrate at the end of his term. The Athenian magistrate, ineligible as he was to reelection and subject to examination before and after his term by a court composed of five hundred or more of his fellow citizens chosen by lot, had little independence of action. In the case of the generals, the fact that their re-election enabled them to escape the review no doubt largely explains why they were the most independent of Athenian officials.

The control of the courts by no means stopped with magistrates. They had a control over the law itself which might give them real legislative power and raise them to a position in particular cases coordinate with the Assembly itself. For the courts could try not only a man but a law. Thus a decision of the Council or of the Assembly might be

attacked by a peculiar form of writ alleging that it was contrary to the constitution. Any citizen could bring such a complaint and the operation of the act in question was then suspended until it was acted upon by a court. The offending law was tried exactly as if it were a person and an adverse decision by the court quashed it. In practice there was apparently no limit to the ground of such an action; it might merely be alleged that the law in question was inexpedient. Again it is obvious that the Athenians thought of the jury as identical, for the purposes in hand, with the whole people.

Political Ideals

The popularly chosen Council and its responsibility to the Assembly, and the independent and popularly chosen juries, were the characteristic institutions of Athenian democracy. As in any system of government, however, there were, behind the institutions, certain conceptions of what the institutions ought to embody, ideals of a valuable political life to which the institutions ought to be instrumental. Such ideals are less easy to discover and less tangible to describe, but they are no less important than the institutions themselves for an understanding of political philosophy. Fortunately, the historian Thucydides has stated, in a passage of incomparable brilliance, this meaning which democracy had for thoughtful Athenians. This is the famous Funeral Oration, appropriately attributed to Pericles, who was the leader of the democracy, and represented as having been delivered in honor of the soldiers who had fallen in the first year of the great war with Sparta.[2] Probably never in historical literature has there been a statement equally fine of a political ideal. The pride with which the Athenian contemplated his city, the love with which he cherished his share in her civic life, and the moral significance of Athenian democracy are written in every line.

The main purpose of Pericles's speech was evidently to awaken in his hearers' minds the consciousness of the city itself as their supremely valuable possession and as the highest interest to which they could devote themselves. The purpose of the address is a patriotic appeal and the occasion is a funeral, so that the speaker might be expected to dwell upon traditional pieties and ancestral greatness. In fact, Pericles has little to say of tradition or of the past. It is the present glory of a united and harmonious Athens upon which he dwells. What he asks of his hearers is to see Athens as she really is, to realize what she means in the lives of her citizens, as if she were a supremely beautiful and worthy mistress.

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

Their citizenship is, then, the Athenians' highest glory. "In magnifying the city I have magnified them." For what treasure can the thoughtful man prefer to that? What possession has he which he can hold in higher esteem or for which he will risk and sacrifice more? Shall he prefer his property or his family? Of what use is property except to enable a man to enjoy that higher good which comes from having an active share in the city's life? And of what value is family, even though it be of ancient and honorable lineage, except as it gives one an entrance into that higher form of social relationship represented by civil life? Above all faction, above all lesser groups of any sort, stands the city, which gives to all of them their meaning and their value. Family and friends and property are to be enjoyed at their best only if they form elements in that supreme good, which consists in having a place in the life and activities of the city itself.

When all due allowance is made for the rhetorical exaggeration natural to the occasion, the fact remains that the Funeral Oration was expressing a perfectly genuine ideal of Greek political life. This life had a quality of intimacy which it is very difficult for the modern man to associate with politics. Modern states are relatively so large, so remote, so impersonal, that they cannot fill the place in modern life that the city filled in the life of a Greek. The Athenian's interests were less divided, fell less sharply into compartments unconnected with one another, and they were all centered in the city. His art was a civic art. His religion, in so far as it was not a family matter, was the religion of the city, and his religious festivals were civic celebrations. Even his means of livelihood were dependent upon the state far more frequently than is the case in modern life. For the Greek, therefore, the city was a life in common; its constitution, as Aristotle said, was a "mode of life" rather than a legal structure; and consequently the fundamental thought in all Greek political theory was the harmony of this common life. Little distinction was made between its various aspects. For the Greek the theory of the city was at once ethics, sociology, and economics, as well as politics in the narrower modern sense.

The pervasiveness of this common life and the value which the Athenians set upon it is apparent upon the face of their institutions. Rotation in office, the filling of offices by lot, and the enlargement of governing bodies even to unwieldiness were all designed to give more citizens a share in the government. The Athenian knew the arguments against all these devices as well as anyone, but he was prepared to accept the drawbacks for the sake of the advantages as he conceived them. His government was a democracy, "for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few." In modern politics such an expression is likely to be taken not quite literally, unless it be understood of the rather colorless right to cast a ballot. Certainly the holding of office counts for little in the calculations of modern democrats, other than those few for whom politics is a career. For the Athenian it might be a normal incident in the life of almost any citizen. On the strength of figures given by Aristotle in his *Constitution of Athens* it has been estimated that in any year as many as one citizen in six might have some share in the civil government, even though it might amount to no more than jury-service. And if he held no office, he might still take part, regularly ten times each year, in the discussion of political questions at the general assembly of the citizens. The discussion, formal or informal, of public matters was one of the main delights and interests of his life.

Accordingly, the proudest boast of Pericles is that Athens, better than any other state, has found the secret of enabling her citizens to combine the care of their private affairs with a share of public life.

> *An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of policy.*

To have absorbed his entire time with his private business would have seemed to the Athenian of Pericles's time a monstrous perversion of values; Athenian manufacture, especially of pottery and arms, was indeed in its time the best in the Greek world, but even the artisan would have been revolted by a life which left no leisure for an interest in the common business, the affairs of the city.

With this desire that all should participate went necessarily the ideal that none should be excluded because of extraneous differences of rank or wealth.

> *When a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition.*

In other words, no man is born to office and no man buys office, but by an equal opportunity he is sifted down to the position to which his natural gifts entitle him.

Finally, this ideal of a common life in which all might actively share presupposed an optimistic estimate of the natural political capacity of the average man. On the negative side it assumed that severe training and intense specialization were not required in order to form an intelligent judgment of political and social questions. There is no clearer note in Pericles's speech than the pride which the democratic Athenian takes in his "happy versatility."

> *We rely not upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands. And in the matter of education, whereas they [the Spartans] from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face.*

This is, of course, a fling at Sparta with its rigid military discipline, but it is more than that. The spirit of the amateur, both for good and ill, is written large upon Athenian political practice. Athenian wits were sharp and the Athenian was prepared to believe—to his cost—that sharpness of wit might be a substitute for expertness of knowledge and the skill of specialization. Nevertheless, there was truth in the Athenian's boast that by sheer intellectual ability he could surpass all other nations—in art, in craftsmanship, in naval warfare, and in statesmanship.

In the Athenian conception, then, the city was a community in which its members were to live a harmonious common life, in which as many citizens as possible were to be permitted to take an active part, with no discrimination because of rank or wealth, and in which the capacities of its individual members found a natural and spontaneous and happy outlet. And in some considerable measure—probably more than in any other human community—the Athens of Pericles succeeded in realizing this ideal. Nevertheless, it was an ideal and not a fact. Even at its best the democracy had its seamy side which had as much to do with the beginnings of political theory as its successes. The *Republic* of Plato might almost be described as a commentary upon the democratic notion of "happy versatility," a notion which seemed to

Plato nothing less than the ineradicable defect of any democratic constitution. And indeed, with the disastrous outcome of the Peloponnesian War before his eyes, the values might well appear more questionable to him than they had to Pericles. In Thucydides's *History*, too, there is a dreadful irony about the Funeral Oration, when it is placed against the story of Athenian defeat that followed.

On the wider issue of achieving a harmonious common life, also, it must be admitted that the city-state was only a qualified success. The very intimacy and pervasiveness of its life, which was responsible for much of the moral greatness of the ideal, led to defects which were the reverse of its virtues. In general the city-states were likely to be a prey to factional quarrels and party rivalries whose bitterness was as intense as only a rivalry between intimates can be. Thucydides draws a terrible picture of the march of revolution and faction through the cities of Greece as the war progressed.

> *Reckless daring was held to be loyal courage; prudent delay was the excuse of a coward; moderation was the disguise of unmanly weakness; to know everything was to do nothing. Frantic energy was the true quality of a man. . . . The lover of violence was always trusted. . . . The tie of party was stronger than the tie of blood. . . . The seal of good faith was not divine law, but fellowship in crime.*[3]

At a later date, after the war was over, Plato sadly said that, "Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich."[4]

It is precisely because the ideal of harmony was only partly or precariously realized that it forms so persistently a part of Greek political thought. Loyalty tended constantly to be paid to a particular form of government or to a party rather than to the city, and this too easily opened the way to sheer political egoism which was not even loyal to a party. In this respect Athens was certainly better than the average and yet the career of Alcibiades illustrates both the dangers of faction and the unscrupulous selfishness which were possible in Athenian politics.

Though but precariously realized, this ideal of a harmonious common life in which it should be the chief joy of every citizen to have a part remains the guiding thought in Greek political theory. This more than anything else explains the unfamiliarity which a modern reader immediately feels when he first takes up the political writings of Plato and Aristotle. Our commonest political concepts are not there; in particular, the conception of individual citizens endowed with private rights and a state which, by means of the law, protects citizens in their

rights and exacts from them the obligations required for this purpose. Our most familiar political thought contemplates some balance of these two opposed tendencies, enough power to make the state effective but enough liberty to leave the citizen a free agent. The philosopher of the city-state envisaged no such opposition and no such balance. Right or justice means for him the constitution or the organization of a life common to citizens, and the purpose of law is to find for every man his place, his station, his function in the total life of the city. The citizen has rights, but they are not attributes of a private personality; they belong to his station. He has obligations, too, but they are not forced on him by the state; they flow from the need to realize his own potentialities. The Greek was happily free both from the illusion that he had an inherent right to do as he pleased and from the pretension that his duty was the "stern daughter of the voice of God."

Within the circle thus set by the conception of civic harmony and a life in common the Athenian ideal found a place for two fundamental political values, always closely connected in the Greek mind, which formed as it were the pillars of the system. These were freedom and respect for law. It is important to notice how Pericles unites the two almost in the same sentence.

> *There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbour if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant. While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for the authorities and for the laws, having an especial regard to those which are ordained for the protection of the injured as well as to those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgressor of them the reprobation of the general sentiment.*

The activities of the city are carried on with the voluntary cooperation of the citizens, and the main instrumentality of this cooperation lies in the free and full discussion of policy in all its aspects.

> *The great impediment to action is, in our opinion, not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act and of acting too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance but hesitate upon reflection.*

it was just this belief in discussion as the best means to frame public measures and to carry them into effect—this faith that a wise measure or a good institution could bear the examination of many minds—that made the Athenian the creator of political philosophy. It was not that he despised custom, but he never believed that a customary code was binding merely because it was ancient. He preferred to see in custom the presumption of an underlying principle that would bear rational criticism and be the clearer and more intelligible for it. This problem of the interrelation of custom and reason ran through all the theory of the city-state. Thus the skepticism which sees in right nothing but blind custom and which therefore sees in political institutions only a way of gaining advantages for the beneficiaries of the system seemed to Plato the deadliest of all social poisons. But in this respect Plato stood for the native Greek faith that government rests in the last resort upon conviction and not on force, and that its institutions exist to convince and not to coerce. Government is no mystery reserved for the Zeus-born noble. The citizen's freedom depends upon the fact that he has a rational capacity to convince and to be convinced in free and untrammeled intercourse with his fellows. The Greek had, indeed, a somewhat naive belief that he alone of all men was gifted with such a rational faculty, and that the city-state alone of all governments gave free play to it. This was the ground for his somewhat supercilious attitude toward "barbarians," who, as Aristotle said, were slaves by nature.

Freedom thus conceived implies respect for law. The Athenian did not imagine himself to be wholly unrestrained, but he drew the sharpest distinction between the restraint which is merely subjection to another man's arbitrary will and that which recognizes in the law a rule which has a right to be respected and hence is in this sense self-imposed. There is one point upon which every Greek political thinker is agreed, namely, that tyranny is the worst of all governments. For tyranny means just the application of unlawful force: even though it be beneficent in its aims and results, it is still bad because it destroys self-government.

> *No worse foe than the despot hath a state,*
> *Under whom, first, can be no common laws,*
> *But one rules, keeping in his private hands*
> *The law.*[5]

In the free state the law and not the ruler is sovereign, and the law deserves the citizen's respect, even though in the particular case it injures him. Freedom and the rule of law are two supplementing aspects of good government, the secret, as the Greek believed, of the

city-state and the prerogative of the Greek alone of all the peoples of the world.

This is the meaning of Pericles's proud boast that, "Athens is the school of Hellas." The Athenian ideal might be summed up in a single phrase as the conception of free citizenship in a free state. The processes of government are the processes of impartial law which is binding because it is right. The citizen's freedom is his freedom to understand, to discuss, and to contribute, not according to his rank or his wealth but according to his innate capacity and his merit. The end of the whole is to bring into being a life in common, for the individual the finest training-school of his natural powers, for the community the amenities of a civilized life with its treasures of material comfort, art, religion, and free intellectual development. In such a common life the supreme value for the individual lies just in his ability and his freedom to contribute significantly, to fill a place however humble in the common enterprise of civic life. It was the measure of the Athenian's pride in his city that he believed that here, for the first time in human history, the means for realizing this ideal had been approximately realized. It is the measure of his success that no later people has set before itself the ideal of civic freedom uninfluenced by his institutions and his philosophy.

Footnotes

1 The constitution of Cleisthenes, whose reforms were adopted in 507 B.C. Minor changes were made from time to time, largely in the direction of increasing the number of magistrates chosen by election and lot and also the number of paid services, both devices of popular government, but the reforms of Cleisthenes established the constitution of Athens as it was during the period of Athens' greatest power and as it remained. There was a brief oligarchic reaction at the close of the Peloponnesian war but the old forms were restored in 403.

2 Thucydides, Bk. II, 35–46. The quotations are taken from Benjamin Jowett's translation, second edition, Oxford 1900.

3 Bk. III, 82.

4 *Republic*, Bk. IV, 422e.

5 Euripides, *The Suppliants*, ll. 429–432 (Way's trans.).

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3
political thought before Plato

The great age of Athenian public life fell in the third quarter of the fifth century B.C., while the great age of political philosophy came only after the downfall of Athens in her struggle with Sparta. Here, as in so many cases in history, reflection followed achievement, and principles were abstractly stated only after they had long been acted upon. The Athenian of the fifth century was not much given either to the reading or the writing of books and, moreover, even if political treatises were written before the time of Plato, not much has been preserved. Nevertheless there are clear indications that much active thought and discussion were expended upon political problems during the fifth century and also that many of the conceptions found later in Plato and Aristotle had already crystallized. The origin and development of these ideas cannot be properly traced, but the atmosphere of opinion must be suggested in which the more explicit political philosophy of the next century could evolve.

Popular Political Discussion

That the Athenians of the fifth century were immersed in the discussion of politics need scarcely be said. Public concerns and the conduct of public affairs were their great topics of interest. The Athenian lived in an atmosphere of oral discussion and conversation which it is difficult for the modern man to imagine. It is certain that every sort of interesting political question was actively canvassed by the curious and inquiring minds of Athenian citizens. Indeed, the circumstances could hardly have been more favorable to certain sorts of political inquiry. The Greek was almost forced to think of what would now be called comparative government. Throughout the length and breadth of the Greek world he found a great variety of political institutions, all indeed of the city-state type, but still capable of very great differences. At the very least there was one contrast which every Athenian must have heard discussed from the time he was old enough to follow conversation at all, that between Athens and Sparta, the types of the progressive and the conservative state, or of the democratic and the aristocratic state. Then in the east there was always the

terrible shadow of Persia which could never be long out of any Greek's consciousness. He hardly counted it, indeed, as a genuine government, or at all events he counted it such a government as only the barbarian merited, but it formed the dark background upon which he projected his own better institutions. As his travels took him still farther afield—to Egypt, to the western part of the Mediterranean, to Carthage, to the tribes of the Asiatic hinterland—he found continually new material for comparison.

That the Greek of the fifth century had formed already a lively curiosity about the queer laws and institutions which filled his world is amply proved by the fund of anthropological lore embodied by Herodotus in his *History*. The strange customs and manners of foreign peoples form a regular part of his stock in trade. Behavior which in one country is looked upon as expressing the greatest piety and goodness is regarded in another with indifference or perhaps even with loathing. Each man naturally prefers the customs of his own country, and though there may be little in these customs which is intrinsically superior to those of another country, the life of every man must be lived in accord with some standards. Human nature needs the piety that belongs to some sort of observance. Herodotus looked with a curious and a tolerant eye, but withal respectfully, upon the strange medley that he revealed. He considers it the most certain evidence of Cambyses's madness that he despised and insulted the religious rites of other nations besides the Persians. "It is, I think, rightly said in Pindar's poem that 'use and wont is lord of all.' "[1]

Even in this very unphilosophical book there is one rather startling bit of evidence of the lengths to which popular thought in Greece had gone in theorizing about government. This is the passage[2] in which seven Persians are represented as discussing the relative merits of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Most of the stock arguments appear: The monarch tends to degenerate into a tyrant, while democracy makes all men equal before the law. But democracy readily becomes mob-rule and a government by the best men is certainly preferable. And nothing can be better than the rule of the one best man. This is a genuine Greek touch which Herodotus certainly did not learn in Persia. This standard classification of the forms of governments, then, was a bit of popular theorizing long antedating anything known as political philosophy. When it occurs in Plato and Aristotle it is already a commonplace which need not be taken too seriously.

In the beginnings of political thought no doubt disinterested curiosity about foreign countries counted for something, but this was certainly not the main motive. The essential condition was the rapidity

with which Athenian government itself had changed and the tenseness of the struggles by which the changes had come about. At no date within the historical era had there been a time when Athenian life—or indeed Greek life—had been mainly regulated by unquestioned custom. Sparta indeed could pose as a marvel of political stability but the Athenian had perforce to take pride in progress, since not much could be said for the antiquity of his institutions. The final triumph of democracy was not much older than the political career of Pericles; the constitution itself went back only to the last years of the sixth century; and the beginning of the democracy, counting from the establishment of popular control over the courts by Solon, was less than a century older. Moreover, from Solon on the general issues of Athenian domestic politics had been the same. The underlying causes were economic and the issue was between aristocracy, dominated by the old and well-born families whose property was in land, and democracy, dominated by the interests of foreign trade and aiming to develop Athenian power upon the sea. Already Solon could boast that the purpose of his legislation was to see fair play between the rich and the poor, and this difference of interest was still for Plato the fundamental cause of disharmony in Greek government. Athenian history, and indeed the history of the Greek cities generally, had been for at least two centuries the arena of active party-struggle and the scene of rapid constitutional change.

Only occasionally is it possible to catch a glimpse that enables one to guess how intense the discussion of political questions must have been that accompanied these struggles. In particular, the triumph of the democracy at Athens was the occasion of at least one astonishing bit of political description which probably did not stand alone and which serves to show how well the underlying economic causes of the political changes were understood. This is the little essay on the *Constitution of Athens*, written by some disgruntled aristocrat and formerly attributed (falsely) to Xenophon.[3] The author sees in the Athenian constitution at once a perfect instrument of democracy and a thoroughly perverted form of government. He sees also that the roots of democratic power are in overseas commerce and in the consequent importance of the navy which, under ancient conditions, was the typically democratic branch of the military system, just as the heavy-armed infantry was the typically aristocratic branch. Democracy is a device for exploiting the rich and putting money into the pockets of the poor. The popular courts he regards as merely a clever way of distributing pay to the six thousand jurymen and of compelling Athens's allies to spend their money in Athens while they wait to get their

judicial business transacted. Like Plato later he complains that in a democracy one cannot even tell a slave when he jostles one in the street. It is obvious that Plato's satirical picture of the democratic state in Book VIII of the *Republic* was no new theme.

There is other evidence also that the Athenian public was no stranger to the discussion of the most radical programs of social change. Thus Aristophanes in his *Ecclesiazusae*, which was performed about 390, was able to make a comedy out of the idea of women's rights and the abolition of marriage, which has strongly suggested a relation to the communism put forward seriously by Plato at about the same time. Women are to oust men from politics; marriage is to be discarded, children are to be kept in ignorance of their true parents and are to be all equally the sons of their elders; labor is to be performed only by slaves; and gambling, theft, and lawsuits are to be abolished. The relation of all this to the *Republic* is obscure, since it is not known whether Aristophanes or Plato published first.[4] But this is not the really interesting point. Aristophanes seems to be lampooning not a speculative philosophy but the utopian ideas of a radical democracy. And since the primary requirement of comedy is that it should go over the footlights, his audience must have known what he was talking about. It is an obvious inference that, early in the fourth century at least, an Athenian audience found nothing incomprehensible in a thoroughly subversive criticism of their political and social system. Again Plato was not an innovator; he was merely trying to take the social position of women seriously, a serious question then as now in spite of the hare-brained treatment it may receive.

Order in Nature and Society

It is clear, then, that active thought and discussion of political and social questions preceded explicit political theory and that isolated political ideas, of more or less importance in themselves, were matters of common knowledge before Plato tried to incorporate them in a well-rounded philosophy. But there were current also certain general conceptions, not exclusively political in their nature, but forming a kind of intellectual point of view, within which political thought developed and which for the first time it made explicit. Here too the conceptions were present and had been expressed before they were abstractly stated as philosophical principles. Such assumptions are elusive but important, for they largely determine what sort of explanations are felt to be intellectually satisfying and therefore the direction that later theories will try to take.

As was said in the preceding chapter, the fundamental thought in the Greek idea of the state was the harmony of a life shared in common by all its members. Solon commended his legislation as producing a harmony or a balance between the rich and the poor in which each party received its just due.[5] The part which ideas of harmony and proportion played in Greek conceptions both of beauty and of morals has been too often emphasized to need repeating. These ideas appeared at the very beginning of Greek philosophy, when Anaximander tried to picture nature as a system of opposite properties (like heat and cold, for instance) which are "divided off" from an underlying neutral substance. Harmony or proportion or, if one prefers, "justice" is an ultimate principle in all the earliest attempts at a theory of the physical world. "The sun will not overstep his measures," said Heraclitus; "if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out." The Pythagorean philosophy in particular regarded harmony or proportion as a basic principle in music, in medicine, in physics, and in politics. In a figure of speech that still persists in English, justice is described as a "square" number. This regard for measure or proportion as an ethical quality is registered in the famous proverb, "Nothing too much." The same ethical idea in a literary form appears in Euripides's *Phoenician Maidens* when Jocasta urges her son to moderation, begging him to honor

> *Equality, which knitteth friends to friends,*
> *Cities to cities, allies unto allies.*
> *Man's law of nature is equality.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Measures for men equality ordained*
> *Meting of weights and number she assigned.*[6]

At the start, then, the fundamental idea of harmony or proportionality was applied indifferently as a physical and as an ethical principle and was conceived indifferently as a property of nature or as a reasonable property of human nature. The first development of the principle, however, took place in natural philosophy and this development reacted in turn upon its later use in ethical and political thought. In physics measure or proportion came to have a definite and somewhat technical significance. It meant that the details or the particular events and objects that made up the physical world were to be explained on the hypothesis that they were variations or modifications of an underlying substance which in essence remained the same. The contrast here is between fleeting and ever-changing particulars and an unchangeable "nature" whose properties and laws are eternal. This

conception as a physical principle culminated in the formulation (late in the fifth century) of the atomic theory, according to which the unchanging atoms, by various combinations, produce all the variety of objects that the world holds.

The interest in physical nature which produced this brilliant first approximation to a scientific point of view lasted right through the fifth century, but at about the middle of that century a change of interest began to make its appearance. This was a swing in the direction of humanistic studies, such as grammar, music, the arts of speech and writing, and ultimately psychology, ethics, and politics. The reasons for this change, which came to have its chief center at Athens, were in the first place a growth of wealth, an increasing urbanity of life, and the feeling that a higher level of education was needed, especially in those arts, like public speaking, which had a direct relation to a successful career in a democratic government. The instruments by which the change was initiated were those itinerant teachers known as Sophists, who made their living—sometimes a very opulent living—by offering instruction to such as were able to pay for it. But the force by which the change of interest was consummated was the tremendous personality of Socrates, supplemented by the incomparable representation of that personality in the Dialogues of Plato. This change amounted in its results to an intellectual revolution, for it turned philosophy definitely away from physical nature and toward humanistic studies—psychology, logic, ethics, politics, and religion. Even where the study of the physical world persisted, as with Aristotle, the explanatory principles were drawn largely from the observation of human relationships. Never again, from the death of Socrates down to the seventeenth century, was the study of external nature for its own sake, irrespective of its relation to human affairs and interests, a matter of primary concern to the great mass of thinkers.

So far as the Sophists were concerned, they had no philosophy; they taught what well-to-do students were willing to pay for. But none the less some of them at least stood for a new point of view as compared with the hitherto prevailing interest of philosophy in the discovery of a permanent substratum for physical change. On its positive side this new point of view was simply humanism—the twisting of knowledge toward man as its center. On the negative side it implied a kind of skepticism toward the older ideal of a detached knowledge of the physical world. This is the most plausible understanding of Protagoras's famous saying that, "Man is the measure of all things, of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not." In other words, knowledge is the creation of the senses and other human faculties and so is a strictly human enterprise. Nothing that Plato says about Protagora

justifies the notion that he meant really to teach that anything is true which anyone chooses to believe, though Plato himself thought that this was what he ought to mean. This would be, indeed, a suicidal doctrine for a professional teacher. What Protagoras presumably meant is that "the proper study of mankind is man."

If, however, it was really the object of the new humanism to set entirely aside the ways of thinking followed by the older physical philosophy, it failed utterly. What it succeeded in doing was to give a new interest and a new direction. The earlier philosophers had gradually come to conceive of physical explanation as the discovery of simple and unchanging realities to the modification of which they might attribute the changes that everywhere appear upon the face of concrete things. But the Greeks of the fifth century had become familiar—through their contacts with foreign peoples and through rapid changes of legislation in their own states—with the variety and the flux of human custom. What more natural, then, than that they should find in custom and convention the analogue of fleeting appearances and should seek again for a "nature" or a permanent principle by which the appearances could be reduced to regularity? The substance of the physical philosophers consequently reappeared as a "law of nature," eternal amid the endless qualifications and modifications of human circumstance. If only such a permanent law could be found, human life might be brought to a degree of reasonableness. Thus it happened that Greek political and ethical philosophy continued along the ancient line already struck out by the philosophy of nature—the search for permanence amid change and for unity amid the manifold.

The question remained, however, as to what form this permanent element in human life should take. What really is the unchanging core of human nature which all men have in common, whatever may be the veneer of "second nature" which habit and custom have laid over the surface? What are the permanent principles of human relationship which remain after due allowance has been made for all the curious forms in which conventionality has clothed it? Obviously, the mere presumption that man has a nature and that some forms of relationship are right and proper in no way settles what the principle shall be. Moreover, what will be the consequence of finding it? How will the customs and the laws of one's own nation look when compared with the standard? Will it enforce the substantial wisdom and reasonableness of the traditional pieties or will it be subversive and destructive? If men discover how to be "natural," will they still be faithful to their families and loyal to their states? Thus was thrown into the caldron of political philosophy that most difficult and ambiguous of all conceptions, the natural, as the solvent for the complications, psychological

and ethical, which actual human behavior presents. Many solutions were offered, depending on what was conceived to be natural. Except for the skeptics, who finally declared in utter weariness that one thing is as natural as another and that use and wont are literally "lord of all," everyone agreed that something is natural. That is to say, some law does exist which, if understood, would tell why men behave as they do and why they think some ways of doing are honorable and good, others base and evil.

Nature and Convention

There is ample evidence that this great discussion about nature *versus* convention was spread wide among the Athenians of the fifth century. It might, of course, as frequently it has done since, form the defense of the rebel, in the name of a higher law, against the standing conventions and the existing laws of society. The classic instance of this theme in Greek literature is the *Antigone* of Sophocles, perhaps the first time that an artist exploited the conflict between a duty to human law and a duty to the law of God. Thus when Antigone is taxed with having broken the law by performing the funeral rites of her brother, she replies to Creon:

> *Yea, for these laws were not ordained of Zeus,*
> *And she who sits enthroned with gods below,*
> *Justice, enacted not these human laws.*
> *Nor did I deem that thou, a mortal man,*
> *Could'st by a breath annul and override*
> *The immutable unwritten laws of Heaven.*
> *They were not born to-day nor yesterday;*
> *They die not; and none knoweth whence they sprang.*[7]

This identification of nature with the law of God and the contrast of convention with the truly right was destined to become almost a formula for the criticism of abuses, a role in which the law of nature has appeared again and again in the later history of political thought. In this role the contrast occurs also in Euripides, who uses it to deny the validity of social distinctions based on birth, even in that critical case for Greek society, the slave:

> *There is but one thing bringeth shame to slaves,*
> *The name: in all else ne'er a slave is worse*
> *Than free men, so he bear an upright soul.*[8]

And again,

The honest man is Nature's nobleman.[9]

The critical Athenian of the fifth century was quite aware that his society had its seamy side and the critic was prepared to appeal to natural right and justice as against the adventitious distinctions of convention.

On the other hand, it is by no means necessary that nature should be conceived as setting a rule of ideal justice and right. Justice may itself be thought of as a convention having no other basis than the law of the state itself, and nature may figure as, in any usual sense, non-moral. Such a view is associated with the later Sophists who apparently found it profitable to shock conservative sensibilities by denying that slavery and nobility of birth are "natural." Thus the orator Alcidamas is credited with saying, "God made all men free; nature has made no man a slave." Most shocking of all, the sophist Antiphon denied that there was "naturally" any difference between a Greek and a barbarian. The end of the fifth century was a time when the dearest prejudices of the fathers were being dissected by and for a not-too-reverent younger generation.

Fortunately something is known of the political ideas of this sophist Antiphon since a small fragment remains of his book *On Truth*.[10] He asserted flatly that all law is merely conventional and hence contrary to nature. The most advantageous way to live is to hold the law in respect before witnesses, but when one is not observed to "follow nature," which means to consult one's own advantage. The evil of breaking the law is in being seen and rests only "on opinion," but the bad consequences of going against nature are inevitable. Most of what is just according to law is against nature, and men who are not self-assertive usually lose more than they gain. Legal justice is of no use to those who follow it; it does not prevent injury or correct the injury afterward. For Antiphon "nature" is simply egoism or self-interest. But obviously he was setting up self-interest itself as a moral principle in opposition to what is called moral. The man who followed nature would always do the best he could for himself.

These fragments show clearly that the radical speculation about justice with which Plato begins the *Republic* were not the inventions of his own imagination. The argument of Thrasymachus, that justice is only "the interest of the stronger," since in every state the ruling class makes those laws which it deems most conducive to its own advantage, is quite in the same spirit. Nature is not a rule of right but a rule of strength. A similar point more elaborated is made by Callicles in the

Gorgias, when he argues that natural justice is the right of the strong man and that legal justice is merely the barrier which the multitude of weaklings puts up to save itself. "If there were a man who had sufficient force . . . he would trample under foot all our formulas, and spells, and charms, and all our laws which are against nature." [11] In the same vein was the famous speech of the Athenian ambassadors to Melos in Thucydides: "Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their own nature they rule wherever they can." [12] It seems quite clear that Thucydides meant this speech to express the spirit of Athens's policy toward her allies.

Of course, the theory which identifies nature with egoism need not carry quite such anti-social implications as it seems to have in Antiphon or as Plato gives it in speeches of Callicles. Glaucon in Book II of the *Republic* develops it more moderately as a kind of social contract, by which men agree together not to do injuries, in order that they may escape injury at the hands of their fellows. The rule would still be egoism, but enlightened self-interest might be compatible with law and justice, as the most feasible way of living together. This view, though not an invitation to lawlessness, is still not compatible with the idea that the city is a life in common. This cool way of holding a fellow citizen at arm's length until one is sure he can get as much as he gives is not in the spirit of a "community." Accordingly, Aristotle argues against it in the *Politics*,[13] where he attributes it to the Sophist, Lycophron. Since Lycophron was a Sophist of the second generation, a pupil of Gorgias, it is possible that a sort of contract-theory—a utilitarian development of the principle of self-interest—existed early in the fourth century. At a later date this kind of political philosophy reappeared in the Epicureans.

Before the close of the fifth century, then, the contrast of nature and convention had begun to develop in two main directions. The one conceived nature as a law of justice and right inherent in human beings and in the world. This view necessarily leaned to the assumption that the order in the world is intelligent and beneficent; it could be critical of abuses but it was essentially moralist and in the last resort religious. The other conceived nature non-morally, and as manifested in human beings it was self-assertion or egoism, the desire for pleasure or for power. This view might be developed as a kind of Nietzschean doctrine of self-expression, or in its more moderate forms it might become a kind of utilitarianism; the extreme forms could become theories of a definitely anti-social complexion. Already in the fifth century, therefore, there were ideas, not as yet systematic or abstract, which contain suggestions of most of the philosophical systems which were produced in the fourth century. Perhaps it needed only that Athens should fall

upon evil days, as she did at the close of the Peloponnesian War, to make her people contemplative rather than active, and to make her a "school for Hellas" in a sense of which Thucydides never dreamed.

Socrates

The personal agency by which suggestive ideas were turned into explicit philosophy was Socrates, and, curiously enough, all the possibilities were equally indebted to him. The profoundly exciting quality of his personality influenced men of the most different character and induced conclusions which were logically quite incompatible though obviously all derivative from Socrates. Thus Antisthenes could find the secret of his personality in his self-command and could enlarge this into an ethics of misanthropy, while Aristippus could see the secret of the same personality in a boundless power to enjoy and could enlarge this into an ethics of pleasure—two quite different versions of Callicles's strong man who could trample under foot the weakness of sociability. For the time being these philosophies seemed of minor importance, eclipsed as they were by the splendor of Plato and Aristotle, but in the event each set up its ideal of the philosopher and that ideal, in both cases, was Socrates. Nevertheless, it seems certain that more of Socrates's personality and a juster conception of his ideas must have gone into the teaching of his greatest pupil, Plato. But in all of Socrates's pupils was consummated the humanistic reaction in which the Sophists began. The great interest of his mature years at least was ethics, in short, the puzzling question about the multitude of local and changeable conventions and the true and abiding right.

Unlike the Sophists, however, he carried into his humanism the rational tradition of the older physical philosophy. This is the meaning of the doctrine most characteristically imputed to him, the belief that virtue is knowledge and so can be learned and taught, and also of the method which Aristotle attributes to him, the pursuit of precise definition. For given these two, the discovery of a valid general rule of action is not impossible, and imparting it by means of education is not impracticable. Or to state it in somewhat different words, if ethical concepts can be defined, a scientific application of them in specific cases is possible, and this science may then be used to bring about and maintain a society of demonstrable excellence. It is this vision of a rational, demonstrable science of politics, which Plato pursued throughout his life.

What exactly were Socrates's conclusions about politics is not known. But in general the implications of identifying virtue with

knowledge are too clear to be missed. Socrates must have been an outspoken critic of the Athenian democracy, with its presumption that any man can fill any office. This is broadly suggested in the *Apology* and practically stated by Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*;[14] and in any case Socrates's trial and conviction are a little hard to understand unless there was "politics" somewhere behind it. It may very well be, then, that some considerable measure of the political principles developed in the *Republic* really belonged to Socrates and were learned directly from him by Plato. However this may be, the intellectualist cast of the *Republic*, the inclination to find salvation in an adequately educated ruler, is certainly an elaboration of Socrates's conviction that virtue, political virtue not excluded, is knowledge.

Footnotes

1 Herodotus, Bk. III, 38.
2 Bk. III, 80–82.
3 Translated by H. G. Dakyns in *Xenophon's Works*, Vol. II; also by F. Brooks in *An Athenian Critic of Athenian Democracy*, London, 1912. The probable date is about 425 B.C.
4 Various hypotheses are discussed by James Adam in his edition of the *Republic*, Vol. I, pp. 345 ff. Communism of women might be sufficiently familiar to readers of Herodotus. See Bk. IV, 104, 180. See also Euripides, Fr. 655 (Dindorf).
5 The poem is quoted by Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory* (1925), pp. 43 f.
6 Ll. 536–542 (Way's trans.).
7 Ll. 450–457 (F. Storr's trans.). A passage in Lysias (*Against Andocides*, 10) suggests that the idea came from a speech of Pericles.
8 *Ion*, ll. 854–6 (Way's trans.).
9 Fr. 345 (Dindorf); trans. by E. Barker.
10 *Oxyrhinchus Papyri*, No. 1364, Vol. XI, pp. 92 ff. Also in Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory, Plato and his Predecessors* (1925), pp. 83 ff. The Sophist Antiphon is not to be confused with the Antiphon who led the oligarchical revolt at Athens in 411, though he was a contemporary.
11 484a (Jowett's trans.).
12 Bk. V, 105.
13 1280 b 12.
14 Bk. I, ch. ii, 9.

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4
Plato: the *Republic*

The imperial ambitions of Athens perished with her defeat in the Peloponnesian War, but though her rôle was changed, her influence upon Greece, and ultimately upon the whole of the ancient world, was by no means diminished. After the loss of her empire she became more and more the educational center of the Mediterranean world, a position which she retained even after her political independence had vanished and indeed far down into the Christian Era. Her schools of philosophy and science and rhetoric were the first great institutions in Europe devoted to higher education and to the research which necessarily accompanies advanced instruction, and to them came students from Rome and all parts of the ancient world. Plato's Academy was the first of the philosophical schools, though Isocrates, who taught especially rhetoric and oratory, probably opened his school a few years earlier. Aristotle's school at the Lyceum was opened some fifty years later, and the two other great schools, the Epicurean and the Stoic, began some thirty years after Aristotle.

Those who have mastered the fine spontaneity, both of life and of art, in the Periclean Age can hardly avoid looking upon this academic specialization of Athenian genius as a decline. Probably it is true that the Greeks would not have turned to philosophy, at least in the manner they did, had the life of Athens remained as happy and as prosperous as it seemed to be when Pericles's Funeral Oration struck its dominant note. And yet no one can doubt that the teaching of the Athenian Schools played as large a part in European civilization as the art of the fifth century. For these Schools mark the beginning of European philosophy, especially in its relations with politics and the other social studies. In this field the writings of Plato and Aristotle were the first great pioneering operations of the European intellect. At the start they have only rudimentary beginnings and nothing that can properly be called a body of sciences, distinguished and classified in the way that now seems obvious. The subjects and their interrelations were in process of creation. But by the time the *corpus* of Aristotelian writings was completed in 323, the general outline of knowledge—into philosophy, natural science, the sciences of human conduct, and the criticism of art—was fixed in a form that is recognizable for any later age of European thought. Certainly no scholar can afford to belittle the advancing specialization and the higher standard of professional accuracy which came with the Schools, even though it brought something academic and remote from civic activity.

The Need for Political Science

Plato was born about 427 B.C. of an eminent Athenian family. Many commentators have attributed his critical attitude toward democracy to his aristocratic birth, and it is a fact that one of his relatives was prominently connected with the oligarchic revolt of 404. But the fact can be perfectly well explained otherwise; his distrust of democracy was no greater than Aristotle's, who was not noble by birth nor even Athenian. The outstanding fact of Plato's intellectual development was his association as a young man with Socrates, and from Socrates he derived what was always the controlling thought of his political philosophy—the idea that virtue is knowledge. Otherwise stated, this meant the belief that there is objectively a good life, both for individuals and for states, which may be made the object of study, which may be defined by methodical intellectual processes, and which may therefore be intelligently pursued. This in itself explains why Plato must in some sense be an aristocrat, since the standard of scholarly attainment can never be left to numbers or popular opinion. Coming to manhood at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War, he could hardly be expected to share Pericles's enthusiasm for the "happy versatility" of democratic life. His earliest thought on politics, that recorded in the *Republic*, fell just at the time when an Athenian was most likely to be impressed by the discipline of Sparta and before the hollowness of that discipline was made evident by the disastrous history of the Spartan Empire.

In the autobiography attached to the Seventh Letter[1] Plato tells how, as a young man, he had hoped for a political career and had even expected that the aristocratic revolt of the Thirty (404 B.C.) would bring substantial reforms in which he might bear a part. But experience with oligarchy soon made the democracy seem like a golden age, though forthwith the restored democracy proved its unfitness by the execution of Socrates.

> *The result was that I, who had at first been full of eagerness for a public career, as I gazed upon the whirlpool of public life and saw the incessant movement of shifting currents, at last felt dizzy . . . and finally saw clearly in regard to all states now existing that without exception their system of government is bad. Their constitutions are almost beyond redemption except through some miraculous plan accompanied by good luck. Hence I was forced to say in praise of the correct philosophy that it affords a vantage-point from which we can discern in all cases what is just for communities and for individuals; and that accordingly the human race will not see better days until either the stock of those*

> *who rightly and genuinely follow philosophy acquire political authority, or else the class who have political control be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers.*[2]

It is exceedingly tempting to see in this passage an important reason for the founding of Plato's School, though rather curiously the School is not mentioned in the Letter. The date must have been within a few years after the conclusion of his rather extensive travels and his return to Athens in 388. Doubtless the Academy was not founded exclusively for any single purpose and therefore it would be an exaggeration to say that Plato intended to build an institution for the scientific study of politics and the training of statesmen. Specialization had not yet reached this point, and Plato hardly thought of the need for the philosopher in politics as a need for men trained *ad hoc* in the professions of administration and legislation. He thought of it rather as a need for men in whom an adequate intellectual training had sharpened the perception of the good life and who were therefore prepared to discriminate between true and false goods and between adequate and inadequate means of attaining the true good. The problem was an outgrowth of the distinction between nature and convention which had been before the minds of reflective Greeks during the second half of the fifth century. It was, therefore, in Plato's conception, an important part of the general problem of discriminating true knowledge from appearance, opinion, and downright illusion. To it no branch of advanced study, such for example as logic or mathematics, was irrelevant. At the same time it would be hard to believe that Plato, convinced as he was that such knowledge and its acquisition by rulers was the only salvation for states, did not hope and expect that the Academy would disseminate true knowledge and philosophy, not spurious arts such as rhetoric. Certainly he believed later that statesmanship is the supreme or "kingly" science.

In 367 and 361 Plato made his famous journeys to Syracuse to aid his friend Dion in the education and guidance of the young king Dionysius in whose accession he saw what he hoped was the auspicious occasion for a radical political reform—a youthful ruler with unlimited power and a willingness to profit by the combined advice of a scholar and of an experienced statesman. The story is told with great vividness in the Seventh Letter. Plato soon found that he had been wholly misled by the report of Dionysius's willingness to take advice and to apply himself either to study or to business. The project was a complete failure, and yet it does not appear that there was anything essentially visionary about Plato's purposes. The advice contained in his

letters to Dion's followers is sound and moderate, and it seems clear that Dion's plans were wrecked by his own failure to meet the Syracusans with a conciliatory policy. Some parts of Plato's Seventh Letter imply that he perceived the great importance for the whole Greek world of a strong Greek power in Sicily to offset the Carthaginians,[3] which was certainly a statesman-like project, and if he believed that an adequate power was impossible without monarchy, this was a conclusion which the Hellenization of the East by Alexander did much to justify. So far as the Sicilian adventure concerned Plato personally, he manifestly felt that no serious scholar who, for a generation, had been preaching the doctrine that politics required philosophy could refuse the support which Dion asked.

> *I feared to see myself at last altogether nothing but words, so to speak—a man who would never willingly lay hand to any concrete task.*[4]

Matters more or less connected with political philosophy are discussed in many of Plato's Dialogues, but there are three which deal mainly with the subject and from these his theories must be mainly gathered. These are the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*. The *Republic* was written in Plato's mature but comparatively early manhood, probably within a decade of the opening of his School. Though it was certainly intended to be a unit and has so impressed its best critics, its composition may well have extended over several years, and there is good stylistic evidence that the discussion of justice in Book I is relatively early. The *Laws*, on the other hand, was the work of Plato's old age and according to the tradition he was still at work on it when he died in 347. Thirty years (or possibly even more) elapsed, therefore, between the writing of the *Republic* and the writing of the *Laws*. It is plausible to see in the former work the enthusiasm of Plato's first maturity, of the time which saw the founding of the School, and in the latter the disillusionment which came with age, perhaps accentuated by the failure of his venture in Syracuse. The *Statesman* was written between the other two dialogues, but probably nearer the *Laws* than the *Republic*.

Virtue is Knowledge

The *Republic* is a book which defies classification. It fits into none of the categories either of modern social studies or of modern science. In it practically every side of Plato's philosophy is touched upon or de-

veloped, and its range of subject-matter is such that it may be said to deal with the whole of human life. It has to do with the good man and the good life, which for Plato connoted life in a good state, and with the means for knowing what these are and for attaining them. And to a problem so general no side of individual or social activity is alien. Hence the *Republic* is not a treatise of any sort, nor does it belong to politics, or ethics, or economics, or psychology, though it includes all these and more, for art and education and philosophy are not excluded. For this breadth of subject-matter, which is a little disconcerting to an academically trained reader, several facts account. The mere literary mechanics of the dialogue-form which Plato used permitted an inclusiveness and a freedom of arrangement which a treatise could not tolerate. Moreover, when Plato wrote, the various "sciences" mentioned above did not yet have the distinctness that was later somewhat artificially assigned to them. But more important than either literary or scientific technique is the fact to which reference has already been made, that in the city-state life itself was not classified and subdivided so much as it now is. Since all of a man's activities were pretty intimately connected with his citizenship, since his religion was the religion of the state, and his art very largely a civic art, there could be no very sharp separation of these questions. The good man must be a good citizen; a good man could hardly exist except in a good state; and it would be idle to discuss what was good for the man without considering also what was good for the city. For this reason an interweaving of psychological and social questions, of ethical and political considerations, was intrinsic to what Plato was trying to do.

The richness and variety of the problems and subject-matter that figure in the *Republic* did not prevent the political theory contained in the work from being highly unified and rather simple in its logical structure. The main positions developed, and those most characteristic of Plato, may be reduced to a few propositions, and all these propositions were not only dominated by a single point of view but were deduced pretty rigorously by a process of abstract reasoning which was not, indeed, divorced from the observation of actual institutions but did not profess to depend upon it. To this statement the classification of forms of government in Books VIII and IX is in some degree an exception, but the discussion of actual states was introduced to point the contrast with the ideal state and may therefore be neglected in considering the central argument of the *Republic*. Aside from this the theory of the state is developed in a closely concatenated line of thought which is both unified and simple. Indeed, it is necessary to insist that this theory is far too much dominated by a single idea and far too

simple to do justice to Plato's subject, the political life of the city-state. This explains why he felt obliged to formulate a second theory—without however admitting the unsoundness of the first—and also why the greatest of his students, Aristotle, while accepting some of the most general conclusions of the *Republic*, stood much closer on the whole to the form of political philosophy developed in the *Statesman* and the *Laws* than to the ideal state of the *Republic*. The over-simplification of the political theory contained in the earlier work made it, except in respect of very general principles, an episode in the development of the subject.

The fundamental idea of the *Republic* came to Plato in the form of his master's doctrine that virtue is knowledge. His own unhappy political experience reenforced the idea and crystallized it in the founding of the Academy to inculcate the spirit of true knowledge as the foundation for a philosophic statecraft. But the proposition that virtue is knowledge implies that there is an objective good to be known and that it can in fact be known by rational or logical investigation rather than by intuition, guesswork, or luck. The good is objectively real, whatever anybody thinks about it, and it ought to be realized not because men want it but because it is good. In other words, will comes into the matter only secondarily; what men want depends upon how much they see of the good but nothing is good merely because they want it. From this it follows that the man who knows—the philosopher or scholar or scientist—ought to have decisive power in government and that it is his knowledge alone which entitles him to this. This is the belief which underlies everything else in the *Republic* and causes Plato to sacrifice every aspect of the state that cannot be brought under the principle of enlightened despotism.

Upon examination, however, this principle is more broadly based than might at first be supposed. For it appears upon analysis that the association of man with man in society depends upon reciprocal needs and the resulting exchange of goods and services. Consequently the philosopher's claim to power is only a very important case of what is found wherever men live together, namely, that any co-operative enterprise depends upon everyone attending to his own part of the work. In order to see what this involves for the state, it is necessary to know what sorts of work are essential, an investigation which leads to the three classes of which the philosopher-ruler will obviously be the most important. But this dividing of tasks and securing the most perfect performance of each—the specialization of function which is the root of society—depends upon two factors, natural aptitude and training. The first is innate and the second is a matter of experience and education.

As a practical enterprise the state depends on controlling and interrelating these two factors; in other words, upon getting the best human capacity and developing it by the best education. The whole analysis reenforces the initial conception: there is no hope for states unless power lies in the hands of those who know—who know, first, what tasks the good state requires, and, second, what heredity and education will supply the citizens fitted to perform them.

Plato's theory is therefore divisible into two main parts or theses: first, that government ought to be an art depending on exact knowledge and, second, that society is a mutual satisfaction of needs by persons whose capacities supplement each other. Logically the second proposition is a premise for the first. But since Plato presumably derived the first almost ready-formed from Socrates, it is reasonable to suppose that temporally the second was a generalization or extension of the first. The Socratic principle that virtue is knowledge proved to have a larger applicability than appeared on its face.

The Incompetence of Opinion

The thesis that the good is a matter of exact knowledge descends to Plato directly from the already ancient distinction of nature and convention and the quarrel between Socrates and the Sophists. Unless something is good, really and objectively, and unless reasonable men can agree about it, there is no standard for an art of statesmanship such as Plato hoped to found. The question in its various ramifications is spread at large over Plato's earlier dialogues, in the continually recurring analogy between the statesman and the physician or the skilled artisan, in the counter comparison in the *Gorgias* of oratory to the pampering of appetite by cookery, in the lack of method and the pretentiousness attributed to the teaching of the Sophists in the *Protagoras*, and on a more speculative level in the frequently recurring question about the relative positions of reason and inspiration, or of methodical knowledge and intuition. In the same category belong the long discussions of art in the *Republic* and the not very flattering estimate of artists as men who get an effect without knowing how or why. This parallels precisely the charge that statesmen, even the greatest of them, have governed by a kind of "divine madness." Obviously no one can seriously hope to teach divine madness.

The difficulties of the city-state, however, are not in Plato's opinion the result of defective education alone and still less of moral deficiencies in its statesmen or its teachers. They arise rather from a

sickness of the whole body-public and of human nature itself. The public itself, he said, is the great sophist. A constantly recurring note in his ethics is the conviction that human nature is at war with itself, that there is a lower man from whom the higher man must at all costs save himself. It was this which made Plato seem to the Fathers of the Church "almost a Christian." Quite gone is the faith in "happy versatility" so magnificently praised in the Funeral Oration. The happy confidence of a generation that had created both spontaneously and successfully has given place to the doubt and uncertainty of a more critical age. In Plato the hope still persisted that it may be possible to recapture the happier frame of mind, but only through methodical self-examination and rigid self-discipline. In origin, therefore, the *Republic* was a critical study of the city-state as it actually was, with all the concrete defects that Plato saw in it, though for special reasons he chose to cast his theory in the form of an ideal city. This ideal was to reveal those eternal principles of nature which existing cities tried to defy.

Chief among the abuses that Plato attacked was the ignorance and incompetence of politicians, which is the special curse of democracies. Artisans have to know their trades, but politicians know nothing at all, unless it be the ignoble art of pandering to the "great beast." After the disastrous outcome of the Peloponesian War, the generation in which the *Republic* was written was peculiarly a time in which Athenians would be likely to admire the thoroughness and discipline of Sparta. Xenophon went farther than Plato in this direction, and indeed Plato never could have admired whole-heartedly a one-sided military education like that at Sparta, however much he might admire the devotion to duty that it produced. But it is noticeable that he was more sharply critical of Sparta at the end of his life, when he wrote the *Laws*, than he was in the *Republic*. Moreover, the idea of expert skill professionally trained was one which, in Plato's day, was just dawning upon Greece. Not many years before the Academy was opened a professional soldier, Iphicrates, had astonished the world by showing what a body of light-armed, professionally trained troops could do even against the heavy infantry of Sparta. Professional oratory may be said to have started about the same time with the School of Isocrates. Thus Plato was merely making explicit an idea that was already growing up. What he rightly perceived was that the whole question is much larger than the training of soldiers or orators, or even than training itself. Behind training lies the need of knowing what to teach and what to train men to do. It cannot be assumed that somebody already has the knowledge which shall be taught; what is most urgently needed is more knowledge. The really distinctive thing in Plato is the coupling of training

with investigation, or of professional standards of skill with scientific standards of knowledge. Herein lies the originality of his theory of higher education in the *Republic* and something of this sort, it is tempting to believe, he must have tried to realize in the founding of the Academy.

Incompetence is a special fault of democratic states but there is another defect which Plato saw in all existing forms of government equally. This is the extreme violence and selfishness of party-struggles, which might at any time cause a faction to prefer its own advantage above that of the state itself. The harmony of political life—that adjustment of public and private interests which Pericles boasted had been achieved in Athens—was indeed, as Plato perceived, for the most part an ideal. Loyalty to the city was at best a precariously founded virtue, while the political virtue of ordinary custom was likely to be loyalty to some type of class-government. The aristocrat was loyal to an oligarchical form of constitution, the man of common birth to a democratic constitution, and both alike were only too likely to make common cause with their own kind in another state. Practices which by standards of modern political ethics would be counted treasonable were in Greek politics rather common. The best-known example, but by no means the worst, is Alcibiades, who did not hesitate to intrigue against Athens both with Sparta and Persia, in order to re-establish his own political influence and that of his party. Sparta, which was oligarchic in its form of government, was regularly looked to for support by the oligarchic party of all the cities within her sphere of influence, and in the same way Athens made common cause with the popular factions.

This fierce spirit of factionalism and party-selfishness was manifestly a chief cause of the relative instability of government in the city-state. Plato attributed it largely to the discrepancy of economic interests between those who have property and those who have none. The oligarch is interested in the protection of his property and the collection of his debts whatever hardship this works upon the poor. The democrat is prone to schemes for supporting idle and indigent citizens at public expense, that is, with money taken from the well-to-do. Thus in even the smallest city there are, Plato said, two cities, a city of the rich and a city of the poor, eternally at war with each other. So serious is this condition that Plato can see no cure for factionalism in Greek politics unless there is a profound change in the institution of private property. As a root-and-branch remedy he would abolish it outright, but at the very least he believes it necessary to do away with the great extremes of poverty and wealth. And the education of citizens to prefer civic welfare before everything else is hardly less important than the education

of rulers. Incompetence and factionalism are two fundamental political evils that any plan for perfecting the city-state must meet.

The State as a Type

The theoretical or scientific implications of Plato's principle are not less important for him than the critical. There is a good both for men and for states and to grasp this good, to see what it is and by what means it may be enjoyed, is a matter of knowledge. Men have, indeed, all sorts of opinions about it and all sorts of impressionistic notions about how to reach it, but of opinions there is no end and among them there is little to choose. Knowledge about the good, if it could be attained, would be quite a different sort of thing. There would, in the first place, be some rational guarantee for it; it would justify itself to some faculty other than that by which men hold opinions. And in the second place, it would be one and unchanging, not one thing at Athens and another at Sparta, but the same always and everywhere. In short, it would belong to nature and not to the shifting winds of custom and convention. In man as in other parts of the world there is something permanent, a "nature" as distinct from an appearance, and to grasp nature is just what discriminates knowledge from opinion. When Plato says that it is the philosopher who knows the good, this is no boast of omniscience; it is merely the assertion that there is an objective standard and that knowledge is better than guess-work. The analogy of professional or scientific knowledge is never far from Plato's mind. The statesman ought to know the good of a state as the physician knows health, and similarly he should understand the operation of disturbing or preserving causes. It is knowledge alone which distinguishes the true statesman from the false, as it is knowledge that distinguishes the physician from the quack.

To Plato when he wrote the *Republic* this determination to be scientific implied that his theory must sketch an ideal state and not merely describe an existing state. Though it may seem paradoxical, it is literally true that the *Republic* pictures a utopia not because it is a "romance," as Dunning imagines,[5] but because Plato intended it to be the start of a scientific attack upon the "idea of the good." The statesman was really to know what the good is and consequently what is required to make a good state. He must know also what the state is, not in its accidental variations but as it is intrinsically or essentially. Incidentally, the philosopher's right to rule could only be vindicated if this were shown to be implied by the nature of the state. Plato's state must be a

"state as such," a type or model of all states. No merely descriptive account of existing states would serve his purpose, and no merely utilitarian argument would vindicate the philosopher's right. The general nature of the state as a kind or type is the subject of the book, and it is a secondary question whether actual states live up to the model or not. This procedure accounts for the rather cavalier way in which Plato treats questions of practicability, which are likely to bother the modern reader. It is easy to exaggerate his remoteness from actual conditions, but as he understood the problem, the question whether his ideal state could be produced really was irrelevant. He was trying to show what in principle a state *must be*; if the facts are not like the principle, so much the worse for the facts. Or to put it a little differently, he was assuming that the good is what it objectively is; whether men like it or can be persuaded to want it is another matter. To be sure, if virtue is knowledge, it may be presumed that men will want the good when they find out what it is, but the good will be none the better for that.

Plato's way of proceeding here will be much more intelligible if it is realized that his conception of what would make a satisfactory science of politics is, in a way harking back to the ancient Egyptians, built upon the procedure of geometry. The relation of his philosophy to Greek mathematics was exceedingly close, both because of the influence upon him of the Pythagoreans and because of the inclusion in his own School of at least two of the most important mathematicians and astronomers of the day. There is a tradition, indeed, that he refused to admit students who had not studied geometry. Moreover, Plato himself propounded to his students the problem of reducing the apparently erratic motions of the planets to simple geometric figures and the problem was solved by Eudoxus of Cnidos.[6] This feat produced a scientific theory of the planetary system and also an approximation to a mathematical explanation of any natural phenomenon. In short, the method and the ideal of exact scientific explanation, which appeared in Greek geometry and astronomy and which reappeared in the astronomy and mathematical physics of the seventeenth century, is one strand in the great Platonic tradition. It has its beginning precisely in the generation which saw the founding of the Academy and the writing of the *Republic*.

It is in no way surprising, therefore, that Plato should have imagined that progress in the rational understanding of the good life lay along a similar line. It was obvious to him that the precision of exact science depended upon a grasp of types; there is no geometry unless one is content to deal with idealized figures, neglecting the divergences and complications that occur in every representation of the type. All

that empirical fact can claim, for example in astronomy, is that the types used shall "save the appearances"; in short, that the astronomer's deductions shall yield a result in agreement with what apparently is happening in the heavens. Manifestly the astronomer's types—his true circles and triangles—tell what is "really" happening.[7] In the same manner the *Republic* aims not to describe states but to find what is essential or typical in them—the general sociological principles upon which any society of human beings depends, in so far as it aims at a good life. The line of thought is substantially similar to that which caused Herbert Spencer to argue for a deductive "Absolute Ethics," applying to the perfectly adapted man in the completely evolved society, as an ideal standard of reference for descriptive social studies.[8] The utility or even the possibility of such a project, as conceived either by Plato or Spencer, may be doubted, but it is a gross error to think that Plato intended to loose his imagination for a flight into the regions of fancy.

Reciprocal Needs and Division of Labor

The proposition that the statesman should be a scientist who knows the idea of the good supplied Plato with a point of view from which he could criticise the city-state and also with a method that led to the ideal state. From this point he was led directly to his analysis of the typical state, and here again he found that he could follow the rule of specialization. The frequent analogies between the statesman and other kinds of skilled workers, artisans, or professional men, are in truth more than analogies. This is true because societies arise in the first place out of the needs of men, which can be satisfied only as they supplement each other. Men have many wants and no man is self-sufficient. Accordingly they take helpers and exchange with one another. The simplest example is, of course, the production and exchange of food and the other means of physical maintenance, but the argument can be extended far beyond the economic needs of a society. For Plato it afforded a general analysis for all association of men in social groups. Wherever there is society there is some sort of satisfaction of needs and some exchange of services for this purpose.

This analysis, introduced so simply and unobtrusively by Plato into his construction of the ideal state, was one of the profoundest discoveries which his social philosophy contains. It brought to light an aspect of society which is admittedly of the greatest importance for any social theory and it stated once for all a point of view which the social theory of the city-state never abandoned. Briefly stated it amounts to

this: society is to be conceived as a system of services in which every member both gives and receives. What the state takes cognizance of is this mutual exchange and what it tries to arrange is the most adequate satisfaction of needs and the most harmonious interchange of services. Men figure in such a system as the performers of a needed task and their social importance depends upon the value of the work they do. What the individual possesses, therefore, is first and foremost a status in which he is privileged to act, and the freedom which the state secures him is not so much for the exercise of his free will as for the practice of his calling.

Such a theory differs from one which pictures social relations in terms of contract or agreement and which therefore conceives the state as primarily concerned with maintaining liberty of choice. A theory of the latter sort occurs, as was pointed out in the last chapter, both in the fragment of Antiphon the Sophist and in the remarks on justice by Glaucon early in the second book of the *Republic*.[9] But Plato rejected it because agreement, resting solely upon the will, can never show that justice is intrinsically a virtue. Social arrangements can be shown to rest on nature rather than convention only if it can be shown that what a man does has meaning beyond the mere fact that he wants to do it. How convincing the argument was found is shown by the fact that Aristotle, who was not greatly influenced by most of Plato's argument for his ideal state, was quite at one with him in this. The analysis of the community in the opening pages of the *Politics* was merely a new version of Plato's argument that a society depends upon mutual needs.

But exchange of services implies another principle of almost equal importance, the division of labor and the specializing of tasks. For if needs are satisfied by exchange, each must have more than he needs of the commodity which he offers, just as he must have less than he needs of that which he receives. It is clearly necessary, therefore, that there should be some specialization. The farmer produces more food than he needs while the shoemaker produces more shoes than he can wear. Hence it is advantageous to both that each should produce for the other, since both will be better fed and better clothed by working together than by each dividing his work to make all the various things he needs. This rests, according to Plato, upon two fundamental facts of human psychology, first, that different men have different aptitudes and so do some kinds of work better than others and, second, that skill is gained only where men apply themselves steadily to the work for which they are naturally fitted.

> *We must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing*

which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.[10]

Upon this brief but exceedingly penetrating analysis of society and of human nature Plato's further construction of the state depends.

It turns out, therefore, that the philosopher-ruler is not peculiar but that his claim to power is justified by the same principle which is at work throughout all society. Banish specialization entirely and all social interchange is banished with it. Imagine men with no difference of natural aptitude and the basis for specialization is gone. Take away all training by which natural aptitude is perfected into developed skill and specialization becomes meaningless. These, then, are the forces in human nature upon which society and with it the state have to rely. The question, then, is not whether they shall be used but only whether they shall be used well. Shall men be divided according to their real aptitudes? Shall these aptitudes be wisely and adequately trained to bring them to their most perfect form? Shall the needs which men seek to satisfy cooperatively be their highest and most genuine needs, or merely the wants of their lower and more luxurious natures? These questions can be answered only in the light of what Plato calls inclusively a knowledge of the good. To know the good is to know how to answer them. And this is the special function of the philosopher. His knowledge is at once his right and his duty to rule.

Classes and Souls

It will be clear upon reflection that this argument makes an important assumption which is not explicitly stated by Plato. Individual capacities are assumed to be of such a sort that, when developed by a properly devised and controlled education, they will result in a harmonious social group. The difficulty with existing states has been that education has been wrong; or at all events, if better breeding is needed —and Plato believes that it is—an improvement of existing strains will accomplish the purpose. In other words, he takes for granted that there is nothing radically unsocial or antisocial in well-bred human beings which might result in disharmony precisely because of a complete and perfect development of individual powers. This assumption is not obviously true and many thinkers since Plato have questioned it; some have even gone to the length of supposing the opposite, namely, that socialized training must be more or less repressive of individual self-expression. But this possibility does not enter into Plato's calculations. While the assumption just mentioned is not explicitly stated, it does enter into the argument of the *Republic* at one point which is likely, without ex-

planation, to be a little puzzling. This is the point at which the state is assumed to be merely the individual "writ large" [11] and at which, accordingly, the question about justice is transformed from the search for an individual virtue into the search for a property of the state. The difficulty of the transition, which seems to a modern reader a little artificial, is masked for Plato by the presumption that there is an inherent fitness of human nature for society and of society for human nature, and this fitness he interprets as a parallelism. Both man and the state have a single underlying structure which prevents the good for one from being essentially different from the good for the other.

It must be admitted that this assumption is responsible for much that is most attractive in the ethical ideal of the city-state and in Plato's representation of it. It explains why, in Plato's ethics, there is no ultimate cleft between inclination and duty or between the interests of individuals and those of the society to which they belong. Where such conflicts arise—and the *Republic* was written because they do arise—the problem is one of development and adjustment, not of repression and force. What the unsocial individual needs is a better understanding of his own nature and a fuller development of his powers in accordance with that knowledge. His internal conflict is not an unappeasable strife between what he wants to do and what he ought to do, because in the last resort the full expression of his natural powers is both what he really wants and what he is entitled to have. On the other hand, what the inharmonious society needs is to provide just those possibilities of complete development for its citizens which their needs demand. The problem of the good state and of the good man are two sides of the same question, and the answer to one must at the same time give the answer to the other. Morality ought to be at once private and public and if it is not so, the solution lies in correcting the state and improving the individual until they reach their possible harmony. It may very well be doubted whether, in general terms, any better moral ideal than this has ever been stated.

At the same time Plato's attempt to make one analysis do duty for both the state and the individual yields him a theory much too simple to solve his problem. The analysis of the state shows that there are three necessary functions to be performed. The underlying physical needs must be supplied and the state must be protected and governed. The principle of specialization demands that essential services should be distinguished, and it follows that there are three classes: the workers who produce and the ' guardians," who in turn are divided, though not so sharply, into the soldiers and the rulers, or the philosopher-king if he be a single ruler. But since division of functions rests on difference of aptitude, the three classes depend upon the fact that there are three

kinds of men, those who are fitted by nature to work but not to rule, those who are fit to rule but only under the control and direction of others, and finally those who are fit for the highest duties of statesmanship such as the final choice of means and ends. These three aptitudes imply on the psychological side three vital powers or "souls," that which includes the appetitive or nutritive faculties and which Plato supposes to reside below the diaphragm, that which is executive or "spirited" and which resides in the chest, and that which knows or thinks, the rational soul which is situated in the head. It would seem natural that each soul should have its own special excellence or virtue, and Plato does in fact carry out this plan in part. Wisdom is the excellence of the rational soul and courage of the active, but he hesitates to say that temperance can be confined to the nutritive soul. Justice is the proper interrelation of the three functions, whether of the classes in the state or of the faculties in an individual.

It would probably be a mistake to put too much stress upon this theory of the "three souls." Plato seems never to have tried seriously to develop it, and often in psychological discussion he does not use it. Moreover, it is certainly not true that in the *Republic* the three classes are so sharply separated as his schematic statement of the theory would lead one to expect. The classes are certainly not castes, for membership in them is not hereditary. On the contrary his ideal seems to be a society in which every child born is given the highest training that his natural powers permit him to profit by, and in which every individual is advanced to the highest position in the state that his achievements (his capacity *plus* his education and experience) enable him to fill adequately. Plato in the *Republic* showed himself remarkably free from temperamental class-prejudice, much freer than Aristotle, for example, and freer than he seems to be in the outline of the second-best state in the *Laws*. But when all these allowances are made, the fact remains that the parallelism assumed between mental capacities and social classes is a restricting influence which prevented him from doing justice in the *Republic* to the complexity of the political problems under discussion. The theory obliged him to assume that all the intelligence in the state was concentrated in the rulers, though his repeated references to the skill of the artisans in their own kind of work shows that he did not literally believe this. On the other hand, in their political capacity the workers have nothing to do but obey, which is nearly the same thing as to say that they have no properly political capacity at all. The position to which they are assigned cannot be corrected even by education, because they seem not to need education for civic activity or for participation in the self-governing activities of the community. In this part of the state's life they are onlookers.

This result has often been attributed, as for example by Edward Zeller,[12] to a contempt for artisans and the handicrafts as compared with intellectual labor, but in truth Plato showed a more genuine admiration for manual skill than Aristotle. The explanation is to be found rather in the assumption that good government is nothing but a matter of knowledge and that knowledge is always the possession of a class of experts, like the practice of medicine. According to Plato most men are permanently in the relation to their rulers of a patient to his physician. Aristotle asked a pertinent question on this point when he inquired whether there are not cases where experience is a better guide than the knowledge of an expert.[13] A man who has to live in a house need not rely on a builder to tell him whether it is commodious or not. But Plato's ideas about sound knowledge when he wrote the *Republic* allowed little importance to experience. The result was that he failed to grasp one of the most significant political aspects of the city-state whose civil life he desired to perfect. His distrust of "happy versatility" was so great that he swung to the opposite extreme and allowed to artisans no capacity for public service except their trades. The old free give and take of the town-meeting and the council is utterly gone, and this side of human personality, which the Athenian democrat valued above everything, must be quite eradicated from the masses. So far as the higher activities of life are concerned, they live in a state of tutelage to wiser men.

Justice

The theory of the state in the *Republic* culminates in the conception of justice. Justice is the bond which holds a society together, a harmonious union of individuals each of whom has found his life-work in accordance with his natural fitness and his training. It is both a public and a private virtue because the highest good both of the state and of its members is thereby conserved. There is nothing better for a man than to have his work and to be fitted to do it; there is nothing better for other men and for the whole society than that each should thus be filling the station to which he is entitled.

> *Social justice thus may be defined as the principle of a society, consisting of different types of men . . . who have combined under the impulse of their need for one another, and by their combination in one society, and their concentration on their separate functions, have made a whole which is perfect because it is the product and the image of the whole of the human mind.*[14]

This is Plato's elaboration of the *prima facie* definition of justice as "giving to every man his due." For what is due *to* him is that he should be treated as what he is, in the light of his capacity and his training, while what is due *from* him is the honest performance of those tasks which the place accorded him requires.

To a modern reader such a definition of justice is at least as striking for what it omits as for what it includes. In no sense is it a juristic definition. For it lacks the notion, connoted by the Latin word *ius* and the English word right, of powers of voluntary action in the exercise of which a man will be protected by law and supported by the authority of the state. Lacking this conception Plato does not mean by justice, except remotely, the maintenance of public peace and order; at least, external order is but a small part of the harmony which makes the state. What the state provides its citizens is not so much freedom and protection as a life—all the opportunities for social interchange which make up the necessaries and the amenities of a civilized existence. It is true that in such a social life there are rights, just as there are duties, but they can hardly be said to belong in any peculiar sense to individuals. They are inherent rather in the services or functions that individuals perform. Resting as it does upon the principle that the state is created by mutual needs, the analysis runs necessarily in terms of services and not of powers. Even the ruler is no exception, for he has merely the special function to which his wisdom entitles him. The notion of authority or sovereign power, such as the Roman attached to his magistracies, has practically no part in Plato's political theory, nor indeed in that of any Greek philosopher.

This completes the general outline of Plato's theory of the state. Starting from the conception that the good must be known by methodical study, the theory constructs society around this idea by showing that the principle is implicit in all society. The division of labor and the specialization of tasks are the conditions of social co-operation, and the problem of the philosopher-king is to arrange these matters in the most advantageous way. Because human nature is innately and inherently social, the maximum advantage to the state means also the maximum advantage to citizens. The goal is therefore a perfect adjustment of human beings to the possibilities of significant employment which the state affords. The remainder of Plato's argument might almost be described as a corollary. The only remaining question concerns the means by which the statesman can bring about the adjustment required. Broadly speaking there are only two ways to take hold of this problem. Either the special hindrances to good citizenship may be removed or the positive conditions of good citizenship may be

developed. The first results in the theory of communism and the second in the theory of education.

Property and the Family

Plato's communism takes two main forms which meet in the abolition of the family. The first is the prohibition of private property, whether houses or land or money, to the rulers and the provision that they shall live in barracks and have their meals at a common table. The second is the abolition of a permanent monogamous sexual relation and the substitution of regulated breeding at the behest of the rulers for the purpose of securing the best possible offspring. This bracketing of the two social functions of procreating children and of producing and owning goods was more obvious in a society that lived mainly under a household economy than it is now. A radical innovation in respect to the one coalesced readily with an innovation in respect to the other. Communism in the *Republic*, however, applies only to the guardian class, that is, to the soldiers and rulers, while the artisans are to be left in possession of their private families, both property and wives. How this is to be made consistent with promotion from the lower rank to the higher is not explained. But the truth is that Plato does not take the trouble to work out his plan in much detail. Still more striking is the fact that, in connection with his theory of private property, he does not have anything to say about slaves. It is a fact that Plato's state seemingly might exist without slavery, since no work especially to be done by slaves is mentioned, a respect in which the state of the *Laws* is strikingly different. This has led Constantin Ritter to argue that in the *Republic* slavery is "in principle abolished." [15] But it is almost incredible that Plato intended to abolish a universal institution without mentioning it. It is more probable that he merely regarded slavery as unimportant.

Plato was in no way unique in believing that an economic cleavage between the citizens of a state is a most dangerous political condition. In general, the Greeks were quite frank in admitting that economic motives are very influential in determining political action and political affiliation. Long before the *Republic* was written Euripides had divided citizens into three classes, the useless rich who are always greedy for more, the poor who have nothing and are devoured by envy, and the middle class, the sturdy yeomanry, who "save states." [16] The oligarchical state to a Greek meant a state governed by, and in the interest of, the well-born among whom the possession of property is hereditary, while a democratic state was one governed by and for the

"many," who have neither birth nor property. The economic difference was the key to the political distinction, as is quite clear from Plato's account of oligarchy.[17] The importance of economic causes in politics was therefore no new idea, and in believing that great diversity of wealth was inconsistent with good government Plato was following a common conviction which represented Greek experience through many generations. The causes of civic unrest in Athens had been mainly of this sort from at least the days of Solon.

So firmly was Plato convinced of the pernicious effects of wealth upon government that he saw no way to abolish the evil except by abolishing wealth itself, so far as soldiers and rulers are concerned. To cure the greed of rulers there is no way short of denying them the right to call anything their own. Devotion to their civic calling admits no private rival. The example of Sparta, where citizens were denied the use of money and the privilege of engaging in trade, doubtless weighed with Plato in reaching this conclusion. His reasons, however, should be carefully noted. He was not in the least concerned to do away with inequalities of wealth because they are unjust to the individuals concerned. His purpose was to produce the greatest degree of unity in the state, and private property is incompatible with this. The emphasis is characteristic of Greek thought, for when Aristotle criticises communism, he does so not on the ground that it is unfair but on the ground that it would not in fact produce the unity desired. Plato's communism has, therefore, a strictly political purpose. The order of ideas is exactly the reverse of that which has mainly animated modern socialist utopias; he does not mean to use government to equalize wealth, but he equalizes wealth in order to remove a disturbing influence in government.

The same is true also of Plato's purpose in abolishing marriage, since he regards family affection, directed toward particular persons, as another potent rival to the state in competing for the loyalty of rulers. Anxiety for one's children is a form of self-seeking more insidious than the desire for property, and the training of children in private homes he regards as a poor preparation for the whole-souled devotion which the state has a right to demand. But in the case of marriage Plato had other purposes as well. He was appalled at the casualness of human mating, which, as he says, would not be tolerated in the breeding of any domestic animal. The improvement of the race demands a more controlled and a more selective type of union. Finally, the abolition of marriage was probably an implied criticism of the position of women in Athens, where her activities were summed up in keeping the house and rearing her children. To Plato this seemed to deny to the state the services of half its potential guardians. Moreover, he was unable to see

that there is anything in the natural capacity of women that corresponds to the Athenian practice, since many women are as well qualified as men to take part in political or even military duties. The women of the guardian class will consequently share all the work of the men, which makes it necessary both that they shall receive the same education and be free from strictly domestic duties.

To a modern taste there is something a little startling about the coolly unsentimental way in which Plato argues from the breeding of domestic animals to the sexual relations of men and women. It is not that he regards sex casually, for the reverse is emphatically true; in fact, he demands a degree of control and of self-control that has never been realized among any large population. The point is rather that he carries out a line of thought relentlessly and with little regard for difficulties that are manifest to feeling even when they are not explicitly stated. The unity of the state is to be secured; property and family stand in the way; therefore property and marriage must go. There can be no doubt that here Plato spoke the authentic language of doctrinaire radicalism, which is prepared to follow the argument where it may lead. On the score of common sense Aristotle's answer left nothing to be said. It is possible, he pointed out, to unify a state to the point where it ceases to be a state. A family is one thing and a state is something different, and it is better that one should not try to ape the other.

Education

However much importance Plato attached to communism as a means for removing hindrances from the path of the statesman, it was not upon communism but upon education that he placed his main reliance. For education is the positive means by which the ruler can shape human nature in the right direction to produce a harmonious state. A modern reader cannot fail to be astonished at the amount of space devoted to education, at the meticulous care with which the effect of different studies is discussed, or at the way in which Plato frankly assumes that the state is first and foremost an educational institution. He himself called it "the one great thing"; if the citizens are well educated they will readily see through the difficulties that beset them and meet emergencies as they arise. So striking is the part played in Plato's ideal state by education that some have considered this to be the chief topic of the *Republic*. Rousseau said that the book was hardly a political work at all, but was the greatest work on education ever written.[18] Obviously this was no accident but a logical result of the point of view

from which the work was written. If virtue is knowledge, it can be taught, and the educational system to teach it is the one indispensable part of a good state. From Plato's point of view, with a good system of education almost any improvement is possible; if education is neglected, it matters little what else the state does.

This degree of importance being conceded, it follows as a matter of course that the state cannot leave education to private demand and a commercialized source of supply but must itself provide the needed means, must see that citizens actually get the training they require, and must be sure that the education supplied is consonant with the harmony and well-being of the state. Plato's plan is therefore for a state-controlled system of compulsory education. His educational scheme falls naturally into two parts, the elementary education, which includes the training of young persons up to about the age of twenty and culminates in the beginning of military service,[19] and the higher education, intended for those selected persons of both sexes who are to be members of the two ruling classes and extending from the age of twenty to thirty-five. It is necessary to consider these two branches of education separately, as Plato himself does.

The plan for a compulsory, state-directed scheme of education was probably the most important innovation upon Athenian practice which Plato had to suggest, and his insistence upon it in the *Republic* may be interpreted as a running criticism upon the democratic custom of leaving every man to purchase for his children such education as he fancies or as the market affords. In the *Protagoras* he broadly implied that often they give less thought to training their children than to breaking a good colt. The Athenian exclusion of women from education falls under the same criticism. Since Plato believed that there was no difference in kind between the native capacities of boys and girls, he logically concluded that both should receive the same kind of instruction and that women should be eligible to the same offices as men. This, of course, is in no sense an argument for women's rights but merely a plan for making the whole supply of natural capacity available to the state. In view of the importance which education has in the state, it is extraordinary that Plato never discusses the training of the artisans and does not even make clear how, if at all, they are to be included in the plan of elementary instruction. This fact illustrates again the surprising looseness and generality of his conclusions, since his unquestionable intention to promote promising children born of artisan parents seems to be wholly unworkable unless a competitive educational system made selection possible. On the other hand, he did not exclude the artisans and it is an open question whether those commentators,

especially Zeller, are right who regard the omission as evidence of Plato's aristocratic contempt for the workers. It is at least true that he set no great store by general education, much as he relied on selective education for the more gifted youth.

The plan of elementary education sketched in the *Republic* was rather a reform of existing practice than the invention of a wholly new system. The reform may be said roughly to consist in combining the training usually given to the son of an Athenian gentleman with the state-controlled training given to a youthful Spartan and in revising pretty drastically the content of both. The curriculum was therefore divided into two parts, gymnastics for training the body and "music" for training the mind. By music Plato meant especially the study and interpretation of the masterpieces of poetry, as well as singing and playing the lyre. It is easy to exaggerate the influence of Sparta upon Plato's theory of education. Its most genuinely Spartan feature was the dedication of education exclusively to civic training. Its content was typically Athenian, and its purpose was dominated by the end of moral and intellectual cultivation. This is true even of gymnastics, which aims only secondarily at giving physical prowess. Gymnastics might be called a training of the mind through the body, as distinguished from direct training of the mind by music. It is meant to teach such soldierly qualities as self-control and courage, a physical keenness tempered by gentleness, as Plato himself defines it. Plato's plan of training represents therefore an Athenian, not a Spartan, conception of what constitutes an educated man. Any other conclusion would have been unthinkable for a philosopher who believed that the only salvation for states lay in the exercise of trained intelligence.

But while the content of elementary education was mainly poetry and the higher forms of literature, it cannot be said that Plato desired particularly an esthetic appreciation of these works. He regarded them rather as a means of moral and religious education, somewhat in the way that Christians have regarded the Bible.[20] For this reason he proposed not only to expurgate drastically the poets of the past, but to submit the poets of the future to censorship by the rulers of the state, in order that nothing of bad moral influence might fall into the hands of the young. For a man who was a consummate artist himself Plato had a singularly philistine conception of art. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that when he wrote about the moral purpose of art a certain puritanical, almost an ascetic, strain is apparent which seems in general out of character for a fourth-century Greek, though it is a strain which appears elsewhere in Plato. In rejecting the poetic form for the dialogue form Plato is perhaps suggesting that poetry stresses the emotional side of human behavior while the more prose-like dialogue

highlights the rational. Philosophically this is connected with the very sharp contrast of mind and body, most evident in the *Phaedo*, which passed from Plato to Christianity. The poverty which Plato exacts of his rulers perhaps shows the same tendency, as do also the preference which he expressed for a very primitive (non-luxurious) sort of state at the beginning of his construction of the ideal state, and the suggestion accompanying the Myth of the Den that the philosopher may have to be forced to descend from a life of contemplation to take part in the affairs of man. Obviously the rule of philosophers might easily become the rule of saints. Probably the closest analogue that has ever existed to Plato's ideal state is a monastic order.

Undoubtedly the most original as well as the most characteristic proposal in the *Republic* is the system of higher education, by which selected students are to be prepared, between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, for the highest positions in the guardian class. The relation of such a conception of higher education to the founding of the Academy and to the whole plan for a science and art of statemanship has been sufficiently stressed. Unless it be the Academy, there was nothing in Greek education upon which Plato could have built; the idea was entirely and characteristically his own. The higher education of the guardians was in purpose professional and for his curriculum Plato chose the only scientific studies known to him—mathematics, astronomy, and logic. Beyond doubt he believed that these most exact studies are the only adequate introduction to the study of philosophy, and there is little reason to doubt that he expected the philosopher's special object of study—the idea of the good—to yield results of comparable precision and exactness. For this reason the outline of the ideal state properly culminates in the plan for an education in which such studies would be fostered, in which new investigations would be undertaken and new knowledge placed at the disposal of rulers. In order to appreciate the greatness of such a conception it is not necessary to believe that Plato was right in hoping for a science of politics as exact as mathematics. It is hardly fair to demand more of him than that he should have tried to follow the lead which, in his own hands and those of his students, was creating in mathematics perhaps the truest monument to human intelligence.

The Omission of Law

Few books that claim to be treatises on politics are so closely reasoned or so well co-ordinated as the *Republic*. None perhaps contains a line of thought so bold, so original, or so provocative. It is this quality which has made it a book for all time, from which later ages

have drawn the most varied inspiration. For the same reason its greatest importance is general and diffused, rather than the result of specific imitation. The *Republic* was, in the eyes of some, tne greatest of utopias and the whole tribe of utopian philosophers followed it, but this phase of the book interested Plato so little that he was almost careless in carrying through the details of the plan. The true romance of the *Republic* is the romance of free intelligence, unbound by custom, untrammeled by human stupidity and self-will, able to direct the forces even of custom and stupidity themselves along the road to a rational life. The *Republic* is eternally the voice of the scholar, the profession of faith of the intellectual, who sees in knowledge and enlightenment the forces upon which social progress must rely. And indeed, who can say what are the limits of knowledge as a political force, and what society has yet brought to bear upon its problems the full power of trained scientific intelligence?

Yet it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that in the *Republic* Plato, like most intellectuals, simplified his problem beyond what the province of human relations will bear. An enlightened despotism—and Plato is right when he concludes that government by intelligence must be government by the few—cannot be merely assumed to be the last word in politics. The presumption that government is purely a matter of scientific knowledge, which the mass of men can resign into the hands of a few highly trained experts, leaves out of account the profound conviction that there are some decisions which a man must make for himself. This is no argument certainly for "muddling through" in cases where muddling means only the bungling choice of means for recognized ends. But Plato's argument assumes that the choice of ends is exactly comparable with the choice of means for an end already agreed upon, and this appears to be simply not true. His comparison of government to medicine, carried through to its farthest extreme, reduces politics to something that is not politics. For an adult, responsible human being, even though he be something less than a philosopher, is certainly not a sick man who requires nothing but expert care. Among other things he requires the privilege of taking care of himself and of acting responsibly with other like responsible human beings. A principle which reduces political subordination to one type, the relation of those who know to those who do not know, is simpler than the facts.

Not the least significant aspect of the *Republic* is what it omits, namely, law and the influence of public opinion. The omission is perfectly logical, for Plato's argument is unanswerable if his premise is granted. If rulers are qualified merely by their superior knowledge, either the judgment of public opinion upon their acts is irrelevant or else the pretense of consulting it is a mere piece of political Jesuitry by

which the "discontent of the masses" is held in check. Similarly, it is as foolish to bind the hands of the philosopher-king with the rules of law as to force an expert physician to copy his prescription from the recipes in a medical textbook. But in reality the argument begs the question. For it assumes that public opinion is nothing but a muddled representation of what the ruler already knows more clearly, and that law has no meaning other than to give the least bungling rule that will fit an average case. And this is not a description but a caricature. As Aristotle said, the knowledge of a thing in use and by direct experience is different in kind from a scientist's knowledge about it, and presumably it is just this immediate experience of the pressures and burdens of government, of their bearing upon human interests and ends, that public opinion expresses. Presumably also the law contains not merely an average rule but also an accumulation of the results of applying intelligence to concrete cases and also an ideal of equitable treatment of like cases.

At all events the ideal state of the *Republic* was simply a denial of the political faith of the city-state, with its ideal of free citizenship and its hope that every man, within the limits of his powers, might be made a sharer in the duties and privileges of government. For this ideal was founded on the conviction that there is an ineradicable moral distinction between subjection to the law and subjection to the will of another human being, even though that other be a wise and benevolent despot. The difference is that the first is compatible with a sense of freedom and dignity while the second is not. The sense of his own freedom under the law was precisely the element in the city-state upon which the Greek set the highest moral valuation and which made the difference, to his mind, between a Greek and a barbarian. And this conviction, it must be acknowledged, has passed from the Greeks into the moral ideals of most European governments. It was expressed in the principle that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and vague as the meaning of consent is, it is hard to imagine that the ideal itself will disappear. For this reason Plato's omission of law from his ideal state cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a failure to perceive a striking moral aspect of the very society which he desired to perfect.

At the same time it is clear that Plato could not have included the law as an essential element of the state without reconstructing the whole philosophical framework of which the ideal state is a part. Its omission was not a matter of caprice but a logical consequence of the philosophy itself. For if scientific knowledge has always the superiority to popular opinion which Plato supposes, there is no ground for that respect for law which would make it the sovereign power in the state.

Law belongs to the class of convention; it rises through use and wont; it is the product of experience growing slowly from precedent to precedent. A wisdom which arises by rational insight into nature cannot abdicate its claims before the claim of law unless law itself has access to a kind of wisdom different from that which scientific reason possesses. If, then, Plato is wrong in trying to make the state over into an educational institution, if this puts a load upon education which it is not able to bear, the philosophical principles—especially the sharp contrast of nature and convention and of reason and experience—need to be re-examined. It is the suspicion that this might be the case, at least the sense that the theory in the *Republic* had not got to the bottom of all the problems involved, that led Plato in his later years to canvass the place of law in the state and to formulate in the *Laws* another type of state in which law rather than knowledge should be the ruling force.

Footnotes

1 The account of Plato's adventure in Sicily presumes the historical reliability, if not the actual authenticity, of Letters III, VII, and VIII. For this there is now ample authority.
2. Letter VII, 325d–326b; L. A. Post's trans. Plato was writing in 353 B.C. The last sentence echoes the famous passage in the *Republic* (473d) about philosophers becoming kings.
3 332e–333a.
4 Letter VII, 328c.
5 *History of Political Theories, Ancient and Mediaeval* (1905), p. 24.
6 Sir Thomas Heath, *Aristarchus of Samos* (1913), chs. xv, xvi.
7 Cf. the contrast of real astronomy and "star-gazing" (*Republic,* 529b–530c) and of science with computation throughout Plato's account of the higher education in mathematics (522c–527c).
8. *Data of Ethics*, ch. xv.
9 358e ff.
10 *Republic,* 370c.
11 368d.
12 *Plato and the Older Academy*. Trans. by S. F. Alleyne and Alfred Goodwin, 1888, p. 473.
13 *Politics,* 3, 11; 1282a 17 ff.
14 E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory, Plato and his Predecessors* (1925), pp. 176 f.
15 *Platon, seine Leben, seine Schriften, siene Lehre* (1923), Vol. II, p. 596.
16 *The Suppliants,* ll. 238–245.
17 *Republic,* 551d.
18 See also Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).
19 The compulsory military service of Athenian boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty was probably not yet in force when Plato wrote, though it was

adopted not many years after, as Wilamowitz supposes, because of the *Laws* (*Aristoteles und Athen*, 1893, Vol. I, pp. 191 ff.).

20 Poetry is the means a preliterate culture employs to retain and pass on useful information both of a moral and technical sort. Rhythm and rhyme are memory aids as is the story form. The *Odyssey* and the *Illiad* are, thus, not simply "works of art" in the modern sense, but early Greek encyclopedias containing what preliterate Greek elders passed on to their young—including information on everything from morality to ship building. Interestingly enough, in the twentieth century some illiterates in the Balkan mountains have been encountered who can recite the entire *Illiad* and *Odyssey* from memory. See Havelock, *op. cit.* and Albert B. Lord, *A. Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

5

Plato: the *Statesman* and the *Laws*

The later form of Plato's political philosophy, contained in the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, belongs a good many years after that contained in the *Republic*. The two later works show a resemblance and the theory which they contain is in marked contrast with that of the *Republic*; together they present the final results of Plato's reflection upon the problems of the city-state. The *Laws* was definitely a work of his old age, and all critics agree in finding in it evidence of declining powers, though this has very often been exaggerated. In respect to literary quality there is no comparison between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The earlier work is conceded to be the greatest literary masterpiece in the whole range of philosophical writing. The *Laws*, on the other hand, is distinctly hard reading. It is rambling, even when all allowance is made for the liberties in this regard that the dialogue-form permitted; it is wordy and it is repetitious. The tradition that it lacked the author's final revision is plausible. It contains fine passages —passages which competent scholars consider as fine as any in Plato's works—but he has lost either the capacity for, or the interest in, sustained literary effect.

Because of its defects of style the *Laws* has been little read, as compared with the *Republic*, and there has perhaps been a tendency to confuse its decline in literary quality with a decline in intellectual power. This is certainly a mistake. The political philosophy of the *Laws* has not the bold sweep of speculative construction that is found in the *Republic*, but on the other hand in the later form of his theory Plato tried to come to grips with political actualities in a way that he never approached in the earlier work. This accounts in part for its lack of order; it is developed less upon a single train of thought and more upon the complexities of its subject-matter. The *Republic* is a book for all time, because the generality of its principles is almost timeless. But the later form of Plato's thought was more influential in the development of political philosophy by his successors in the ancient world. This is evident in the case of Aristotle, since it is the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, rather than the *Republic*, which formed the point of departure for the *Politics*. In respect to its influence on the discussion of specifically political questions in their theoretical aspects—such, for example, as the constitution of states, their political organization, and especially

the theory of the so-called "mixed" state—it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the *Laws*.

The Readmission of Law

The line of thought which Plato followed in the *Republic* yielded a theory in which everything was subordinated to the ideal of the philosopher-king, whose unique claim to authority is the fact that he alone knows what is good for men and states. The working-out of this line of reflection resulted in the exclusion of law altogether from the ideal state and the conception of the state as an educational institution only, in which the majority of the citizens are in a condition of permanent tutelage to the philosopher-ruler. This ran quite contrary to the deepest convictions of the Greeks about the moral value of freedom under the law and of participation by the citizens in the task of self-government. In this sense the first form of Plato's political theory was one-sided in its devotion to a single principle and inadequate to express the ideals of the city-state. This suspicion in the mind of its author was responsible for the direction which his later thought took. As the name of the dialogue indicates, the *Laws* was written in an attempt to restore law to the place which it occupied in the moral estimation of the Greeks and from which Plato had tried to remove it. The fundamental difference between the theory of the *Republic* and that of the *Laws* is that the ideal state of the former is a government by specially chosen and specially trained men, quite untrammeled by any general regulations, while the state sketched in the latter is a government in which law is supreme, ruler and subject alike being subject to it. But this difference implied drastic changes in all the underlying principles of government, more drastic changes than Plato succeeded in carrying through to a logical conclusion.

It is not uncommon to impute the change from the earlier to the later form of his political theory to the disillusionment which he must have suffered as a consequence of the failure in his attempt to take part in the affairs of Syracuse, and it may well be that this experience brought home to Plato the actualities of political life in an especially poignant fashion. At the same time it is impossible to suppose that he went to Syracuse with the expectation of founding an ideal state ruled by a philosopher-king and then modified his views because he failed. Plato himself in the Seventh Letter says the contrary. In his advice to Dion's followers he says:

> *Let not Sicily nor any city anywhere be subject to human masters—such is my doctrine—but to laws. Subjection is bad both for masters and for subjects, for themselves, for their children's children, and for all their posterity.*[1]

And though this was written in 353, Plato says also that the plan which he recommends for a legislative commission to draw up new laws is akin to what he and Dion had intended to carry through together.[2] It is clear therefore that the venture at Syracuse was from the start designed to issue in a state under the forms of law. The legislative commission —a common device in Greece for formulating a code for a colony—is the literary device which offers the excuse for the Laws. And if the *Statesman* was written about the time of Plato's association with Dion (367–361), the discussion of the relative merits and demerits of law in government evidently marks a doubt in his mind about the feasibility of his conclusions in the *Republic*. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that Plato never made any sudden change in his convictions and that he was aware over a long period of years that the omission of law from the ideal state was a cardinal difficulty.

On the other hand, it is also a fact that Plato never definitely decided that the theory developed in the *Republic* was erroneous and had to be abandoned. He says repeatedly that his purpose in the *Laws* is to describe a second-best state and he sometimes puts this assertion into conjunction with his strongest statements about the importance of law. Without laws men "differ not at all from the most savage beasts," and yet if a competent ruler should arise, they would have no need to be ruled by laws, "for no law or ordinance is mightier than knowledge."[3] To the end, therefore, Plato was convinced that in a truly ideal state the rule of pure reason, embodied in the philosopher-king and unhampered by law or custom, ought to prevail. Perhaps he was never very sure that such an ideal could be realized, but as time went on he became convinced that it could not. The state ruled by law was always a concession to the frailty of human nature and never something which he was willing to accept as having a right to stand on a parity with the ideal. Still, if the knowledge necessary to make the philosopher-king is unattainable, then Plato is clear that the common moral consciousness is right in believing that a government according to law is better than a goverment by men, rulers being what they are. The relation between the two theories is highly unsatisfactory; the ideal is logically irreproachable but not attainable in fact, while the second-best state is not impossible to attain but is shaky in respect to its credentials.

Now the truth is that this difficulty about the best and the second-

best state grew directly out of a fundamental problem in Plato's philosophy which he had to face at many points during the latter part of his life and which he never succeeded in solving. It was not a question merely of making up his mind whether he did or did not have a high opinion of the law as an element in government. If the line of reasoning followed in the *Republic* (together with the general body of philosophical principles) was sound, there was no place in the state for law. Conversely, if a place had to be made for law, then there was nothing for it but to modify profoundly the whole philosophical structure and to admit principles which, to say the least, would greatly complicate it. The situation presented a dilemma and the fact that Plato himself saw and stated it is the true measure of his intellectual greatness. Probably no critic from Aristotle on has ever stated an objection against Plato which he could not have learned from reading Plato.

The exclusion of law from the ideal state resulted from the twofold fact that statesmanship is defined as an art depending upon an exact science and that this science is conceived, after the manner of mathematics, as a rational apprehension of the type to which factual knowledge contributes nothing, or at least nothing beyond illustration. Behind this theory is the presumption that intelligence and perception are at least disparate and perhaps opposed; knowledge of the type is impossible so long as a thinker is hemmed in and restricted by all the insignificant variability that the senses show, just as true astronomy is impossible so long as the real motions of the planets are believed to be what they seem to be. On the side of ethics a knowledge of the good implies a like independence of the inclinations and appetities that are most closely associated with the body; this distinction of body and soul, which occasionally grows into an out-and-out opposition of a lower and higher nature, is a troublesome factor in Plato's thought, though he is never committed to all the implications of once for all accepting it. Now in the field of politics, the positive law—law as it actually exists and is practiced by men in an actual community—must be counted on the side of the senses and the inclinations. This was perhaps more obvious to a Greek than it is now, since Greek law was more completely a matter of use and wont than is the case where there exists a professional judiciary and the elements of a more or less scientific jurisprudence. But in any case the wisdom of the law is the wisdom of experience, feeling its way from precedent to precedent, making its rules to fit cases as they arise and never arriving at a very clear-cut knowledge of its principles. In short, it is quite different from what Plato conceived an art to be—the self-conscious application of scientifically ascertained causes to produce a clearly foreseen end. The

problem was inherent in the contrast of nature and convention from which he started. For if the law belongs to convention (in Greek the words are the same) and cannot be ruled out as a factor in government, how can institutions ever be got on a rational basis where they are sure to realize the maximum natural good?

This is no antiquarian problem even today. How is a planned and managed society to make its peace with such enormous psychological forces as those represented by the genius of the Roman Law or the English Common Law? The ordinary business of life, its everyday valuations and expectations, goes on in a matrix of use and wont which changes indeed but changes slowly and which has never been planned or even envisaged as a whole, precisely because it is the matrix in which planning and valuation go on. In the mass it is not irrational but non-rational, though parts of it are continually coming to the front as precisely the irrational forces of mere convention or custom which stand in the way of any intelligent modification of the existing order. Is the customary basis of life—the habitual valuations and ideals by which men regulate their personal ambitions and their dealings with other men—to be interpreted as the enemy of intelligence and the great obstacle in the way of an art of living and governing? In effect this is the assumption behind the ideal state of the *Republic*, and that presumption forced Plato to become a rebel aganist the most cherished political ideal of the state which he desired to save. But if use and wont are not the great enemy, if convention is not the opposite of nature, how can the two be interpreted as supplementing one another? Can a man serve two masters? Or must he not hold to one and despise the other? Plato had learned from Socrates—and he never changed his mind—that he must hold to reason, but he became less certain that he must despise convention. And this is the problem of his later political theory, the problem of the place that must be assigned to law in the state.

The Golden Cord of the Law

It is the emergence of this problem that can be seen in the *Statesman*. The dialogue is not indeed primarily a political work but an exercise in definition, the statesman being the subject-matter with which Plato chose to work, but the choice was hardly an accident. It is true also that the conclusion reached is that the statesman is a kind of artist whose chief qualification is knowledge. The figure used is that of the shepherd who has the control and management of a human flock, or more specifically the head of a household who directs his family for the good of all the members. This argument, it should be noted in passing,

forms the starting-point of Aristotle's *Politics*, which opens with an attempt to show that the household and the state are distinct kinds of groups and that the family is therefore not a fair analogue for civil government. The issue is broader than it seems, and it became traditionally a bone of contention between the defenders of absolute government on the one hand and of liberal government on the other. The question, of course, is whether subjects shall be assumed to be dependent upon rulers, as children must be dependent upon their parents, or whether they shall be assumed to be responsible and self-governing. The important point, however, is not so much the sense in which Plato answered the question as the fact that he discussed it. The *Republic* had assumed that the statesman is an artist who has the right to rule because he alone knows what is good. In the *Statesman* the question is canvassed and the assumption of the *Republic* is made the subject of an elaborate definition.

The definition is backed up by a strong argument in favor of political absolutism, in case the ruler is really an artist at his work:

> *Among forms of government that one is preeminently right and is the only real government, in which the rulers are found to be truly possessed of science, not merely to seem to possess it, whether they rule by law or without law, whether their subjects are willing or unwilling. . . .*[4]

It is indeed a "hard saying" that government should be carried on without law, but law has to deal roughly with average cases and it is preposterous that a really expert ruler should thus have his hands bound, just as it is preposterous that a physician should be forced to prescribe by the book, if he knows enough about medicine to have written the book. The argument is that by which enlightened despotism has been justified from Plato's day to our own. If people are forced, "contrary to the written laws and inherited traditions, to do what is juster and nobler and better than what they did before,"[5] it is absurd to say that they are ill-used. For not many men can be expected to know what is good for the state. The assumption of the *Republic* is thus made explicit and its conclusion is fully accepted. In the ideal state the consent of subjects is no part of the ruler's equipment, since the subject's liberty according to the customs and traditions of the law can only work to hamper the free artistry of the ruler who knows his art.

And yet Plato is not quite willing to take all the consequences of his conclusion, or at least he is well aware that there is another side to the matter. This is apparent from the fact that his definition of the

statesman draws a sharp distinction between the king and the tyrant upon precisely the point at issue. A tyrant rules by force over unwilling subjects, while the true king or statesman has the art of making his rule voluntary.[6] There is no way in which the two positions can be made compatible, but it is apparent that Plato is not willing to abandon either. It is not unjust to force men to be better than their traditions, and yet he cannot conquer the Greek detestation of government that has to depend frankly upon force. The passage recalls the eloquent denunciation of tyranny and the tyrant in Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*, not least because of the tyrant's utter lack of piety and reverence toward all normal human relations.

The classification of states which Plato includes in the *Statesman* shows also that he has moved some distance from the position taken in the *Republic*. The two noticeable points are, first, that the ideal state is set off definitely from the class of possible states and, second, that democracy is given a more favorable place than in the *Republic*. In the earlier work, where little or no attention is given to an effort to classify, the ideal state is placed at the top and actual states are arranged as successive degenerations the one from the other. Thus timocracy, or the military state, is a corruption of the ideal state; oligarchy, or government by the rich, is a corruption of timocracy; democracy arises by the corruption of oligarchy; and tyranny, which is at the bottom of the list, is a corruption of democracy. In the *Statesman* a more elaborate classification is attempted. The ideal state, or a pure monarchy ruled by the philosopher-king, is "divine" and therefore too perfect for human affairs. It is distinguished from all actual states by the fact that in it knowledge rules and there is no need for law. It is the state of the *Republic* now definitely relegated to its place as a "model fixed in the Heavens" for human imitation but not for attainment. The classification of actual states is reached by crossing two classifications on each other. The traditional threefold division is subdivided in each of its parts into a lawless and a law-abiding form. In this way Plato reaches the sixfold classification, of three law-abiding states and their corresponding lawless corruptions, which Aristotle afterward adopted in the *Politics*. Thus the rule of one yields monarchy and tyranny; the rule of a few, aristocracy and oligarchy; while for the first time Plato recognizes two types of democracy, a moderate and an extreme form. More striking still, he now makes democracy the best of the lawless states, though the worst of the law-abiding states. Both forms of democracy are therefore better than oligarchy. Evidently Plato has moved toward the position later taken in the *Laws*, in which the second-best state is described as an attempt to combine monarchy with democracy. It is a tacit admission that

in the actual state the factors of popular assent and participation cannot be overlooked.

Plato's new theory, then, is to be frankly a second-best, involving the unsatisfactory contrast of the heavenly with the earthly city. The available stock of human intelligence is not great enough to make the philosopher-king a possibility. The humanly best solution, therefore, is to rely upon such wisdom as can be embodied in the law and upon the natural piety of men toward the wisdom of use and wont. The bitterness with which Plato accepts this compromise is apparent in the irony with which he remarks that now the execution of Socrates must be justified.[7] The state, with its inherited law, must be conceived as somehow an imitation of the heavenly city. At least there can be no doubt that law is better than caprice and the piety of the law-abiding ruler than the arbitary will of a tyrant, a plutocracy, or a mob. Nor is it to be doubted that law is in general a civilizing force without which, human nature being what it is, man would be the worst of savage beasts. And yet this saying, so suggestive of Aristotle, is for Plato an act of faith for which his philosophy, in so far as it contrasts knowledge and opinion, can offer no real justification.

In one of the most striking passages of the *Laws* he does not hesitate to say that it is an act of faith:

> *Let us suppose that each of us living creatures is an ingenious puppet of the gods, whether contrived by way of a toy of theirs or for some serious purpose—for as to that we know nothing; but this we do know, that these inward affections of ours, like sinews or cords, drag us along and, being opposed to each other, pull one against the other to opposite actions; and herein lies the dividing line between goodness and badness. For, as our argument declares, there is one of these pulling forces which every man should always follow and nohow leave hold of, counteracting thereby the pull of the other sinews: it is the leading-string, golden and holy, of "calculation", entitled the public law of the State; and whereas the other cords are hard and steely and of every possible shape and semblance, this one is flexible and uniform, since it is of gold. With that most excellent leading string of the law we must needs co-operate always; for since calculation is excellent, but gentle rather than forceful, its leading-string needs helpers to ensure that the golden kind within us may vanquish the other kinds.*[8]

The state of Plato's later theory, then, is to be held together by the "golden cord of the law" and this implies that its ethical principle of

organization is different from that in the *Republic*. The law is now, so to speak, the surrogate for that reason which Plato had sought to make supreme in the ideal state and which he still regarded as the supreme force in nature. The chief virtue in the ideal state had accordingly been justice, the division of labor and the specialization of functions which puts every man in his proper place and "gives him his due" in the sense that he is enabled to bring all his faculties to their highest development and allowed to put them to the fullest use. In the state of the *Laws* wisdom is crystallized—perhaps one might even say frozen—in the law; no such flexible adjustment of the individual to the state is possible, but the regulations made by the law are assumed to be the best possible "on the whole." Consequently the supreme virtue in such a state is temperance or self-control, which means a law-abiding disposition or a spirit of respect toward the institutions of the state and a readiness to subordinate oneself to its lawful powers.

In the early books of the *Laws* Plato criticises pretty sharply those states, like Sparta, which have adopted the fourth virtue, courage, as the chief end of their training and so have made all civic virtue subordinate to military success. The estimate of Sparta is distinctly less favorable than that implied by the account of the timocracy in the *Republic* and is outspoken in its condemnation of the futility of war as an end for states. The end is harmony, both in domestic and foreign relations, and short of the perfect harmony which would issue from specialization of functions in the ideal state, its best guarantee is obedience to law. The state of the *Laws*, therefore, is a state constructed upon temperance or moderation as its chief virtue and seeking to achieve harmony by fostering the spirit of obedience to law.

The Mixed State

It is evident, then, that Plato requires a principle of political organization designed to bring about this desired result, one which shall play the part for his later theory that the division of labor and the division of citizens into three classes had played in the *Republic*. In point of fact he discovered [9] a principle which passed into the later history of political theory and succeeded in gaining the adherence of the majority of thinkers who dealt with the problem of organization over a period of many centuries. This was the principle of the "mixed" state, which is designed to achieve harmony by a balance of forces, or by a combination of diverse principles of different tendency in such a way that the various tendencies shall offset each other. Stability is thus a resultant of opposite political strains. This principle is the ancestor of the famous separa-

tion of powers which Montesquieu was to rediscover centuries later as the essence of political wisdom embodied in the English constitution. In the case of Plato the mixed state sketched in the *Laws* is said to be a combination of the monarchic principle of wisdom with the democratic principle of freedom. It cannot be said, however, that he succeeded in making the combination which he had in mind or even that he always remained faithful to the ideal of the mixed constitution. Plato's allegiance was hopelessly divided and in the end he reverted to the more congenial line of thought already developed in the *Republic*.

Nevertheless, his manner of introducing and defending the principle of the mixed state was in the highest degree significant for the later development of the study. The *Laws* deals with actual states. Plato accordingly sees that the method of free logical or speculative construction which he had consciously adopted in the *Republic* is out of place. The problem concerns now the rise and fall of states and the actual rather than the ideal causes of their greatness and decay. In the third book of the *Laws*, therefore, Plato makes the first suggestion of the innumerable attempts at a kind of philosophic history, which shall trace the development of human civilization, mark its critical stages, note the causes of progress and decay, and by analysis of the whole derive the laws of political stability which the wise statesman will observe in order to control and direct the changes that beset human society. He remarks, in a passage that suggests Aristotle, that human life is controlled by God, chance, and art, and art must co-operate with occasion.[10] It is true that Plato's mythological history contained nothing suggesting canons of accurate investigation. And yet this suggestion in the *Laws*, that the study of politics is to be attached to the history of civilization, had more possibilities of fruitfulness than the analytic and deductive method which governed the *Republic*. It formed the beginning of the authentic tradition of social studies and in particular of the mode of investigation which was to be taken up and perfected by Aristotle.

The plan of Plato's philosophic history of the race is not very clear-cut because it has more than one purpose and combines more than one principle. In the first place it utilizes what was doubtless the current Greek conception of the direction in which their own institutions had developed. In the beginning men lived as herdsmen in solitary families, lacking the arts that use the metals and also the social distinctions and many of the vices of a civilized life. Plato imagines it to have been a kind of "natural" age, in which men lived at peace since the causes of war that mark a more ambitious society had not yet appeared. Already in Plato the "state of nature"—that long-drawn myth of later political philosophers—has made its appearance. As men increase in numbers, and as agriculture grows and new manual arts are devised, families are

gathered in villages, and finally statesmen arise who unite the villages into cities. It is this line of evolution that Aristotle used in the opening chapters of the *Politics* to mark off the distinctive function of the city as the bearer of the possibilities of a civilized life.

Plato has, however, at least two other purposes, the one somewhat incidental and the other more closely connected with the emergence of the mixed constitution. Incidentally he points his criticism of Sparta by tracing its downfall to its exclusively military organization, since "ignorance is the ruin of states." But what he mainly wishes to do is to show how the arbitrary power of monarchy and the tyranny that goes with it has been a cause of decay, as exemplified especially in Persia, and how an unbridled democracy at Athens ruined itself by an excess of liberty. Either might have been prosperous had it been content to remain moderate, to temper power with wisdom or liberty with order. It is the extreme in both cases that proved ruinous. Here then is the principle upon which a good state must be formed. If not a monarchy it must at least contain the principle of monarchy, the principle of wise and vigorous government subject to the law. But equally, if not a democracy, it must contain the democratic principle, the principle of freedom and of power shared by the masses, again of course subject to law.

The argument may be generalized. Men have admitted historically several claims to power—the right of parents over children, of age over youth, of freemen over slaves, of well-born over base-born, of strong over weak, and of rulers chosen by lot over other citizens [11]—some incompatible with others and hence the cause of factions. In Plato's opinion, of course, the only "natural" claim to power is that of the wise over the less wise, but this belongs to the ideal state. In the second-best state the problem is to select and combine these admitted claims in order to get on the whole the most law-abiding rule. In effect this means some approximation to wisdom by favoring age, good birth, or property, which may be taken perhaps as *prima facie* symptoms of better than average ability, with some concession to the lot for the sake of democracy. This Plato describes, not very aptly, as a mixture of monarchy and democracy.

The founding of a city to meet these specifications evidently requires attention to the underlying physical, economic, and social factors upon which the political constitution depends, since Plato's mixed state is not a balance of merely political forces. He begins accordingly by discussing the geographical situation of the city and the conditions of climate and soil which are most favorable. Here again he introduced what became a favorite and indeed almost a traditional part of the political theory of the philosophic historian, the influence of which was immediate. as may be seen in Aristotle's remarks preparatory to sketching the

best state.[12] The best site is not, Plato thinks, upon the coast, because of the corruptions introduced by foreign commerce and more especially because foreign trade means a navy and a navy means power for the democratic masses. This view is built upon the history of Athens and the condemnation of the abuses of naval power is a companion piece to the earlier condemnation of the abuse of military power by Sparta. The ideal is a mainly agricultural community, on a soil that is self-sufficing but rugged, since this is the nurse of the hardiest and most temperate kind of population. This recalls the admiration which many theorists of the eighteenth century felt for the Swiss and shows the same distrust of commercialism and industrialism. He believes also that common race, language, law, and religion are desirable, provided they do not give too great a weight to custom.

Social and Political Institutions

Of all social institutions that which is politically most significant is the ownership and use of property. This had been Plato's view in the *Republic*—though there he had tried to make a state that would put education into first place—and it is doubly true where he is trying to deal with actual states. In the *Laws* he makes no secret of the fact that he still thinks communism the ideal arrangement but too good for human nature. Accordingly he concedes to human frailty the two chief points and leaves private ownership and the private family standing. He still retains his plan for the equal education of women and for their sharing in military and other civic duties, though he now says nothing of their holding office. Permanent monogamous unions—with an intolerable amount of public supervision—are accepted as the lawful form of marriage. With his concession of the private ownership of property Plato unites the most stringent regulation of its amount and use, following in general the regulations in effect at Sparta. The number of citizens is fixed at 5040 and the land is divided into an equal number of allotments, which pass by inheritance but can be neither divided nor alienated. The produce of the land is to be consumed in common at a public mess. Property in land is therefore equalized. The cultivation of the land is to be done by slaves, or possibly a more descriptive word would be serfs, who pay a rental in the form of a share of the produce.

Personal property, on the other hand, is permitted to be unequal but its amount is limited; that is, Plato would prohibit to any citizen the ownership of personal property in excess of four times the value of a lot of land.[13] The purpose is to exclude from the state those excessive differences between rich and poor which Greek experience had shown to

be the chief causes of civic contention. In fact, however, the use of personal property is restricted as stringently as its amount. Citizens are not to be permitted to engage either in industry or trade, to have a craft or a business. All these activities, in so far as they cannot be dispensed with, are to be in the hands of resident aliens, who are freemen but not citizens. The state is to have only a token-currency (perhaps like the iron money of Sparta); the taking of interest for loans is prohibited; even the possession of gold and silver is forbidden. The citizen's "ownership" of his property is made by every restriction that Plato can think of strictly a Barmecide feast.

Analysis of the social arrangements described in the *Laws* shows that Plato has not really abandoned the division of labor which, in the *Republic*, he had offered as the basic principle of all society. He has merely offered a new division of labor, replacing the three classes of citizens in the earlier theory. The new division is broader in that it applies to the whole population of the state but it is just as exclusive. Thus agriculture is set down as the special function of the slaves, trade and industry as that of a class of freemen who are not citizens, while all political functions are the prerogative of the citizens. It is evident also that this plan, like the one in the *Republic*, gives up the fundamental problem instead of solving it. The problem is one of participation; as Pericles had said in the Funeral Oration, to find a way by which the mass of men can attend to their private affairs and yet have a hand in the public business. Nominally this is the solution that Plato is seeking, but what he arrives at is a state in which citizenship is frankly restricted to a class of privileged persons who can afford to turn over their private business—the sordid job of earning a living—to slaves and foreigners. And this is what the democracy of Pericles's day emphatically was not. The lines of class-cleavage in the *Republic* are less overtly significant than those in the *Laws*, for the former were lines between citizens, even if Plato had not thought the problem through very carefully. In the *Laws* the economic part of the population is not composed of citizens at all, and the state is therefore based frankly on economic privilege. This is none the less true because the kind of privilege that Plato prefers is security rather than wealth.

It is unnecessary to go into details of the political constitution which Plato erects upon his social system. He provides for the main kinds of institutions—town-meeting, council, and magistrates—which existed in every Greek city. The point to be noted is the way in which he tries to carry out the idea of a mixed constitution. The mode of choosing magistrates is by election—according to Greek ideas an aristocratic method—and the duties of the general assembly of citizens are practically exhausted in these elections. The chief board of magistrates

—called now by Plato the "guardians of the law" instead of guardians—is a group of thirty-seven, chosen by a threefold election consisting of a nominating ballot by which three hundred candidates are selected, a second ballot by which a hundred are selected from the three hundred, and a final ballot by which thirty-seven are selected from the hundred. But the most characteristic bit of electoral machinery is that by which the council of 360 is chosen. This plan is frankly devised to weight the votes of the better-to-do. The citizens are divided into four classes according to the amount of their personal property, a device which Plato adopted from the Athenian constitution introduced by Solon and antedating the democracy. Since personal property may not exceed four times the value of a lot of land, there are four property-classes, the lowest class being composed of those whose personal property does not exceed the value of their land, the next of those above this amount but not exceeding twice the value of their land, and so on. Presumably the lowest class would be much the most numerous, and the highest much the smallest, yet Plato assigns to each class one-fourth of the members of the council,[14] much as the former Prussian constitution allocated the choice of electors for members of the chamber of deputies to three groups each of which paid one-third of the taxes. He further weights the votes of the more opulent citizens by providing a penalty for non-voting which does not apply to the lowest property-classes. The system of property-classes has an effect on the constitution also because certain offices can be filled only from the highest group or groups. In the case of the council there is only one concession to democracy: the number of persons elected is double the number of places to be filled and the final choice is made by lot.

It is rather incomprehensible that Plato should have regarded this constitution, the practically effective part of which is surely the system of property-classes, as a combination of monarchy and democracy. The concession to democracy was certainly very slight and was grudgingly made "on account of the discontent of the masses." Moreover, Aristotle, at least, thought that there was no element of monarchy whatever in the constitution described in the *Laws* "It is nothing but oligarchy and democracy, leaning rather to oligarchy." [15] It is true that what Plato intends is to secure the preponderance of the law-abiding elements and an equality proportioned to merit, but the effect of his constitution is to give the preponderance to those who have the most personal property. Yet he himself says that a niggardly man, who is certainly not good, will probably be richer than a good man who likes spending for noble purposes.[10] It is not clear, therefore, that he would have agreed with Aristotle, who also used the property-qualification for his middle-class state, in believing that the well-to-do are on the average better than the

poor. It is a fact also, as has been pointed out, that in the *Statesman* he places even the lawless democracy higher than the oligarchy. It is impossible to make Plato's plan of government square with his intentions. Apparently when he came to constitution-making he found that differences of property are overt and usable while differences of virtue are not.

Educational and Religious Institutions

It is unnecessary to say much about Plato's later plan of education, which still occupies a great share of his attention in the *Laws*. The general outline of the curriculum, as including music and gymnastic, remains very similar to that in the *Republic*; his distrust of the poets still issues in the most rigorous censorship of literature and art; the education of women equally with men remains an important part of the plan; and the education of all citizens is still compulsory. The changes are chiefly that he gives more attention to the organization of education and, since the whole state is no longer an educational institution, that he is obliged to consider the articulation of the system of education with the rest of government. In respect to the first it is noteworthy that he now undertakes to outline a system of publicly regulated schools with paid teachers to provide a fully outlined course of instruction for the elementary and secondary grades. In respect to the relations of this system to the state, he makes the magistrate who has charge of the schools the chief of all the magistrates. The theory of education in the *Laws*, unlike that of the *Republic*, is the theory of a system of educational institutions.

A similar inclination to institutionalize appears in Plato's account of religion and its relation to the state. Perhaps it was a sign of old age that he should have showed so much more interest in religion, a subject which he had passed over with scarcely more than a reference in the *Republic*. Certainly the rather extended development of religious law in the tenth book of the *Laws*, while not without the impressiveness that goes with intense conviction, is the most lamentable thing that his genius produced. Religion, from the point of view of the *Laws*, must be subject to the regulation and supervision of the state, just as education is. Consequently Plato forbids any kind of private religious exercises and enacts that rites may be performed only in public temples and by authorized priests. In this he is influenced partly by his dislike of certain disorderly forms of religion to which, as he remarks, hysterical persons and especially women are prone, and partly by the feeling that a private religion withdraws men from their allegiance to the state. His regulation

of religion does not stop with ceremonial. He has become convinced that religious belief is closely related to moral behavior or, more specifically, that certain forms of disbelief are definitely of an immoral tendency. Accordingly he thinks it necessary to provide religion with a kind of creed and the state with a law of heresy for the punishment of disbelievers. The creed is simple. What it forbids is atheism, of which Plato distinguishes three kinds: denial of the existence of the gods, denial that they concern themselves with human conduct, and the belief that they are easily placated for a sin committed. Imprisonment and, for the worst cases, death are the penalties attached to atheism. These proposals are strongly out of keeping with the practice of the Greeks and give to the *Laws* the bad pre-eminence of being the first reasoned defense of religious persecution.

The *Laws* closes on a note which is entirely out of keeping with the purpose which Plato has been following and with the state which he has sketched in accordance with that purpose. In the last few pages he adds to the state another institution, barely mentioned before, which not only fails to articulate in any way with the other institutions of the state but also contradicts the purpose of planning a state in which the law is supreme. This Plato calls the Nocturnal Council—a body composed of the ten eldest of the thirty-seven guardians, the director of education, and certain priests chosen specially for their virtue. This Council is quite outside the law and yet is given a power to control and direct all the legal institutions of the state. Its members are supposed to have the knowledge needed for the salvation of the state and Plato's final conclusion is that the Council must first be founded and the state placed in its hands. It is evident that the Nocturnal Council stands in the place of the philosopher-king of the *Republic* and that its inclusion in the *Laws* is a flagrant violation of loyalty to the second-best state. But it is not quite the philosopher-king. Coming as it does after the creation of a crime of heresy and a class of authorized priests there is a disagreeable flavor of clericalism about the Nocturnal Council which is heightened by the evidently religious nature of the wisdom which Plato imputes to its members.

The Republic and the Laws

If Plato's political philosophy be considered as a whole and in relation to the immediate development of the subject, the theory of the state contained in the *Republic* must be regarded as having made a false start. What the *Republic* supplied to the theory of the city-state was a consummate analysis of the most general principles underlying society

—its nature as a mutual exchange of services in which human capacity is developed equally to the end of personal satisfaction and of achieving the highest type of social life. In the *Republic*, however, this conception was developed almost wholly in terms of the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge of the good, and knowledge was conceived upon the analogy of the exact, deductive procedure of mathematics. For this reason Plato thought of the relation between rulers and subjects as a relation between the learned and the ignorant. This in turn resulted in eliminating law from the state, since there was no place in Plato's theory of knowledge at this stage of his thought for the gradual growth of wisdom through experience and custom. Yet the omission of law falsified the moral ideal of free citizenship which was the very essence of the city-state.

The effort in Plato's later philosophy to restore law to its place in the state was always in some degree half-hearted and inconclusive, as was indicated by the unsatisfactory compromise which made him describe the later version as only a second-best. The real difficulty was that the revision called for a complete reconstruction of his psychology to make a significant place for habit and of his theory of knowledge to make a place for experience and custom. Yet it was the study of the state in the *Laws* that suggested the nature of the revisions required. For here Plato turned to a really careful analysis of actual institutions and laws, and suggested the attachment of such studies to history. In the *Laws* also he suggested the principle of balance—of a mutual adjustment of claims and interests—as the proper means for forming a constitutional state. Far more than the abstract type-state of the *Republic*, this was a serious attack upon the problem of the city-state—the conciliation of the interests of property with the democratic interest represented by numbers. It was from these beginnings in the *Laws* that Aristotle started. Without abandoning the general principles stated in the *Republic*, which still provide the materials for his theory of the community, he adopted in almost every case the hints thrown out in the *Laws*, enriching them with more painstaking and more extensive examinations of the empirical and historical evidence. And in the general system of his philosophy Aristotle sought to provide a consistent body of logical principles to explain and justify the procedure which he followed.

Footnotes

1 334 c–d; L. A. Post's trans.
2 337 d.

3 874 e; 875 c.
4 *Statesman,* 293 c; H. N. Fowler's trans.
5 269 c–d.
6 276 e.
7 *Statesman,* 299 b–c.
8 *Laws,* 644d–645a. R. G. Bury's trans.
9 Possibly Plato did not discover the mixed state. See Aristotle's reference to other theories of mixed states *(Politics,* 1265 b 33) which may refer to earlier writers. The *Laws* is at any rate the earliest extant form of the theory.
10 *Laws.* 709 a–c.
11 690 a–d. Cf. the similar list of claims in Aristotle's *Politics,* 3, 12–13 1283 a 14 ff.
12 *Politics,* Bk. VII (the traditional arrangement of books).
13 744 e.
14 744 e; 756 b–e; cf. the Servian Constitution at Rome described by Cicero, *Republic,* Bk. 11, 22, 39–40.
15 *Politics,* 2, 6; 1266 a 6.
16 743 a–b.

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6
Aristotle: political ideals

About the time when Plato was asked by Dion to undertake the venture in Syracuse for the education of the young Dionysius and the improvement of Syracusan government, the greatest of Plato's students joined the Academy. Aristotle was not an Athenian but a native of Stagira in Thrace, where he was born in 384. His father was a physician, which probably contributed to the prevailing interest in biological studies that Aristotle's work shows, and had been attached in that capacity to the Macedonian court. Aristotle was probably attracted to Plato's school in the first place because it was the best place in Greece to carry on advanced studies. Once there, he remained a member of the school as long as Plato lived—a period of twenty years—and his mind received indelibly the impression of Plato's teaching. Every page of his later philosophical writing bears witness to this connection. After Plato's death in 347 Aristotle left Athens and during the next twelve years was variously employed. To this period belongs the first of his independent writing. In 343 he became the instructor of the young prince Alexander of Macedon, but one looks in vain in his political writings for any effect of his Macedonian connection upon his ideas. He seems to have lacked the imagination necessary to see the revolutionary importance of Alexander's conquest of the East, with the consequent mingling of Greek and oriental civilization. The choice of such a policy was directly contrary to everything that he must have taught his royal pupil about politics. In 335 Aristotle opened his own School in Athens, the second of the four great philosophical Schools, and during the next twelve years most of his books were written, though they probably included work begun during the earlier period. Aristotle survived his great pupil by a year; he died in Euboea in 322, after leaving Athens to escape the anti-Macedonian disturbances that followed Alexander's death.

The New Science of Politics

The Aristotelian writings present a problem very different from that of Plato's Dialogues. His extant works, neglecting fragments of early popular writings, were for the most part not books completed and prepared for publication. They were used in connection with his teaching, though important parts of them were probably written before the Lyceum was opened. In fact, they were not published in their present form until four centuries after his death but remained the property of

the School and were doubtless used by later instructors. It seems probable that the twelve years of Aristotle's life as head of the Lyceum were largely occupied in directing a number of extensive projects of research, shared by his students, such as the famous investigation of the constitutional history of a hundred and fifty-eight Greek cities, of which the *Constitution of Athens* (discovered in 1891) is the only surviving example. These researches, of which the study of the constitutions was only one, were mainly historical rather than philosophical; they were genuinely empirical investigations and in the light of them Aristotle from time to time made additions to the body of writings which he already had by him when the School was opened.

The great political treatise which goes by the name of the *Politics* cannot therefore be regarded as a finished book such as Aristotle would have produced had he been writing for a general public. It has been doubted, in fact, whether Aristotle himself arranged it in its existing form or whether it may not have been put together by his editors from several bodies of manuscript.[1] The difficulties lie upon the surface and could hardly be missed by any attentive reader, but the solution of them is another matter. Later editors have shifted the books about in an attempt to improve the order, but no rearrangement of the text will make a unified and finished work of the *Politics*.[2] Thus Book VII, in which Aristotle takes up the construction of an ideal state, apparently goes on from the end of Book III, while Books IV, V, and VI, dealing with actual and not ideal states, form a group by themselves. For this reason Books VII and VIII are usually put after Book III, and Books IV to VI at the end; yet there is a connection between the discussion of monarchy near the end of Book III and the discussion of oligarchy and democracy in Book IV. So far as the reading of the text goes, there are difficulties in any order, and probably Ross is right when he says that the reader might as well take it as it stands traditionally.

The best hypothesis which has so far been advanced to explain the *Politics* is that by Werner Jaeger[3] and while this is not demonstrated, it at least offers a reasonable way of envisaging the development of Aristotle's political philosophy. According to Jaeger the *Politics* as it stands is Aristotle's work and not that of an editor. But the text belongs to two stages and therefore falls into two main strata. There is, in the first place, a work dealing with the ideal state, and with previous theories of it. This includes Book II, an historical study of earlier theories and chiefly notable for the criticism of Plato; Book III, a study of the nature of the state and of citizenship but intended to be introductory to a theory of the ideal state: and Books VII and VIII on the construction of the ideal state. These four books Jaeger assigns to a date not long after Aristotle's

departure from Athens following the death of Plato. There is, in the second place, a study of actual states, mainly democracy and oligarchy, together with the causes of their decay and the best means of giving them stability, which makes up Books IV, V, and VI. This Jaeger assigns to a date after the opening of the Lyceum,[4] supposing that it represents a return to political philosophy after or during the investigation of the hundred and fifty-eight constitutions. Books IV, V, and VI were inserted by Aristotle in the middle of the original draft, and result in enlarging the work on the ideal state into a general treatise on political science. Finally, Jaeger believes, Book I was written last of all as a general introduction to the enlarged treatise, though it was joined hastily and imperfectly to Book II. According to Jaeger's conception, therefore, the *Politics* was intended to form a treatise on a single science, but was never subjected to the rewriting that would have been necessary to bring the parts, written as they were over a period of perhaps fifteen years, into a well-unified form.

If this hypothesis be correct, the *Politics* represents two stages in Aristotle's thought which are distinguished by the distance that he has travelled in emancipating himself from the influence of Plato, or perhaps it would be better to say, in striking out a line of thought and investigation characteristically his own. In the first he still thinks of political philosophy as the construction of an ideal state upon lines already laid down especially in the *Statesman* and the *Laws*. Plato's prevailingly ethical interest in the subject still predominates; the good man and the good citizen are one and the same, or at all events they ought to be, and the end of the state is to produce the highest moral type of human being. It is not to be supposed that Aristotle consciously abandoned this point of view, since the treatise on the ideal state was left standing as an important part of the *Politics*. At some date not far removed from the opening of the Lyceum, however, he conceived a science or art of politics on a much larger scale. The new science was to be general; that is, it should deal with actual as well as ideal forms of government and it should teach the art of governing and organizing states of any sort in any desired manner. This new general science of politics, therefore, was not only empirical and descriptive, but even in some respects independent of any ethical purpose, since a statesman might need to be expert in governing even a bad state. The whole science of politics, according to the new idea, included the knowledge both of the political good, relative as well as absolute, and also of political mechanics employed perhaps for an inferior or even a bad end. This enlargement of the definition of political philosophy is Aristotle's most characteristic conception.

The description of Aristotle's political theory can therefore be advantageously divided into two parts. The source for the first is Books II, III, VII, and VIII. The questions to be considered here are the relations of his thought to Plato's in his first attempt at an independent philosophy and especially the suggestions, in so far as they can be discerned, that presage the final step which took him quite beyond Plato. The source for the second is Books IV, V, and VI, and the questions here are his final thoughts on the kinds of government, his conception of the social forces behind political organization and change, and his description of the means with which the statesman has to work. Finally, in the opening chapters of Book I he said his last word about the great philosophical problem upon which both he and Plato had been engaged, the distinction of nature from appearance or convention, and suggested the conception of nature to which his ripest political reflection led him.

The Kinds of Rule

True to a custom which he follows in works on other subjects Aristotle begins his book on the ideal state with a survey of what other writers have written on the subject. The point of greatest interest here is criticism of Plato, since one would expect to find the key to the differences of which he was conscious between himself and his master. The result is rather disappointing. So far as the *Republic* is concerned he is emphatic in his objections to the abolition of private property and the family. These objections have already been referred to and nothing further need be said about them. His criticism of the *Laws*, on the other hand, is difficult to interpret. It refers largely to matters of detail and moreover it is sometimes astonishingly inaccurate. This is surprising in view of the fact that, in his construction of the ideal state, almost every subject discussed is suggested by the *Laws* and there are many parallelisms (even verbal) in small points.[5] Evidently when the passage was written he did not regard it as worth while to analyze the *Laws* and state his dissent from its principles. The tone of his criticism suggests what may be the reason. Apparently he felt about both Plato's political works, and perhaps about his philosophy in general, that they are brilliant and suggestive but too radical and speculative. They are, as he says, never commonplace and always original. But the query in his mind seems to be, Are they reliable? The general ground of his dissent is stated in a dryly humorous remark which sums up better than pages of comment the fundamental difference of temper between Aristotle and his master:

> *Let us remember that we should not disregard the experience of ages; in the multitude of years these things, if they were good, would certainly not have been unknown; for almost everything has been found out, although sometimes they are not put together; in other cases men do not use the knowledge which they have.*[6]

In short, Aristotle's is the soberer if less original genius. He feels that too great a departure from common experience probably has a fallacy in it somewhere, even though it appears to be irreproachably logical.

One essential difference between Plato and Aristotle is apparent in all parts of the *Politics* that have to do with the ideal state: what Aristotle calls the ideal state is always Plato's second-best state. The rejection of communism just referred to shows that the ideal state of the *Republic* was never entertained by Aristotle, even as an ideal. His ideal was always constitutional and never despotic rule, even though it were the enlightened despotism of the philosopher-king. Consequently, Aristotle accepted from the start the point of view of the *Laws*, that in any good state the law must be the ultimate sovereign and not any person whatsoever. He accepted this not as a concession to human frailty but as an intrinsic part of good government and therefore as a characteristic of an ideal state. The relation of the constitutional ruler to his subjects is different in kind from any other sort of subjection because it is consistent with both parties remaining free men, and for this reason it requires a degree of moral equality or likeness of kind between them, despite the undoubted differences which must exist.

This distinction between different kinds of rule is so important for Aristotle that he returns to it again and again, and it had evidently been an object of early interest with him.[7] The authority of a constitutional ruler over his subjects is quite different from that of a master over his slaves, because the slave is presumed to be different in nature, a lower sort of being who is inferior from birth and incapable of ruling himself. Aristotle admits, to be sure, that this is often not true in fact, but at all events it is the theory upon which slavery is justified. For this reason the slave is the master's living tool, to be kindly used, but still used for the master's good. Political authority differs also from that which a man exercises over his wife and children, though the latter is certainly for the good of the dependent as well as for that of the father. The failure to distinguish household from political authority Aristotle regarded as one of Plato's serious errors, since it led him in the *Statesman* to assert that the state is like the family only larger. The child is not an adult and even though he is ruled for his own good, he is still not in a position of equality. The case of the wife is not so clear but apparently Aristotle believed

that women were too different in nature from men (though not necessarily inferior) to stand with them on the peculiar footing of equality which alone permits the political relationship. The ideal state, therefore, if not a democracy, at least includes a democratic element. It is "a community of equals, aiming at the best life possible" [8] and it ceases to be constitutional or genuinely political if the discrepancy between its members is so great that they cease to have the same "virtue."

The Rule of Law

Constitutional rule in the state is closely connected, also, with the question whether it is better to be ruled by the best man or the best laws, since a government which consults the good of its subjects is also government in accordance with law. Accordingly the supremacy of law is accepted by Aristotle as a mark of a good state and not merely as an unfortunate necessity. His argument for this position is that Plato is mistaken when, in the *Statesman*, he makes government by law and government by wise rulers alternatives. Even the wisest ruler cannot dispense with law because the law has an impersonal quality which no man, however good, can attain. The law is "reason unaffected by desire";[9] and the analogy which Plato was accustomed to draw between politics and medicine is wrong. The political relationship, if it is to partake of freedom, must be of such a kind that the subject does not wholly resign his judgment and his responsibility, and this is possible provided both the ruler and the ruled have a legal status. The "passionless" authority of law does not take the place of a magistrate, but it gives to the magistrate's authority a moral quality which it could not otherwise have. Constitutional rule is consistent with the dignity of the subject, whereas a personal or despotic rule is not. The constitutional ruler, as Aristotle sometimes says, rules over willing subjects; he rules by consent and is quite different from a dictator. The precise moral property which Aristotle means to point out is as elusive as the consent of the governed in modern theories, but no one can doubt its reality.

Constitutional rule as Aristotle understands the expression has three main elements: First, it is rule in the public or general interest as distinguished from a factional or tyrannous rule in the interest of a single class or individual. Second, it is lawful rule in the sense that government is carried on by general regulations and not by arbitrary decrees, and also in the vaguer sense that the government does not flout standing customs and conventions of the constitution. Third, constitutional government means the government of willing subjects as distinguished from a despotism that is supported merely by force. Though

these three properties of constitutional rule are clearly mentioned by Aristotle, he nowhere examines them systematically, to find out either if the list is complete or what is the relationship between the three. He was aware that one of the properties might be absent from a government while the others were present; for example, a tyrant may act despotically and yet in the public interest, or a lawful government may be unjustly favorable to one class. But constitutional rule was never really defined by Aristotle.

The emphasis upon constitutional rule is the consequence of taking seriously the suggestion in the *Laws* that law may be regarded not as a makeshift but as an indispensable condition of a moral and civilized life. An introductory passage in the *Politics* was evidently written with one of Plato's remarkable utterances in mind: "Man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all." [10] But this view of law is impossible unless it be supposed that there is a gradual increase of wisdom through the accumulation of experience and that this growing stock of social intelligence is embedded in law and custom. The point is of fundamental philosophical importance because if wisdom and knowledge are the prerogatives of scholars, the experience of the ordinary man never brings him more than unreliable opinion, and Plato's reasoning is unanswerable. To put the case the other way about, if Plato's philosophy is mistaken in neglecting the experience of the ages, then that experience must represent a genuine growth in knowledge, though this growth registers itself in custom rather than in science and is produced by common sense rather than by learning. Public opinion must be admitted to be not only an unavoidable force but also, up to a point, a justifiable standard in politics.

It is possible to argue, Aristotle says, that in the making of law the collective wisdom of a people is superior to that of even the wisest lawgiver. He develops the argument still farther in connection with his discussion of the political ability of popular assemblies. Men in the mass supplement each other in a singular fashion, so that by one understanding one part of a question and another another part, they all together get around the whole subject. He illustrates this by the assertion (perhaps not quite obvious) that popular taste in the arts is reliable in the long run, while experts make notorious blunders at the moment. To somewhat the same effect is his marked preference for customary as compared with written law. He is even prepared to admit that possibly Plato's plan for abolishing law would be an advantage if only the written law were at stake. But he holds it clearly impossible that the knowledge of the wisest ruler can be better than the customary law. The rigid distinction between nature and convention, with the

extreme intellectualism or rationalism to which this distinction had committed Socrates and Plato, was thus broken down by Aristotle. The reason of the statesman in a good state cannot be detached from the reason embodied in the law and custom of the community he rules.

At the same time, Aristotle's political ideal was quite at one with Plato's in setting up an ethical purpose as the chief end of the state. He never changed his opinion on this point, even after he had enlarged his definition of political philosophy to include a practical manual for statesmen who have to do with governments which are very far from ideal. The real purpose of a state ought to include the moral improvement of its citizens, because it ought to be an association of men living together to achieve the best possible life. This is the "idea" or meaning of a state; Aristotle's ultimate effort at a definition turns upon his conviction that the state alone is "self-sufficing," in the sense that it alone provides all the conditions within which the highest type of moral development can take place. Like Plato, also, Aristotle confined his ideal to the city-state, the small and intimate group in which the life of the state is the social life of its citizens, overlapping the interests of family, of religion, and of friendly personal intercourse. Even in his examination of actual states there is nothing to show that his connection with Philip and Alexander enabled him to perceive the political significance of the Macedonian conquest of the Greek world and of the East. The political failure of the city-state did not, in his eyes, take from it the character of an ideal.

Aristotle's theory of political ideals, therefore, stands upon ground which he had clearly occupied because of his association with Plato. It follows from an effort to adopt and take seriously the chief elements of the theory developed in the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, with such changes as were required to make that theory clear and self-consistent. This applies particularly to the distinctive feature of Plato's later theory, that law must be treated as an indispensable constituent of the state. This being true, it is necessary to take account of the conditions of human nature which make it true. Law must be admitted to include real wisdom, and the accumulation of such wisdom in social custom must be allowed for. And the moral requirements which make law necessary must be incorporated as part of the moral ideals of the state. True political rule must therefore include the factors of subordination to law and of freedom and consent on the part of its subjects. These become factors not of a second-best state but of the ideal state itself.

About Aristotle's ideal state itself not much need be said. In truth it is avowed purpose to construct an ideal state never eventuated, and the reader feels that the task was really little to his taste. What he does is to write a book not on an ideal state but upon the ideals of the state.

The sketch of an ideal state, begun in Books VII and VIII, was apparently never finished, which is significant, especially if it be correct to suppose that these books belong to the earlier draft of the *Politics*. The good life requires conditions both physical and mental, and it is upon these that Aristotle expends his attention. The list of conditions is derived from the *Laws*. It includes specifications regarding the population needed, both its amount and character, the territory most suitable in size, nature, and situation. It is not the case that Aristotle always agrees with Plato. He is distinctly more favorable to a situation on or near the sea, for example, but the differences are matters of detail, and the list of relevant conditions is substantially that which Plato had proposed. Aside from physical conditions of the good life, the most important force in molding citizens is, for Aristotle as for Plato, a compulsory system of education. In his general theory of education Aristotle differs from Plato, as might be expected, in allowing greater weight to the formation of good habits. Thus he places habit between nature and reason among the three things which make men virtuous. Such a change was necessary in view of the importance which custom must have in a state subject to law. Aristotle's discussion is wholly devoted to liberal education and shows, far more than Plato's, an actual contempt for the useful. A plan of higher education such as had formed so notable a part of the *Republic* is conspicuous by its absence—an omission which may of course be due to the fact that the book is unfinished. The government of the ideal state also suggests the *Laws*. Property is to be privately owned but used in common. The soil is to be tilled by slaves, and artisans are to be excluded from citizenship on the ground that virtue is impossible for men whose time is consumed in manual labor.

Conflict of the Ideal and the Actual

So far Aristotle's political ideals have been outlined without raising any questions about the discrepancies and difficulties that would be encountered if these ideals were brought into relation with the actual institutions and practices of cities. The ideal is in itself almost as deductive as Plato's and apparently it had been formed by a kind of dialectical analysis of the defects of the earlier theory. But it is obvious that discrepancies with practice and with ends actually pursued in government are much more serious for Aristotle than for Plato. The latter had never supposed that an ideal need be embodied in practice to be valid, and he had never allowed to custom any such claim to wisdom as Aristotle's theory required. If facts fail to square with ideal truth, Plato could always say, like the mathematician or the mystic, so much the worse for

facts. Aristotle, with a heavy obligation to common sense and the wisdom of the ages, is in no position to be so radical. He might be reformist but never revolutionary. The whole bent and bias of his thought must be toward the view that the ideal, while conceded to be an effective force, must still be a force within the actual current of affairs and not dead against it. The wisdom inherent in custom must, so to speak, be a guiding principle that takes advantage of such plasticity as actual conditions include to lift them gradually to a better conformation. This is the view of nature which Aristotle finally evolved as a result of his reflection upon both social and biological problems.

That Aristotle was by no means at peace with this problem, even when he wrote the treatise on the ideal state, is written large in the complexities of Book III, in which the crucial questions of the whole work are discussed. The conclusion of the book shows that it was designed as an introduction to an ideal state. Books VII and VIII, however, show that Aristotle found the carrying out of this project so unsatisfactory that he never completed it, and when the first draft was enlarged, it was not by proceeding with the sketch of the ideal state but by the insertion of Books IV to VI. These are conspicuously realistic in their purpose and tone but carry forward lines of thought that are started in Book III. It is safe to conclude that the construction of an ideal state became less and less congenial to Aristotle's mode of thought as he grew older, and also that he finally found in Book III an introduction to a line of investigation which he had not originally intended to pursue. This conclusion is borne out by the reading of Book III itself. Its complexities are due, in part at least, to the fact that an introduction to the ideal state involves, to Aristotle's mind, a rather extended study of existing kinds of states. Often he is evidently more interested in the empirical study than in the purpose that he had set himself. In short, the reasons which led Aristotle to insert Books IV to VI after Book III were sound, though presumably they were not the reasons which led him to write Book III in the first place. The plan outgrew its original scope, but it grew from interests that were present at the start.

The general nature of the difficulty which Aristotle confronts is not difficult to see. The political ideal which came to him from Plato presumed that city and citizen are strictly correlative terms. This accounts for three questions which he places at the opening of Book III: What is a state? Who is a citizen? Is the virtue of a good man the same as the virtue of a good citizen? A state is an association of men for the sake of the best moral life. The type of life which a group of men will live in common depends upon what kind of men they are and what ends they design to realize, and reciprocally the end of the state will determine who can be members of it and what kind of life they can

individually live. From this point of view a constitution is, as Aristotle says, an arrangement of citizens, or, as he says elsewhere, a kind of life, and a form of government is the expression of the kind of life which the state is designed to foster. The ethical nature of the state not only dominates but, so to speak, completely overlaps its political and legal nature. Thus Aristotle concludes that a state lasts only so long as its form of government endures, since a change in form of government would signify a change in the constitution or the underlying "kind of life" that the citizens are trying to realize. Law, constitution, state, form of government all tend to coalesce, since from a moral point of view they are all equally relative to the purpose which causes the association to exist.

In so far as the object is to formulate an ideal state, this is not an insuperable objection. For such a state would be dominated by the highest possible kind of life, and Plato, at least, had supposed that an understanding of the idea of the good would show what this is. But to arrive at the idea of the good first and then to use this as a standard for criticising and evaluating actual lives and actual states, was just what made Aristotle despair. If, on the other hand, one begins with the observation and description of actual states, distinctions evidently have to be made. The good man and the good citizen cannot be quite identical, as Aristotle points out, except in an ideal state. For unless the purposes of the state are the best possible, their realization will require a kind of life in the citizens which falls below the best possible. In actual states there must be different kinds of citizens with different kinds of "virtue." Similarly, when Aristotle defines the citizen as one who is eligible to take part in the assembly and to serve on juries—a definition based upon Athenian practice—he is obliged to point out at once that the definition will not fit any but a democratic state. Or again, when he concludes that the identity of the state changes with its form of government, he has to add a warning that the new state is not therefore justified in defaulting the debts and other obligations contracted by the previous state. Distinctions must in practice be made. A constitution is not only a way of life for the citizens but also an organization of officers to carry on public business, and therefore its political aspects cannot be forthwith identified with its ethical purpose. Merely to observe these complexities is to feel a difficulty about the construction of an ideal state to serve as a standard for them all.

A similar sense of the complexities of his problem is apparent when Aristotle passes on to discuss the classification of forms of government. Here he adopts the sixfold classification already used by Plato in the *Statesman*. Having distinguished constitutional from despotic rule by the principle that the former is for the good of all and the

latter for the good of the ruling class only, he crosses this division upon the traditional threefold classification and thus gets a group of three true (or constitutional) states—monarchy, aristocracy, and moderate democracy (polity)—and three perverted (or despotic) states—tyranny, oligarchy, and extreme democracy or mob-rule. The only difference between Plato's treatment and Aristotle's—and it appears to be unimportant—is that the former describes his true states as law-abiding while the latter describes them as governed for the general good. In view of his analysis of what constitutional government means, Aristotle must have thought that the two descriptions came to nearly the same thing. No sooner does he complete the sixfold classification, however, than he points out that there are serious difficulties about it. The first of these is that the popular classification by the number of rulers is superficial and does not say, except by accident, what those who use it mean. What everybody means by an oligarchy is a government by the rich, just as a democracy is a government by the poor. It is true that there are many poor and few rich, but this does not make the relative numbers descriptive of the two kinds of state. The essence of the matter is that there are two distinct claims to power, one based upon the rights of property and the other upon the welfare of the greater number of human beings.

Conflicting Claims to Power

This correction of the formal classification carries Aristotle a long way, for it raises the question, What are the justifiable claims to power in the state? And if there are more than one, how can they be adjusted to each other in such a way as to save them all? Similar questions, as has been said, had already presented themselves to Plato.[11] These questions, be it noted, do not really concern an ideal state—and Plato had not supposed that they did—but the relative merits of actual states, and the relative claims of various classes in the same state. Wisdom and virtue might be said to have an absolute claim to power; at least Plato had thought so and Aristotle did not deny it. But this point is academic. The dispute is not about a general moral principle but about the way to approximate it in practice. Everyone will admit, Aristotle says, that the state ought to realize the largest measure of justice possible and also that justice means some kind of equality. But does equality mean that everybody is to count for one and nobody for more than one, as the democrat supposes? Or does it mean that a man with large property-interests and perhaps a good social position and education ought to count for more than one, as the oligarch believes? Granted

that government ought to be carried on by wise and virtuous rulers, where must you lodge power to get wisdom and virtue, or at least the best available approximation to them?

When the question is put in this way Aristotle immediately perceives that a relative question requires a relative answer. He shows easily enough that wealth has no absolute moral claim to power, for the state is not a trading company or a contract, as Lycophron the Sophist had said. It is easy to show also that counting everybody for one is at most a convenient fiction. But on the other hand, can it be said that property has no rights? Aristotle was convinced that Plato's venture in that direction had proved disastrous, and in any case, as he points out, a plundering democracy is no more honest than an exploiting oligarchy. Property has moral consequences and for this reason is too important to be left entirely out of the picture by anyone who is trying to be realistic. Good birth, good education, good associations, leisure—and these go in some degree with wealth—are not negligible as claims to political influence. The democrat also has something to say relatively for his claim. The number of persons affected surely is a moral consideration in estimating political consequences, and moreover a sober public opinion, Aristotle is convinced, often is right where professedly wise persons are wrong. The upshot of the discussion is that there are objections against every claim to power that can be advanced and also that all the usual claims have a certain amount of merit. It is hard to see just how this conclusion can advance the construction of an ideal state, but it is also obvious that Aristotle has treated a perennial dispute in political ethics with incomparable common sense. In fact, this examination of the conflicting claims of democracy and oligarchy led Aristotle later to lay aside the search for an ideal state and to take up the more modest problem of the best form of government attainable by most states.

The conclusion that no class has an absolute claim to power reenforces the principle that the law must be supreme, since its impersonal authority is less subject to passion than men can claim to be. But Aristotle recognizes that even this, one of his most deeply-held convictions, cannot be asserted quite absolutely. For the law is relative to the constitution and consequently a bad state will be likely to have bad laws. Legality itself then is only a relative guarantee of goodness, better than force or personal power, but quite possibly bad. A good state must be ruled according to law but this is not the same as saying that a state ruled according to law is good.

Apparently Aristotle believed that monarchy and aristocracy alone have any claim to be regarded as ideal states. He has very little to say about aristocracy but he treats monarchy at some length. It is

precisely this discussion of a supposedly ideal state that shows clearest how little he has to say on the subject and connects most clearly with the quite realistic rediscussion of democracy and oligarchy placed in Book IV. The monarchy ought theoretically to be the best form of government if it be assumed that a wise and virtuous king can be found. Plato's philosopher-king would come nearest to having an absolute claim to his power. But then, he would be a god among men. To allow other men to make law for a mortal god would be ridiculous and to ostracize him would not be quite just. The only alternative is to allow him to rule. And yet Aristotle is not perfectly certain that even such a man has an indefeasible right to rule. So much importance does he attach to the equality which ought to exist between citizens of the same state that he questions whether even perfect virtue would be an exception. The problem of equality concerns every form of government, good as well as perverted. Still, Aristotle is willing to admit that monarchy would be suitable for a society in which one family was far superior to all others in virtue and political skill. The truth is that the ideal monarchy is for Aristotle perfectly academic. Except for the authority of Plato he probably would never have mentioned it. He remarks that monarchy according to law is not really a constitution at all, and if this be taken literally, the fact that good government must recognize the supremacy of law really puts the monarchy out of consideration as a true form of government. A monarchy of the ideal type would belong to domestic rather than political rule. Nothing but his acceptance of Plato's sixfold classification brings it into consideration.

When Aristotle turns to an examination of existing monarchies he drops the consideration of an ideal state entirely. Two legal forms of monarchy he knows, the Spartan kingship and the dictatorship, but neither of these is a constitution, and two kinds of monarchical constitution, the Oriental monarchy and the monarchy of the heroic age. The latter, of course, is conjectural and really outside Aristotle's experience. The Oriental monarchy is more truly a form of tyranny, though it is lawful after a barbarian fashion, since Asiatics are slaves by nature and do not object to despotic government. Substantially, therefore, actual monarchy, as Aristotle knows it, is equivalent to such government as that of Persia. However, the significance of this discussion is less in what he says about monarchy than in the fact that he distinguishes the different kinds. Evidently the sixfold classification of states had already lost its meaning for him as compared with an empirical study of the actual working of governments. It was precisely at this point that he took up again the examination of oligarchy and democracy—that is to say, Greek forms of government—in Book IV.

The reasons should now be clear why Aristotle's political ide

did not eventuate in the construction of an ideal state. The ideal state represented a conception of political philosophy which he inherited from Plato and which was in fact little congenial to his genius. The more he struck out an independent line of thought and investigation, the more he turned toward the analysis and description of actual constitutions. The great collection of one hundred and fifty-eight constitutional histories made by him and his students marks the turning point in his thought and suggested a broader conception of political theory. This did not mean that Aristotle turned to description alone. The essence of the new conception was the uniting of empirical investigation with the more speculative consideration of political ideals. Moral ideals—the sovereignty of law, the freedom and equality of citizens, constitutional government, the perfecting of men in a civilized life —are always for Aristotle the ends for which the state ought to exist. What he discovered was that these ideals were infinitely complicated in the realization and required infinite adjustment to the conditions of actual government. Ideals must exist not like Plato's pattern in the Heavens but as forces working in and through agencies by no means ideal.

Footnotes

1 Thus, for example, Ernest Barker (*Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 1906, p. 259) believes that notes of three distinct sets of lectures are combined in the *Politics*, while W. D. Ross (*Aristotle*, 1924, p. 236) calls it a "conflation of five separate treatises."

2 References to the books by number mean the order of the manuscript; so many experiments have been tried that, beyond Books I to III, the numbers are very ambiguous. There is a table giving the order in the principal editions in Immisch's Teubner text, p. vii.

3 *Aristoteles* (1923); Eng. trans. by Richard Robinson, 1934, ch. 10.

4 For a criticism of Jaeger's hypothesis see Ernest Barker's translation of the *Politics* (1948), Introduction II, § 4; pp. xli–xlvi.

5 A considerable list of parallels is given by E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory, Plato and his Predecessors* (1925), pp. 380 ff.

6 *Politics*, 2, 5; 1264 a 1 ff. (Jowett's trans).

7 Cf. *Politics* 3, 6; in 1278 b 31 he refers to his early popular dialogues, while only a few lines before, 1278 b 18, he refers to the discussion of household authority in Book I, though the subject is evidently the same.

8 7, 8; 1328 a 36.

9 3, 16; 1287 a 32.

10 1, 2; 1253 a 31 ff. Cf. *Laws*, 874 e.

11 *Laws*, 690 a ff.

7
Aristotle: political actualities

The opening paragraphs of Book IV of the *Politics* show a significant enlargement of Aristotle's conception of political philosophy. Any science or art ought, he says, to cover the whole of a subject. A gymnastic trainer ought indeed to be able to produce a finished athlete, but he ought also to be able to supervise the physical education of those who cannot become athletes or select suitable exercises for those who need a special kind of training. The same should be true of the political scientist. He needs to know what would be the best government if there were no impediments to be overcome, in other words, how to construct an ideal state. But he should know also what is best relative to circumstances and what will succeed in any given conditions even though it is neither the best abstractly considered nor the best under the circumstances. Finally, on the strength of this knowledge he should be able to judge what form of government is best suited to most states and attainable without presuming more virtue and intelligence than men commonly possess. With this knowledge he can suggest the measures that will be most likely to correct the defects of existing governments. In other words, the complete art of the statesman must take governments as they are and do the best it can with the means it has. It might even divorce itself from moral considerations altogether and tell the tyrant how to succeed in tyranny, as Aristotle actually does later.

No such radical separation of politics from ethics was intended, but nevertheless the new view of the statesman's art makes it a different subject of investigation from the ethics of individual and personal morality. At the beginning of Book III of the *Politics* Aristotle had discussed the virtue of a good man and the virtue of a citizen and had treated their non-identity as a problem. In the closing pages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he takes for granted that they are not identical and presents the problem of legislation as a branch of investigation distinct from the study of the noblest form of ethical ideal. The subject, he says, has been too much neglected but is necessary to complete a philosophy of human nature. Significantly also he refers to his collection of constitutions as a source for studying the causes which preserve or destroy states and which bring good or bad government; it can hardly be doubted that the proposed study is that which ended in the writing of Books IV to VI of the *Politics*.

> *When these have been studied we shall perhaps be more likely to see with a comprehensive view, which constitution is best, and how each must be ordered, and what laws and customs it must use, if it is to be at its best.*[1]

This discrimination of ethics and politics, which marks the beginning of the two as distinct but connected subjects of investigation, is of a piece with the astounding power of logical organization displayed by his philosophy as a whole. By virtue of this capacity, in which he far surpassed Plato, he was able to outline the main branches of scientific knowledge as they have remained even to modern times.

The Political and Ethical Constitutions

The analysis of actual forms of Greek government undertaken in Book IV is attached to the sixfold classification of constitutions in Book III. Perhaps more truly it is connected with the treatment of monarchy in the latter part of that Book. Aristotle now refers to monarchy and aristocracy as belonging to the class of ideal states, though this does not correspond very accurately with the discussion of them in Book III, and he proposes to pass on to a closer examination of oligarchy and democracy. It is commonly supposed, he says, that there is only one form of each of these but this is a fallacy, a remark which recalls his comment on the difficulty of seeing that there are several kinds of monarchy.[2] What the practical statesman needs to know, in order to work with actual government, is how many kinds of oligarchy and democracy there are and what laws are suitable to each kind of constitution. This will enable him to tell what form of government is best for most states, what is best for a state that has to exist under some special condition, what is needed to make any given form of government practicable, and what causes make for stability or instability in different kinds of states.

The reopening of the question of classification with respect to oligarchy and democracy requires a re-examination of the general nature of the constitution. The view which had on the whole prevailed in Book III is that the constitution is an "arrangement of citizens" or a mode of life which more or less dictates the external organization of the state. This is a normal point of view so long as the ethical aspect of the state was uppermost in Aristotle's mind. For the determining factor in any state would be the ethical values which the association of citizens was designed to realize; the moral purposes of the citizens in living together would be the essential thing that they had in common

and hence, so to speak, "the life of the state." Aristotle had, however, defined a constitution also as the arrangement of offices or magistracies, which is closer to a political view of the state in the modern sense. In Book IV the latter definition is restated and the constitution is distinguished from the law, which is the body of rules to be followed by magistrates in performing the duties of their offices. Aristotle also adds still a third analysis of states into social classes, or united groups smaller than the state itself, such as families, or the rich and poor, or occupational groups such as farmers, artisans and merchants. The economic structure of the state is not spoken of as a constitution, but its influence is often decisive in determining what form of political constitution (arrangement of offices) is suitable or feasible. Aristotle compares economic classes to an animal's organs and says that there are as many kinds of states as there are ways of combining the classes necessary to support a social life.

At the outset, therefore, Aristotle has introduced into the discussion of actual states several important distinctions, which to be sure he has not made explicit but which show clearly how far he has progressed in the assessment of real political forces. In the first place, reference has already been made to the discrimination of politics from ethics. This was involved in the plan of treating the actual apart from the ideal constitution, and is marked by the greater importance given to the definition of the constitution as an arrangement of offices. He now distinguishes also the law from the political structure of the organized government. Still more important is the discrimination of political structure from the social and economic structure which lies behind it. The modern distinction between the state and society is one which no Greek thinker made clearly and adequately, and which perhaps could not be clearly made until the state was conceived as a legal structure, but Aristotle at least reached a very good first approximation to it. Moreover, he was able to use the distinction in a highly realistic fashion when he shrewdly remarked that a political constitution is one thing and the way the constitution actually works is another. A government democratic in form may govern oligarchically, while an oligarchy may govern democratically.[3] Thus a democracy with a prevailingly agricultural population may be quite changed by the addition of a large urban trading class, though the political structure of the state—the offices and the political rights of its citizens—is quite unchanged.

The use which Aristotle made of this twofold analysis of the state—into political agencies and classes united by similarity of economic interest—would have been easier to follow if he had always distinguished his use of the one from his use of the other, and if he had discriminated both from the interaction of one upon the other. In his

enumeration of the kinds of democracy and oligarchy it is often hard to see what principle of classification he is following; in fact he offers two lists of each[4] without explaining wherein the two differ, though in one he seems to be thinking mainly of the political constitution and in the other of the economic constitution. Moreover, the classification is complicated by the distinction between lawless and law-abiding governments, though this ought not to apply to oligarchy at all and in any case would have to be regarded as a result derivative from the arrangement of offices or classes. But though the treatment is not schematic, it is substantially clear and unquestionably it represents a mastery of its subject—the internal working of the Greek city-states—such as has rarely been displayed by any later political scientist over any other form of government. Substantially the thought is as follows: There are certain political regulations—such for instance as qualifications for voting and eligibility to office—which are characteristic of democracy and others which are characteristic of oligarchy. There are also economic conditions—such for instance as the way in which wealth is distributed or the predominance of one or another economic class—which predispose a state toward democracy or oligarchy and determine what kind of political constitution will be most likely to succeed. Both the political and the economic arrangements vary in degree, some tending to a more extreme and some to a less extreme form of the two types. The possible number of combinations is large, since states may be formed not only from democratic or oligarchic elements but also from elements of both types, as for instance it would be if the assembly were democratically organized while the judiciary was chosen with some sort of oligarchical qualification. The way a government actually works depends in part on the combination of political factors, in part on the economic factors, and also on the way both sets of factors are combined with each other. Finally, some of the economic factors tend to produce a lawless state and others a law-abiding state, and the same is true of the political factors. Such a conclusion is hard to state in a formal classification, but it has the merit of recognizing a great mass of political and social complexity.

The Democratic and Oligarchic Principles

It will be enough to indicate how in general Aristotle follows out these lines of classification, without giving in detail all the subdivisions of oligarchy and democracy that he mentions. Thus democracies differ in their political constitutions according to their inclusiveness, and this usually follows from the way they use, or fail to use, a property

qualification. There may be no qualification at all, either for voting in the assembly or for holding office, or the qualification may be lower or higher, or it may apply to some offices but not to others. On the other hand, a democracy may not only impose no qualification but may pay its citizens a fee (as at Athens) for jury-service or even for attending the town-meeting, which puts a premium on attendance by the poor. Democracies will differ also according to the economic structure of the state. A democracy composed of farmers may impose no qualification and yet the management of affairs may be wholly in the hands of the gentry, since the mass of people have little time and little inclination to trouble themselves with public business. Aristotle considers this to be the best kind of democracy; the people have considerable power and hold the governing class in check by the possibility that they may use it, but so long as the rulers proceed moderately the people leave them free to do much as they think best. A very different sort of democracy results when there is a large urban population who not only have power but use it by trying to transact public business in the town-meeting. This opens an arena to the demagogues, and such a democracy is nearly certain to become lawless and disorderly. In practice it is hardly different from tyranny. The problem of a democracy is to unite popular power with intelligent administration and the latter is not possible by a large assembly.

The kinds of oligarchy are distinguished upon the same general lines. For oligarchy a property qualification or some condition of eligibility, both for citizenship and for office, is normal, but the qualification may be higher or lower. The oligarchy may be broadly based in the population or power may be confined to a small faction. Such a faction may form a self-perpetuating corporation which fills public offices from its own ranks without even a show of election, and in extreme cases a few families, or even a single family, may have practically hereditary power. What kind of oligarchical government is possible will depend in turn upon the distribution of property. If there is a fairly large class of property owners with no great extremes of wealth, the oligarchy is likely to be broadly based, but if there is a small class of the very wealthy, government will be likely to fall into the hands of a clique. And when this happens it will be hard to prevent the abuses of factional rule. At the extreme, oligarchy, like democracy, becomes practically indistinguishable from tyranny. The problem in an oligarchy is the converse of that in a democracy: it is to keep power in the hands of a comparatively small class without allowing this class to become too oppressive to the masses, for oppression is nearly certain to breed disorder. In Aristotle's judgment aggression by the rich is more prob-

able than aggression by the masses, and consequently oligarchy is harder to regulate than democracy. At the same time an oligarchy broadly based in a population where wealth is pretty evenly distributed may be a law-abiding form of government.

This examination of the kinds of democracy and oligarchy is later elaborated by Aristotle in a more systematic analysis of the political constitution or political organs of government. He distinguishes three branches which are present in some form in every government. First, there is the deliberative branch, which exercises the ultimate legal power of the state in such acts as the making of war and peace, the concluding of treaties, the auditing of magistrates' accounts, and legislation. Second, there are various magistrates or administrative officers, and third, there is the judiciary. Each of these branches may be organized democratically or oligarchically, or more or less democratically or oligarchically. The deliberative body may be more or less inclusive and may exercise a larger or a smaller number of functions. The magistrates may be chosen by a larger or smaller electorate, or in more democratic governments by lot; they may be chosen for longer or shorter terms; they may be more or less responsible to the deliberative branch and may have a larger or a smaller measure of power. In the same way the courts may be popular, chosen by lot from a large panel, and may exercise powers co-ordinate with the deliberative branch itself, as at Athens, or they may be restricted in power or numbers and chosen in a more selective way. Any given constitution may be organized more democratically in one of its branches and more oligarchically in another.

The Best Practicable State

The analysis of the political factors in democracy and oligarchy has put Aristotle in a position where he can consider the question which now takes the place of the construction of an ideal state, viz., what form of government is best for most states, leaving aside special circumstances that may be peculiar to a given case and assuming no more virtue or political skill than states can usually muster? Such a form of government is in no sense ideal; it is merely the best practicable average which results from avoiding the extremes in democracy and oligarchy that experience has shown to be dangerous. This sort of state Aristotle calls the polity, or constitutional government, a name applied in Book III to moderate democracy; Aristotle would not be averse to adopting the word aristocracy (previously used in its etymological

meaning for an ideal state) in those cases where the constitution leans away from popular government too much to be called a moderate democracy.

In any case the distinctive feature of this best practicable state is that it is a mixed form of constitution in which elements are judiciously combined from oligarchy and democracy. Its social foundation is the existence of a large middle class composed of those who are neither very rich nor very poor. It is this class which, as Euripides had said years before, "saves states." For they are not poor enough to be degraded or rich enough to be factious. Where such a body of citizens exists they form a group large enough to give the state a popular foundation, disinterested enough to hold the magistrates responsible, and select enough to avoid the evils of government by the masses. Upon such a social foundation it is possible to build a political structure drawing upon institutions typical of both democracy and oligarchy. There may be a property qualification but only a moderate one, or there may be no property qualification with no use of lot in selecting magistrates. Aristotle regarded Sparta as a mixed constitution. He was probably thinking also of the government attempted at Athens in 411 —in reality a paper constitution—which aimed to form a citizen-body restricted to five thousand able to supply themselves with heavy armor and which in the *Constitution of Athens* Aristotle said was the best government that Athens had ever had. Like Plato, Aristotle is obliged by practical considerations to fall back upon property as a surrogate for virtue. Neither thinker believed on principle that property is a sign of goodness but both reached the conclusion that for political purposes it offers the best practicable approximation to it.

The principle of the middle-class state is balance, balance between two factors that are certain to count for something in every political system. These factors grow from the claims to power discussed in Book III but Aristotle now treats them less as claims than as forces. These two he describes as quality and quantity. The first includes political influences such as arise from the prestige of wealth, birth, position, and education; the second is the sheer weight of numbers. If the first predominates the government becomes an oligarchy; if the second, a democracy. In order to produce stability it is desirable that the constitution should allow for both and balance the one against the other. It is because this is most easily done where there is a large middle class that this kind of state is the most secure and the most law-abiding of practicable constitutions. In some respects Aristotle sees safety in numbers, because he believes in the collective wisdom of a sober public opinion and thinks that a large body is not easily corrupted. But especially for administrative duties men of

position and experience are the best. A state that can combine these two factors has solved the chief problems of stable and orderly government. Undoubtedly Greek history bears out this diagnosis of the internal difficulties which the city-state had to meet. On the other hand, Aristotle has little to say about an equally pressing difficulty which the course of history in his own lifetime ought to have suggested to him—the difficulty of foreign affairs and the fact that the city-state was too small successfully to govern a world in which powers like Macedon and Persia had to be coped with.

In Book V Aristotle discusses at length the causes of revolution and the political measures by which it can be prevented, but the details may be passed over. His political penetration and his mastery of Greek government are apparent on every page. But the theory of the subject is already apparent in the discussion of the middle-class state. Both oligarchy and democracy are in a condition of unstable equilibrium, and as a result each runs the risk of being ruined by being too much itself. A statesman whose practical problem is to govern a state of either kind has to prevent it from carrying out the logic of its own institutions. The more oligarchical an oligarchy becomes the more it tends to be governed by an oppressive faction, and similarly, the more democratic a democracy becomes, the more it tends to be governed by a mob. Both tend to degenerate into tyranny, which is bad in itself and also unlikely to be successful. The almost cynical freedom with which Aristotle advises the tyrant presages Machiavelli. The traditional tactics are to degrade and humiliate all who might be dangerous, to keep subjects powerless, and to create divisions and mistrust among them. A better way is to rule as little like a tyrant as possible, to pretend at least to an interest in the public welfare, and at all events to avoid the public exhibition of a tyrant's vices. In the long run no form of government can be permanent unless it has the support of the major political and economical forces in the state—regard being given both to quality and quantity—and for this reason it is usually good policy to gain the loyalty of the middle class. It is the extreme in any direction that ruins states. In short, if not actually a middle-class government, the state must be as like middle-class government as it can, always of course allowing for any special circumstances which may be decisive in a given case.

The New Art of the Statesman

Aristotle's conception of a new and more general type of political science, including not only a study of the ethical meaning of the state

but also an empirical study of the elements, both political and social, of actual constitutions, their combination, and the consequences which are found to follow from these combinations, represented in no sense an abandonment of the fundamental ideas which he had derived from Plato. It did represent, however, an important modification and readjustment of them. The objective is still the same in so far as it looks to an art of statesmanship able to direct political life to morally valuable ends by means rationally chosen. The state is still to realize its true meaning as a factor in a civilized life and the discovery of this meaning is therefore still of vital importance. The direction of political life along the lines best adapted to give the state its true meaning is a work to be performed by intelligence; it is the subject of a science and an art, and therefore as different for Aristotle as for Plato from the mere sharpness of a designing politician, the bungling of a popular assembly, or the rhetorical cleverness of a demagogue or a sophist. What Aristotle did was not to abandon the ideal but to work forward to a new conception of the science and of the art based on it. Plato had believed that politics could be made the subject of a free intellectual or speculative construction by grasping once for all the idea of the good, though the writing of the *Laws* is enough to show that in the end he was forced substantially beyond this conception of the task. Aristotle's association with Plato fell in the years when this readjustment of his political thought was taking place, and in any case the native bent of Aristotle's mind would probably have forced him along a line different from that upon which Plato had started.

The method of free intellectual construction—suitable enough for a philosophy that adopted mathematics as the type of all knowledge—was therefore closed to Aristotle from the start. This is proved by his inability to carry out the project for a sketch of an ideal state. But it was a slow and difficult task to adapt the ideals of Plato's philosophy to a different method, and this is what Aristotle had to do. The whole story of that readaptation is written in Aristotle's formulation of his own philosophical system, of which the science and art of politics was but a single chapter, though an important one. The embedding of constitutional rule in the ideals of the state—the recognition of law, consent, and public opinion as intrinsic parts of a good political life—was an important first step but one which required Aristotle to go farther. He had to go on to analyze the city-state into its political elements, to study the bearing upon these of underlying social and economic forces. And to studies such as these a speculative method was obviously inappropriate. The collection of constitutions was Aristotle's attempt to amass the data needed to deal with these problems, and the more empirical and more realistic theory of Books IV to VI

was his solution of them. But a more empirical method carried with it a change in the conception of the art which it was to serve. An end outside the political process upon which a state could be modeled would no longer suffice. The statesman of Aristotle's art is, so to speak, seated in the midst of affairs. He cannot model them to his will, but he can take advantage of such possibilities as the posture of events offers. There are necessary consequences which cannot be avoided; there are the chances brought by untoward circumstances which may wreck even a good plan; but there is also art, the intelligent use of available means to bring affairs to a worthy and desirable end.[5]

For Aristotle, then, political science became empirical, though not exclusively descriptive; and the art included the improvement of political life even though this has to be done on a modest scale. It was natural that this advance in his ideas should turn his attention back to first principles and lead him to reconsider the underlying problems from which both he and Plato had started. This he did briefly in the introduction which he wrote for the completed *Politics,* the first book of the present text. Much of this book merely enlarged upon the theory of household government, including economics, and recapitulated the distinction between this and political rule. This subject was not very completely worked out, probably because the re-examination of the household brought Aristotle face to face with questions already considered in Book II as part of the criticism of communism. He never undertook the task of rewriting which would have been needed to fuse the two discussions. In the first part of Book I, however, he went back to the fundamental question of nature and convention, since for his theory as for Plato's it was necessary to show that the state has intrinsic moral value and is not merely an imposition of arbitrary force.

In order to deal with this problem Aristotle canvasses more systematically the definition of the state, starting substantially from the same point as Plato at the beginning of the *Republic.* His procedure follows the theory of definition by genus and differentia which is developed in his logical works. The state, he says, is a kind of community. A community is a union of unlike persons who, because of their differences, are able to satisfy their needs by the exchange of goods and services. This is substantially identical with Plato's belief that the state depends upon a division of labor, but Aristotle differs from Plato because he distinguishes several species of community of which the state is only one. The object of this, of course, is to distinguish the rule of a household—over wife, children, or slaves—from political rule. Plato, in other words, had confused the genus with the species. The problem, therefore, is to determine what kind of community a state is. In Book I the discussion is so entirely levelled against

Plato that Aristotle seems not quite to have developed his whole thought. Elsewhere[6] he points out that the exchange of goods by buying and selling, or merely contractual relations, makes a community but not a state, because there need be no common ruler. In Book I he stresses communities, so to speak, at the other extreme, where there is a distinction of ruler and ruled but not a constitutional or political ruler. This is illustrated by the relation of master and slave, where the latter exists wholly for the master's good. The state lies then in an intermediate position, distinguished from contract on one side and from ownership on the other. This method of definition by approximation, the discrimination of what might be called limiting cases, is frequently used by Aristotle in his scientific works. Unfortunately in the *Politics* he does not consider as systematically as might have been expected the differences between household relations other than slavery, for example, the relation between the head of a household and his wife, which he believed to be different in kind both from his relation to a slave and from the relations of a political ruler to his subjects.

He does, however, propose a general principle for defining the state in contrast with the household. This is the reference to growth or historical development. "He who thus considers things in their first growth and origin, whether a state or any thing else, will obtain the clearest view of them."[7] Aristotle thereupon appeals to the traditional history of the Greek city, which Plato had already used in the *Laws* to introduce the construction of the second-best state. Thus history shows that the family is the primitive kind of community, brought into being by such elemental needs as those for shelter, food, and the propagation of the race. So long as men have progressed no farther than to satisfy these needs, they live in detached families under a patriarchal government. A higher stage of development is represented by the village, which is a union of several families, and a still higher by the state, which is a union of villages.

The growth is not, however, merely in size. At a certain point a community arises which is different in kind from the more primitive groups. It becomes what Aristotle calls "self-sufficing." This refers in part to its territory and its means of economic support, and also to its political independence, but not primarily to these. What is distinctive about the state is, for Aristotle, that it first produces the conditions necessary to a really civilized life. It originates, as he says, in the bare needs of life but it continues for the sake of a good life. To this end it is as important that the state should not be too large as that it should not be too small. For Aristotle never contemplates any social unit other than the Greek city-state as fulfilling the needs of a civilized life. It includes the household as one of its necessary elements—and Plato

was in error in desiring to abolish the more primitive unit—but it is a more developed and therefore a more perfect kind of community. This is shown by the fact that the needs which the state satisfies are the more typically human needs. Even the family, which in its most primitive form depends on physical needs that man shares with all animals, requires capacities definitely beyond those which unite the gregarious animals. For it requires speech and the power to distinguish right from wrong, which are characteristics only of the rational animal. But the state gives the opportunity for a higher development even of these rational powers. Man is distinctively the political animal, the only being that dwells in cities and subjects himself to law and produces science and art and religion and all the many-sided creations of civilization. These represent the perfection of human development and they are attainable only in civil society. To live without it a being must be either a beast or a god; that is, either below or above the medium plane on which humanity lives. In their highest form, as Aristotle believes—dominated as he is by a belief in the unique human capacity of the Greeks—the arts of civilization are attainable only in the city-state.

Nature as Development

The meaning and value of the state arise from the fact that, as Edmund Burke said, it is a partnership in all the sciences and all the arts, and this is Aristotle's final argument against those who assert that law and morals are matters of convention. The argument as Aristotle uses it represents a careful redefinition of the term "nature," such that it can be adapted to every branch of science and made the general principle of a philosophy. It is a practical rule for the guidance of investigation that the simplest and most primitive comes first in time, while the more complete and perfect comes only later after growth has taken place. The later stage, however, shows more adequately than the earlier what the true "nature" of a thing is. This rule Aristotle had found useful on a large scale in his biological studies. A seed, for example, discloses its nature only as it germinates and as the plant grows. The physical conditions, such as soil and heat and moisture, are necessary, but even though they are identical for two different seeds—like an acorn or a mustard seed—the resulting plants are quite different. Aristotle infers that the effective cause of the difference lies in the seeds; each plant contains its own "nature" which displays itself as it gradually unfolds and becomes explicitly what the seeds are implicitly. The same kind of explanation applies also to the growth of the community. In its primitive form, as the family, it shows its intrinsic nature

as a division of labor, but in its higher forms, without failing to satisfy the primitive needs, it shows itself able to give scope for the development of higher capacities which would be dormant if the family only existed. The family, Aristotle says, is prior in time but the state is prior "by nature"; that is, it is the more completely developed and therefore the more indicative of what the community has implicit in it. For the same reason life in the state shows what human nature intrinsically is. No one could even have guessed that the arts of civilization were possible if life had not progressed beyond the kinds of exchange needed to satisfy the primitive needs.

Aristotle's use of the word nature with reference to society has, therefore, a double significance. It is true that men are instinctively sociable because they need each other. The primitive community depends upon impulses embedded in all life, such as sex and the appetite for food. They are indispensable but they are not distinctive of human life, because they are not very different in man and in the lower animals. Human nature is more characteristically displayed in the development of those powers that belong to men alone. And since the state is the only medium in which these can develop, it is "natural" in a sense that is in some respects the opposite of instinctive. Just as it is "natural" for an acorn to grow into an oak, so it is natural for human nature to expand its highest powers in the state. This does not mean that the development must inevitably take place, for the absence of the needed physical conditions will prevent the growth in both cases. Aristotle in fact believes that it is only in the very limited case of the city-state that the higher development takes place and he attributes this to the fact that only Greeks of all men possess the faculty for such a growth. Where it does take place it shows what human nature is capable of, just as a well-watered and well-nourished oak shows what a good acorn really has in it. The state is natural because it contains the possibility of a fully civilized life, but since it requires physical and other conditions for its growth, it presents an arena for the stateman's art. The application of understanding and will does not create it but may very well turn it toward a more perfect unfolding of its innate possibilities.

A theory of nature such as this—derived from biological as well as social studies—appears to Aristotle to provide a logical foundation for his more broadly conceived science and art of politics. Nature is at bottom a system of capacities or forces of growth directed by their inherent nature toward characteristic ends. They require for their unfolding what may be called broadly material conditions, which do not produce the ends at which growth is directed but may aid or hinder growth according as they are favorable or the reverse. The events and

changes that go on continually are the processes of appropriation by which the powers of growth take possession of such material conditions as are available. These three factors, called by Aristotle form, matter, and movement, are the fundamental constituents of nature. They offer scope to the arts because within some limits not easy to discover the plans of the artist can serve as forms toward which the available material can be made to converge. Thus in politics the statesman cannot do anything he chooses, but he can wisely choose those courses which tend at least to a better and more desirable development of social institutions and of human life. In order to do this he needs to understand both what is possible and what is actual. He must know what potentialities of growth are present in the situation before him and what material conditions will give these ideal forces the means of working themselves out in the best way. His investigations always combine two purposes. They must be empirical and descriptive, because without the knowledge of the actual he cannot tell what means are at his disposal or how the means will turn out if used. But they must consider also the ideal dimension of the facts, for otherwise the statesman will not know how his means should be used to bring out the best that his material affords.

Aristotle's conception of the science and art of politics represents the type of investigation which offered the greatest scope to his own mature intellectual genius. In originality and boldness of speculative construction he was by no means the equal of Plato, and the underlying principles of his philosophy were all derived from his master. In the power of intellectual organization, especially in the ability to grasp a pattern or a tendency in a vast and complicated mass of details, he was not only superior to Plato but the equal of any thinker in the later history of science. The use of this capacity, in social studies and in biology, shows Aristotle at the top of his bent, after he had freed himself in some measure from Plato and had struck out for himself a line of thought in accordance with his own originality. It was his growth in this direction that caused him to turn aside from the borrowed purpose of sketching an ideal state and to carry his investigation first toward constitutional history and second toward general conclusions about the structure and functioning of states based upon observation and history. Aristotle was the founder of this method, which has been on the whole the soundest and most fruitful that the study of politics has evolved.

Footnotes

1 *Nic. Eth.*, 10, 9; 1181 b 20 (Ross' trans.).
2 3, 14; 1285 a 1.

3 4, 5; 1292 b 11 ff.
4 Of democracy, 4, 4; 1291 b 30 ff; 4, 6; 1292 b 22 ff. Of oligarchy, 4, 5; 1292 a 39 ff; 4, 6; 1293 a 12 ff.
5 *Metaph.* 7, 7; 1032 a 12 ff.; Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 709 b–c.
6 3, 9; 1280 b 17 ff.
7 1, 2; 1252 a 24 f.

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8
the twilight of the city-state

The political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle was singularly devoid of immediate influence both of a practical and a theoretical kind. In fact, if it were judged by the part that it played in the two centuries following Aristotle's death, it could only be described as a magnificent failure. The reason for this is that the two philosophers between them had stated more completely and perfectly than any successor could hope to do the ideals and the principles of the type of political institution with which they dealt, the city-state. There was in truth no further progress to be made upon that line. This is not to say that what Plato and Aristotle had written had value only as applying to the city-state. The presumption upon which Plato worked—that human relations may be made the object of rational study and may be subjected to intelligent direction—is a *sine qua non* of any social science whatever. And the more general ethical principles of Aristotle's political theory—the conviction that a state ought to be a relation between free citizens morally equal, conducting itself according to law and resting upon discussion and consent rather than force—have never vanished from European political philosophy. These great qualities explain why later thinkers, even down to the present, have repeatedly gone back to Plato and Aristotle. But though much that they wrote thus had permanent significance, it is a fact that Plato and Aristotle believed it to apply to the city-state and to that alone. They never conceived of these or of any political ideals as capable of being realized in any other form of civil society. Their assumption was justified by the facts as they then were, for it is hard to imagine political philosophy taking its rise in any society that then existed except the Greek cities.

Plato and Aristotle were quite aware, of course, that no city in Greece had realized the ideals which they believed to be implicit in the city-state. Had the need for criticism and correction not been clearly present to their minds, they would never have tried to analyze the society in which they lived or to distinguish its perversions from its successes. But while they criticized—and often sharply—they still believed that the conditions of a good life did measurably exist in the city state. And while they would gladly have changed many of its practices they never doubted that the city-state was fundamentally sound and the only ethically sound foundation for the higher forms of civilization. Their criticism was, therefore, basically friendly. They spoke for

the class of Greeks that found life in the city-state substantially satisfying, though by no means perfect. But it is an ominous symptom that both men, certainly without intending to be spokesmen for a class, were driven to make citizenship more and more explicitly a privilege and therefore the prerogative of those who had the property and the leisure to enjoy the luxury of political position. The deeper Plato and Aristotle penetrate into the underlying ethical meaning of the city-state, the more they are forced to the conclusion that this meaning exists only for a few and not for the whole mass of artisans and farmers and wage-earners, as the democracy of the Periclean Age had imagined. This in itself suggests—what was the fact—that others less vocal or less favorably situated might see in the city-state a form of society that needed not to be improved but to be superseded; at least they might regard it as a thing to be neglected by men in search of a good life. Such a criticism, of protest or at least of indifference, did exist, somewhat obscurely, in the age of Plato and Aristotle. But the historical circumstances were such that the immediate future lay with it rather than with the more imposing theories of the greater men, and this explains the temporary eclipse of their political philosophy after Aristotle's death. When the city-state had been relegated to history and it was no longer possible to picture political values as realizable only in it, men could return to exploit the infinite fertility of the *Republic*, the *Laws*, and the *Politics*.

The common form taken by these diverse philosophies of protest or indifference—and their startling significance in the fourth and third centuries—can be grasped only by keeping clearly in mind the ethical presumption which lay behind all that Plato and Aristotle wrote about the state. This is the presumption that a good life implies participation in the life of the state. It was this which enabled Plato to start with the proposition that the state is at bottom a division of labor in which men of differing capacity satisfy their needs by mutual exchange. Plato's conception was made merely more complete in Aristotle's analysis of the community. This presumption caused both men to regard participation as a conception ethically more important than either duties or rights, and to see in citizenship a sharing of the common life. From this point of view citizenship stands at the summit of human goods, or at least this would be so if both the city and human nature were developed to the top of their bent. This presumption represents the very genius of the ethics and politics of the city-state. And for this reason the essence of protest is the denial of it. Assert that a man, in order to live a good life, must live outside the city-state, or being in it should at any rate not be of it, and you have set up a scale of values not only

foreign to but essentially opposed to that assumed by Plato and Aristotle. Say that the wise man will have as little to do with politics as he can, that he will never willingly take the responsibilities or the honors of public office, but will shun both as a useless cause of anxiety, and you have said that Plato and Aristotle have set up a wholly erroneous notion of wisdom and goodness. For such a good is private, something which a man gains or loses in himself and by himself, and not something that requires a common life. Self-sufficiency, which Plato and Aristotle regarded as an attribute of the state, becomes an attribute of the individual human being. The good becomes something not strictly conceivable within the confines of the city-state—a good of privacy and withdrawal. It is the growth of this kind of ethical theory that marks the twilight of the city-state.

The attitude of Plato and Aristotle toward this ethics of withdrawal is significant. They know its existence but they cannot quite take it seriously. Thus there is perhaps a gibe at the Cynic scheme of life in the "pig-state" of the *Republic*,[1] where living is reduced to the barest and rudest necessaries. There is almost certainly a sneer behind Aristotle's remark that the man who can live without the state is either a beast or a god. The moralist who sets up the ideal of individual self-sufficiency claims the attributes of a god, but he is likely to live the life of a beast. Only in the introduction to his ideal state does Aristotle propose to argue the relative merits of the statesman's and the philosopher's life, and here he does not really argue. He merely asserts that "happiness is activity" and that "he who does nothing cannot do well."[2] He almost certainly is thinking of the Cynics, and it is not improbable, as Jaeger suggests, that some of Plato's students had enlarged upon the ideal of the contemplative life in the spirit of Plato's own remark that the philosopher might have to be compelled to return to the den. At all events the Academy certainly had moved in this direction a generation later. But for Aristotle the argument has really not got beyond the level of epigram. The whole structure of his political thought assumes that the citizen's activity is the chief good and he never takes any other view seriously.

The Failure of the City-State

Beside the theoretical assumption that only the city-state is morally self-sufficient there is also in the reformist political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle a practical assumption of great importance and one which had the misfortune to be not quite true under existing

circumstances. The improvement of the city-state within limits set by that form of government took for granted that its rulers were free agents, able by the choice of wise policies to correct its internal defects. The complete acceptance of it as a moral institution by Plato and Aristotle meant in effect that their political horizon was bounded by it. In consequence neither of them was as keenly aware as he should have been of the part which foreign affairs played even in the internal economy of the city-state. It is true that Aristotle criticized Plato for this omission,[3] but it cannot be said that he did better himself. If Plato had been as closely associated with Macedonia as Aristotle, he would hardly have failed to perceive the epoch-making importance of the career of Alexander. It is interesting to conjecture what might have happened if it had occurred to Aristotle to consider the hypothesis that the city-state needed to be absorbed into some still more self-sufficing political unit, as it had itself absorbed the family and the village. But this was beyond his power of political imagination. In fact, however, the fate of the city-state depended not upon the wisdom with which it managed its internal affairs but upon its interrelations with the rest of the Greek world and upon the relations of Greece to Asia on the east and to Carthage and Italy on the west. The supposition that the city-state could choose its mode of life regardless of limits fixed by these foreign relations was fundamentally false. Plato and Aristotle might deplore, like many other intelligent Greeks, the contentiousness and belligerency of the relations between the Greek cities, but as the event proved, these vices were ineradicable so long as the cities remained independent.

As Professor W. S. Ferguson has pointed out,[4] the Greek city-state from a date early in its history was confronted by a political dilemma which it never was able to cope with. It could not attain self-sufficiency, either in its economics or its politics, without adopting a policy of isolation, and it could not isolate itself without suffering stagnation in that very culture and civilization which Aristotle regarded as its crown of glory. On the other hand, if it chose not to isolate itself, it was driven by political necessity to seek alliances with other cities, and these alliances could not be successful without impairing the independence of their members. The dilemma ought to be comprehensible to a modern political observer, for it was substantially similar to that in which a more inclusive economy has placed the nation-state. The modern nation can neither isolate itself nor, as yet at least, curb its independence enough to form a more viable political unit. All the modern fictions about complete national sovereignty united with international regulation find their parallel in the Greek alliances of allegedly independent cities. By the middle of the fourth century these federations

were the prevailing form of government in the Greek world, but they quite failed to make permanent and stable states. Even as late as the formation of the Panhellenic League by Philip, at Corinth in 338, the cities, had they been able to work together, might have gone far toward influencing and even controlling the policy of Macedonia, but the inherent particularism of the city-state was unable to rise to the opportunity. It is a matter of speculation whether, had the Greek cities been left to themselves, they would ever have succeeded in producing a really effective kind of federal government. It was of the essence of the situation that they could never hope to be left to themselves.

Greek particularism and its dangers to Greek political life were an old story even in Plato's day. Especially the orators, from the beginning of the fourth century, had urged the cities to unite against the barbarians either of the east or of the west. Gorgias of Leontini had made it the subject of an oration at the Olympian Games, as had also Lysias a little later in 388. Isocrates had urged unity and lived to see in Philip of Macedon, as he believed, the man of destiny who might bring it about. Yet the treaty of Antalcidas (387–6) had established the suzerainty of Persia over the Greek world in matters of war and peace, and the Persian power persisted until it passed into the hands of Philip by the formation of the League at Corinth. Two centuries later the control of Greece was taken over by the expanding power of Rome. In foreign affairs, therefore, the city-state had failed permanently and more or less obviously from a date quite early in the fourth century. Even if the confederation had succeeded in stabilizing relations among the cities themselves, they would still have had to deal with the great political forces that surrounded the Greek world on the east, north, and west. And this they were doubly incapable of doing.

The failure of the cities to stabilize their relations with one another was not, however, a failure only in a special branch of administration. Foreign and domestic affairs were never really separable in the city-states, for the class interests which were oligarchic or democratic in internal politics were similar from city to city and continually made common cause. No important aspect of local government could avoid making its peace in some fashion or other with the political and economic ties which ran between cities. And this is as true of the Macedonian intervention as of the relations between cities. The interests of property were in general on the side of Macedonia and this is one important reason why the more prosperous classes tended to look with complaisance upon the rise of Philip's power. For obvious reasons democratic interests had more local patriotism. The inextricable intertwining of foreign and domestic policy is admirably illustrated by the treaties between Alexander and the cities of the League of Corinth.

In addition to the control of foreign affairs, Macedonia and the League were given the responsibility of repressing, in the cities of the League, any movement for the abolition of debt, the redivision of land, the confiscation of property, or the liberation of slaves. Later leagues included similar provisions.[5] The old issue between wealth and poverty, which Plato and Aristotle regarded as the essential difference between oligarchy and democracy, was in no way diminished as time went on. If anything it grew sharper; foreign intervention might draw the lines anew but the lines were still there.

The truth is that the social and political problems of the Greek world were not soluble by the city-states. It would be false to imply that they were really solved by the confederations and the monarchies that followed the conquests of Alexander. What became ever clearer was that the politics of the city-state did not even state the problems. The rise of Macedonia forced home the recognition of two facts that had existed but that Plato and Aristotle had for the most part overlooked. The one fact was that the city-state was too small and too contentious to govern even the Greek world and that no perfecting of it would make it commensurable with the economy of the world in which it lived. The other fact was that the assumed political superiority of Greeks over barbarians was not viable in the eastern Mediterranean, in view of the economic and cultural relations which had long existed between the Greek cities and the Asiatic hinterland. When Alexander deliberately adopted the policy of merging his Greek and his oriental subjects—a policy which must have been flatly contradictory of all that Aristotle had taught him about politics—he was at once accepting a fact whose importance his master had missed and also taking a step which made his master's political presumptions definitely obsolete.

Withdrawal or Protest

It is clear, then, that there was nothing accidental about the existence and the spread of a political philosophy much more negative in its attitude toward the values native to the city-state than that of Plato and Aristotle The city-state of course continued to exist, and most of them continued for a long time to control their local affairs by the old governing bodies. No general statement can be made that will cover all the degrees and kinds of control over them in the Hellenistic Period. But no intelligent observer who had a sense of humor could take them quite so seriously as to suppose that their offices formed the capstone of a very significant career. A negative attitude might arise merely from a perception of the fact that the government of the city was not so

important as men had imagined, that the life of any city was not for the most part in its own power, and that the most gifted statesman could not hope to accomplish much in that arena. The result would be a defeatist attitude, a mood of disillusionment, a disposition to withdraw and to create a private life in which public interests had a small or even a negative part; a public career would be indifferent or even an actual misfortune. This point of view was perhaps best illustrated by the Epicureans or the Skeptics. On the other hand, a much more forthright negation of the city-state and its values might arise in so far as the unfortunate and dispossessed succeeded in making themselves vocal. Here it might be expected that withdrawal would be accompanied by a note of protest or a stress upon the seamy side of the existing social order. Such a protest might well be unable to state an adequate ideal of its own and might therefore run to fantastic or even indecent extremes. This tendency was illustrated best by the Cynic School.

It was characteristic of all these Schools, as has been said, that they did not follow the lines laid down by Plato and Aristotle. Their significance lies in the fact that they branched out in a new direction and began lines of thought to which the future was to give importance. For this reason they stand in some respects upon a much lower level of perfection than the work of the great theorists of the city-state. None of their authors possessed the transcendent genius of Plato and none had Aristotle's incomparable mastery of the history and government of the city-states. Their importance lies in the fact that they present a different point of view, that they raise questions about first principles, and that they make an opening for the restatement of these principles in a situation very different from that which Plato and Aristotle had envisaged. Considered sympathetically the failure of the city-state must be interpreted as a major moral disaster, at least for those classes that were mainly affected. It meant infinitely more than the closing of a political career can possibly mean in an age when in any case the whole scheme of values is largely private and personal. It forced upon men the creation for the first time of ideals of personal character and private happiness such as a Greek, trained in the ideals of the city-state, could scarcely see as other than a makeshift and a renunciation. This may be perceived in the growth of large numbers of private societies for religious or social purposes, such as the classical age had felt no need for, a tendency characteristic of the Hellenistic age.[6] These are manifestly an effort to compensate for the social interests left unsatisfied by the recession of the city from a place of first-rate importance. To Plato and Aristotle the values offered by citizenship still seemed fundamentally satisfying, or at least capable of being made so; to a few of their contemporaries and increasingly to their successors this appeared to be

false. It was this profound difference of point of view that made it necessary for the time being to turn aside from the political philosophy which they had left.

All the schools that taught the ideal of individual self-sufficiency professed to arise directly from the teaching of Socrates. How much truth there may have been in any of these claims is impossible to say, and after the generation had passed that had known him in person, his professed followers probably knew little more about it than is known now. Socrates became and remained almost a myth, the ideal wise man and philosophic hero, whom every school set up as the professed example of its teaching. In one sense, however, the philosophical problem really did return to the posture in which it had stood before the work of Plato. It was a recanvassing of the old issue about the meaning of nature and its relation to customary and conventional rules of popular morals. This was of course true for the generation to which Plato belonged, since everyone really did begin where Socrates left off, but it was true at a later date also for those who found themselves unable to accept the elaborate solutions offered by Plato and Aristotle. The more it became doubtful whether the city-state actually did provide the only conditions upon which a civilized life can be lived, the more it was necessary to re-examine the previous question: What are the essential and permanent factors in human nature from which a theory of the good life can be derived? Theories that Plato considered and rejected get a new hearing.

There were, as has been said, two chief forms of political philosophy to be considered in this connection. The one was most fully developed in the Epicurean School, though the differences between Epicureans and Skeptics were not very important, so far as the negations of their political theories were concerned. The second was the very different political philosophy of the Cynic School. It will be convenient to consider the two forms of theory in this order.

The Epicureans

The purpose of Epicureanism[7] was, in general terms, the same as that of all the ethical philosophy of the period after Aristotle, namely, to produce in its students a state of individual self-sufficiency. To this end it taught that a good life consists in the enjoyment of pleasure, but it interpreted this negatively. Happiness consists actually in the avoidance of all pain, worry, and anxiety. The pleasures of congenial friendship, which Epicurus sought to realize within the circle of his pupils,

were those which formed the positive content of his doctrine of happiness, and this involved a withdrawal from the useless cares of public life. The wise man, therefore, will have nothing to do with politics unless circumstances compel him to do so. The philosophical basis of this teaching is a system of thoroughgoing materialism adopted from earlier philosophies, and apparently chosen less because it was certainly true than because of the consolations which it was believed to hold out. The secret of its power of consolation lay in the fact that Epicurus counted the anxieties of religion, of divine retribution, and the incomprehensible whims of gods and spirits, as among the most serious to which men are heir. The gods, we may be sure, care nothing about men and do not interfere either for good or ill in the course of their lives. This was in fact the most virile part of the Epicurean teaching. The School was a caustic critic of all sorts of superstitious practice and belief, such as divination and astrology—a really substantial evil—and its record in this respect is in honorable contrast to that of Stoicism, which was only too ready to find adumbrations of truth in popular beliefs that were obviously not true.

So far as the world at large is concerned, then, nature means simply physics, the atoms out of which all things are made. So far as human beings are concerned, nature means self-interest, the desire of every man for his own individual happiness. All other regulation of human action belongs to the class of conventions and is therefore meaningless for the wise man, except in so far as a conventional rule may be serviceable in producing more happiness than men would get without it. There are, therefore, no intrinsic moral virtues and no intrinsic value of any sort except happiness.

> *There never was an absolute justice but only a convention made in mutual intercourse, in whatever region, from time to time, providing against the infliction or suffering of harm.*[8]

The argument against intrinsic values is the variety of moral rules and practices which have prevailed in different times and places, an argument, which was originally exploited by certain of the Sophists and which had been noticed (and in intention refuted) by Plato in the discussion of justice in the *Republic*. At a later date it was vastly elaborated by the Skeptic Carneades against the Stoics.[9] The vital point in the argument is the view that the good is a feeling privately enjoyed and that social arrangements are justified, if at all, only as devices to secure the largest possible private good.

States, then, are formed solely for the sake of obtaining security,

especially against the depredations of other men. All men are essentially selfish and seek only their own good. But in this way the good of everyone is jeopardized by the equally selfish action of all other men. Accordingly men enter into a tacit agreement with each other neither to inflict nor to suffer harm. The doing of injustice is not bad in itself, but suffering its consequences without protection is worse than any advantage to be gained. Since the state of affairs resulting from a general practice of injustice is intolerable, men adopt as a working compromise the plan of respecting the rights of others for the sake of obtaining an equal forbearance from them. In this way the state and the law come into existence as a contract to facilitate intercourse between men. If no such contract exists, there is no such thing as justice. Law and government exist for the sake of mutual security and they are effective solely because the penalties of the law make injustice unprofitable. The wise man will act justly because the fruits of injustice are not worth the risk of detection and punishment. Morality is identical with expedience.

It follows, of course, that what men regard as right and just conduct will vary with circumstances and with time and place.

> *Whatever in conventional law is attested to be expedient in the needs arising out of mutual intercourse is by its nature just, whether the same for all or not, and in case any law is made and does not prove suitable to the expediency of mutual intercourse, then this is no longer just. And should the expediency which is expressed by the law vary and only for a time correspond with the notion of justice, nevertheless, for the time being, it was just, so long as we do not trouble ourselves about empty terms but look broadly at facts.*[10]

In general, no doubt, justice is largely the same among all peoples, for human nature is much the same everywhere, but still it is easy to see that at least in its applications the principle of expedience will vary more or less according to the kind of lives men lead. Thus what is wrong for some peoples may be right for others. For similar reasons a law which was perhaps originally just because it facilitated human intercourse may become wrong if the conditions change. In any case the test of law and of political institutions lies solely in expedience; in so far as they meet the need for security and make mutual intercourse safer and easier they are just in the only intelligible sense of the word. It was not unnatural therefore that the Epicureans, while caring little about forms of government, should have had a general preference for

the monarchy as being the strongest and therefore the securest of governments. They were drawn no doubt mainly from the propertied classes, for whom security is always a major political good.

The social philosophy of the Epicureans was backed up by a really impressive theory of the origin and development of human institutions upon purely materialistic principles. This has been preserved in the fifth book of Lucretius's poem *De rerum natura* but it presumably originated with Epicurus. All the forms of social life, its political and social institutions, the arts and sciences, in short, all human culture, have come about without the intervention of any intelligence other than man's. Living beings themselves are the result of purely physical causes, and Epicurus borrowed from Empedocles a theory that rather crudely suggests the modern hypothesis of natural selection. Man has no instinctive leaning toward society and no impulsion other than the restless pursuit of his individual happiness. In the beginning he lived a roving and solitary life, seeking shelter in caves and struggling to maintain himself against wild beasts. The first step toward civilization was the accidental discovery of fire. Gradually he learned to shelter himself in huts and to clothe himself with skins. Language originated from the cries by which instinctively he expressed his emotions. Experience and the more or less intelligent adaptation of action to the conditions of nature in time produced the various useful arts, as well as the institutions and laws of organized society. Civilization is wholly the creation of natural human powers acting within the conditions set by the physical environment. Belief in the gods arises from dreams; the beginning of wisdom lies in the realization that the gods take no part in human affairs.

The full possibilities of such a theory of social evolution, and of a political philosophy based upon pure egoism and contract, could not be exploited until modern times. Then it was revived and the political philosophy of Hobbes—in its underlying materialism, its reduction of all human motives to self-interest, and in its construction of the state upon the need for security—is remarkably like Epicureanism. In the ancient world the drift of thought was against its most vital element—its attack upon religion and superstition—for the importance of religion among human interests was pretty steadily on the increase. It is true, however, that Epicureanism was on the whole a philosophy of escape. The charges of sensualism which gave its very name a bad meaning are mostly groundless, but it probably tended to foster a kind of bloodless aestheticism incapable of influencing, or of wishing to influence, the course of human affairs. For individual men it was a source of peace and consolation, but for the time being it had nothing to do with the progress of political ideas.

The Cynics

The Cynics also, perhaps held a philosophy of escape but of a very different kind. More than any other School they formulated a protest against the city-state and the social classifications upon which it rested, and their escape lay in the renunciation of everything that men commonly called the goods of life, in the levelling of all social distinctions, and in abandoning the amenities and sometimes even the decencies of social conventions. Apparently they were recruited from the ranks of the foreigners and exiles, that is, from those who already stood outside the citizenship of the state. The founder of the School, Antisthenes, had a Thracian mother; its most notorious member, Diogenes of Sinope, was an exile; and its most able representative, Crates, seems to have renounced his fortune to adopt a life of philosophic poverty as a wandering beggar and teacher. His wife, Hipparchia, was a woman of good family who was first his pupil and then the companion of his wanderings. The Cynics formed a somewhat vague and quite unorganized body of roving teachers and popular philosophers who adopted a life of poverty on principle and who suggested somewhat the mendicant friars of the Middle Ages. Their teaching was addressed for the most part to the poor; they taught contempt for all the conventionalities; and in their behavior they often affected a shocking rudeness and disregard for decorum. In so far as the ancient world produced such a phenomenon, the Cynic may be described as the earliest example of the proletarian philosopher.

The philosophical basis of their teaching was the doctrine that the wise man ought to be completely self-sufficing. This the Cynics take to mean that only what is within his power, his own thought and character, is necessary to a good life. Everything except moral character is a matter of indifference. Among things indifferent the Cynic includes property and marriage, family and citizenship, learning and good repute, and in short all the pieties and conventions of a civilized life. All the customary distinctions of Greek social life were thus subjected to an annihilating criticism. Rich and poor, Greek and barbarian, citizen and foreigner, freeman and slave, well-born and base-born are all equal, for they are all reduced to the common level of indifference. The equality of the Cynics, however, was the equality of nihilism. The School never became the medium for a social doctrine either of philanthropy or of amelioration, but leaned always toward the ascetic and puritanical. For poverty and slavery were literally of no consequence in their eyes; true, the freeman was no better than the slave, but neither the one nor the other had any value in himself, nor would the Cynic

admit that slavery was an evil or freedom a good. They appear to have been actuated by a real hatred of the social discriminations universal in the ancient world, but this hatred led them to turn their backs on inequality and to seek in philosophy the entrance into a spiritual realm where the abominations would not matter. It was hardly less a philosophy of renunciation than Epicureanism, but it was the renunciation of the ascetic and nihilist rather than of the esthete.

The result was that the political theory of the Cynics was utopian. Both Antisthenes and Diogenes are said to have written books on politics and both seem to have sketched a kind of idealized communism, or perhaps anarchy, in which property, marriage, and government disappeared. The problem was not one that, as the Cynic conceived it, touched the lives of the great majority of men. For most men, of whatever social class, are in any case fools, and the good life is only for the wise man. Equally, a true form of society also is for the wise man only. Philosophy emancipates its votaries from the laws and conventions of the city; the wise man is equally at home everywhere and nowhere. He requires neither home nor country, neither city nor law, because his own virtue is a law to him. All institutions are equally artificial and equally beneath the notice of the philosopher, for between men who have attained moral self-sufficiency these things are all unnecessary. The only true state is that in which wisdom is the requirement for citizenship and this state has neither place nor law. All wise men everywhere form a single community, the city of the world, and the wise man is, as Diogenes said, a "cosmopolitan," a citizen of the world. This conception of world-wide citizenship involved important consequences and had a distinguished history in Stoicism, but this was due chiefly to the positive meaning which the Stoics gave it. What the Cynics emphasized was its negative side: primitivism, the abolition of civic and social ties and of all restrictions except those that arise from the wise man's sense of duty. The protest of the Cynic against social convention was a doctrine of the return to nature in the most nihilist sense of the term.

The chief practical importance of the Cynic School lay in the fact that it was a matrix from which Stoicism emerged. But the Cynics have an interest perhaps out of proportion to their importance. After an interval of more than two thousand years it is not easy to recover the obscurer elements of political thought and those not in accord with the more vocal classes in the state. The rise and spread of Cynicism shows that, even as far back as the time of Socrates, there were some upon whom the institutions of the city-state bore heavily and who saw in it by no means an object to be idealized. With Plato and Aristotle

in opposition these men were bound to be minor prophets. Yet what they saw at the beginning of the fourth century of the declining importance of the city-state was only what all men saw by the end of the century.

Footnotes

1 372 d.
2 7, 3; 1325 a 16 ff.
3 *Politics*, 2, 6; 1265 a 20.
4 *Hellenistic Athens* (1911), pp. 1 ff.
5 W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (1927), p. 104.
6 Tarn, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
7 The School was founded by Epicurus at Athens in 306 and remained for centuries one of the four great Athenian Schools. It was connected with Socrates through Aristippus.
8 Golden Maxims, 33. See R. D. Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean* (1910), pp. 177 ff.
9 Carneades's argument is reviewed at length by Cicero, *Republic*, Bk. III, 5–20.
10 Golden Maxims, 37.

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