Rationalism in Greek Philosophy
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THE PHILOSOPHERS WHOM WE have discussed so far are all associated with the periphery of the ancient world, the Pythagoreans in southern Italy, Anaximenes and Anaximander in Miletus, Heraclitus in Ephesus, and Democritus in Thrace. Yet there seems to be no peculiarly colonial character in their philosophies, nothing which would make them any different from other men’s theories. One sees no striking influence of Oriental thought on those who wrote in Asia Minor, nothing especially primitive in the ideas of those who lived near the early Italians or Scythians. If we have grouped them together, it is partly because they are chronologically earlier than the men of whom we treat in this chapter, though that would not apply either to Zeno the Eleatic or to Democritus, and partly because it is traditional to do so. The notion that for some reason or other they were particularly interested in cosmological problems, such as the origin of things, is not borne out by the fragments which remain of their works, for these show quite as much interest in biology, and, in the case of
Parmenides and the Pythagoreans, in dialectical technique. The traditional interpretation of them as cosmologists derives from the first chapters of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, but that was written to see to what extent his predecessors had made use of his four causes in their writings. And he found that for the most part they were interested only in his material cause. In fact, it is largely because of the fragmentary character of their literary remains that they are seen as precursors of the Athenian philosophers, rather than as their rivals. If we had their books in their entirety, it is likely that, in spite of the use to which Aristotle put them, we should see that they showed the same interest in noncosmological questions as their successors.

The fifth and early fourth centuries are usually and justifiably thought of as the period of Athenian cultural supremacy. It is the period which opens with those glorious years known as the Periclean Age (roughly 460–430 B.C.) and closes with the death of Aristotle (322 B.C.) and the decay of his school, the Lyceum. But this must not be taken to mean that something utterly new and unprecedented began at a given date and that it ended abruptly at another. On the contrary, we can see the same problems which are found in the early philosophers reappearing in the Athenians and the same problems which Aristotle investigated being elaborated in even greater detail after his death. We simply have more texts to go on from this period and consequently more information about what the philosophers thought and why they thought it, as well as more insight into the intellectual conflicts which stimulated philosophical reflection at this time. We have, moreover, more nonphilosophical writings, in which philosophical ideas are either reflected, combated, or reported, than in earlier periods. We know more about the political history of the time, more about cultural developments, more about the fine arts, and more about the personalities whose influence on philosophy may have been decisive. Yet in spite of this we do not know with any impressive degree of certainty why this age should have contained so many men of genius.
Throughout European history there have been similar periods which are named after powerful individuals, usually rulers. We have the Augustan Age in Rome, the Age of Charlemagne in northern Europe, the Age of Lorenzo de’ Medici in Florence, the Age of Elizabeth I in England, the Age of Louis XIV in France. All these ages have in common a concentration of the arts and sciences either about a court or in a city or its surroundings. The personal influence of a ruler such as Pericles or Augustus or Charlemagne, his interest in enriching his capital, his desire to protect men of outstanding ability, his willingness to spend money for the attainment of such purposes, must not be discounted, however fashionable the purely economic interpretation of history may be. The wealth of the Spanish rulers after the conquest of South America did little if anything comparable to Periclean Athens or Augustan Rome in the Iberian peninsula, nor has the unprecedented wealth of modern North America produced in the United States an Aeschylus, a Sophocles, or even a Euripides. Without riches, it is unlikely that Pericles could have beautified Athens, but riches have not sufficed elsewhere to produce a Phidias. What has to be explained, moreover, is not the appearance in a given locality of a great architect, a great poet, a great philosopher, or a great statesman. On the contrary, the problem is to explain the appearance of a group of such men all working at the same time and in the same city. But that would seem to be, as far as Athens is concerned, a unique event and the unique is precisely the inexplicable or, if one prefer, the accidental.

The Periclean Age lasted for thirty years. It was followed by continued war and the political overthrow of Athenian independence. Pericles died in 429, two years after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, which ended a generation later (404 B.C.) in the utter ruination of the city. But in the middle of the fourth century (338 B.C.) she was conquered by Macedonia and from then on declined in military and political strength. But that did not prevent the rise of men like Plato and Aristotle, to say nothing of the great orators, the writers of the New Comedy, Zeno the
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Stoic and Chrysippus at the end of the fourth century along with Epicurus a bit later. In sculpture we have the names, if not the works, of Paepius, Myron, Polyclitus, and of course Phidias, while in the fourth century we have that of Praxiteles. The works of these men are no longer stylish and current taste prefers more “primitive” art. But nevertheless, during the Italian Renaissance and in the so-called Neoclassic Period, they were the inspiration—through Roman copies and modern casts—of artists who were by no means contemptible. But we are not interested in appraising such artists; we are simply saying that their existence and their influence are enough to prove that cultural life in Athens, and indeed elsewhere in Greece, did not die out with military defeat and economic decline.

I

1. The earliest in date of the philosophers living in Athens is Anaxagoragas who came there from Clazomenae. Most of the fragments which remain deal with cosmological and epistemological questions, but there appears dimly in them a notion that behind the veil of sensory perception lies a truth which most men do not apprehend. That truth is that regardless of perceived changes, there is no mutability in the real world. “The Greeks,” he says (fr. B17), “are wrong in thinking that there is coming-into-being and destruction. For nothing comes into being, nor is it destroyed, but from the things which are there is both mixture and separation.” Here he agrees with Empedocles. “Therefore they would rightly call coming-into-being mixture and destruction separation.” It is because of the weakness of our senses that we do not see the truth (fr. B21). Now what would we see if we did see it? We should see that all qualities are always present in everything,

1 So in our own times, to take but one example, France throughout most of the nineteenth century has been the victim of wars, revolutions, financial disasters, and political turmoil, and yet has produced writers, painters, sculptors, and architects of genius.
but in such tiny amounts that they are imperceptible to us now. Yet the fact that we cannot perceive them does not entail the belief that they do not exist: our organs of perception are simply too weak to apprehend them. Their existence, then, is inferred from the principle which had been used by other philosophers, namely, that it is irrational to believe in the spontaneous appearance of anything. In the beginning, says Anaxagoras (fr. Br), "all things were together, unlimited both in multitude and in smallness. For smallness too was unlimited [infinitesimal?]. And since all things were together, nothing was discernible because of its small size." As we have said, behind this argument there seems to lie the principle *ex nihilo nihil*, since Anaxagoras is emphatic in denying the possibility of genesis and destruction. His critique then is once more a critique of sensory experience.

But, like most of his contemporaries, he is also interested in the problem of how things got to be the way they are. In other words he not only makes an epistemological analysis of the world but also assumes the historical point of view. Epistemologically the world is split between what our gross senses perceive and what the reason knows to be the case. Our sense organs are too obtuse to grasp the mixture of qualities which is present in everything. So today a painter might point out that if we looked through a magnifying glass at his canvas, we should see little grains of yellow and of blue pigment in the areas which appear green to the naked eye. He could then say, if it served his purpose, that the area of the canvas is "really" covered with yellow and blue grains, but that it appears to be green. This might include, as one sees, an explanation of why the area in question appears to be green, an explanation based on the laws of perceptual psychology. Similarly one might say that the world which we experience is really molecules or atoms or whatever is believed to be inside the atoms, and presumably descriptions could be elaborated of how and why it does

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2 The problem remains of how Anaxagoras would have measured "size." Would it have been by volume or by weight? Or is he thinking of sensory qualities?
not appear to be so. But no such statement would be historical in
the sense that it would give us a chronological account of how
things once were subatomic particles whirling about in empty
space, of how they came together to form atoms at a later date,
of how then the atoms formed molecules which finally cohered
to build up macroscopic objects. Such an account would be logi-
cally independent of the epistemological analysis, in that, though
it assumes the chronological priority of the elemental particles,
one could also assume their chronological posteriority. For we
have no revelation that the analytically simple is first in time.

But to Anaxagoras an account of reality had to include an ex-
planation of the origin of things as we find them. Since there is
no such thing as genesis and destruction, he was driven to con-
cluding that all qualities were mixed up together at the beginning
of the world. The process of cosmic history is the separating out
of the mixture of the various things which we perceive. "But be-
fore these things were separated from one another, when all
things were together, not even color was visible, for the mixture
of all things prevented it, both the mixture of the moist and the
dry and that of the hot and the cold, and of the light and the dark,
and of the great quantity of earth that was in it and of the mass
of unlimited things resembling one another in no way. For none
of the other things"—that is presumably the other qualities—"re-
sembles any other. And since these things are so, we must believe
that all things are inherent in the whole" (fr. B4). How then did
the separation take place?

Here Anaxagoras, like Empedocles, assumes that nothing would
change "of its own accord." But whereas Empedocles introduced
the two agents of Love and Strife to do the attracting and repell-
ing, Anaxagoras assumes the existence of only one agent, which
he called Nous or Mind. Now Nous is both unlimited and self-
ruled, "and is mixed with nothing, but is alone by itself and in
itself" (fr. B12). It has none of the seeds of things in it but is the
power which brings order into them. Though he uses physicalistic
terms to describe it, calling it the lightest and purest of all things,
he also attributes to it mental powers. He speaks of it as having “all knowledge of everything,” and “the greatest strength.” Moreover, “it rules over all things whatsoever that are animate, both greater and smaller. And Nous ruled over the revolution of the whole, so that it revolved in the beginning.” The revolution began on a small scale and then spread in wider and wider areas, until now the heavenly bodies are moved around in it. It is because of this revolution, started by Nous, that the elemental qualities were separated. Hence the agent of change is something mental in its nature and change is separation and, presumably, recombination. The introduction of physicalistic terms in the description of Nous is no stranger than the Stoics’ use of a material substance, the Pneuma, or Spirit, as their active force. The Pneuma was a material being and yet it behaved as something divine.

The introduction of a mental agent, completely distinct from all other things which are inert, incapable of initiating any change, was seen by the ancients themselves as something novel in philosophy. Plato makes Socrates (Phaedrus 270a) recall the influence of this thesis upon Pericles and he has him say (Phaedo 97b, c), “Having once heard someone read from a book, so it was said, by Anaxagoras,” in which it was maintained that Nous is the orderer as well as the cause of all things, he was very pleased and interpreted the word “cause” to mean the purpose of all change. If he was to show him that the earth was either flat or round, he would also show him why this was good, and he would demand no other kind of causality. But (98b) he failed to do this and his Nous was no better than any other kind of cause. Aristotle also, in a famous passage in his Metaphysics (984b 15), says that when a man, whom he identifies as Anaxagoras, said that mind (Nous) was present in all things as the cause of the cosmos and of its order, he seemed like a sober man in contrast with the babblers who were his predecessors. But Aristotle too, like the Platonic Socrates, was disappointed in him, for to his way of thinking a causal explanation should include purpose. Anaxagoras’ Nous then, though mental, was not teleological. It was apparently sufficient for it to be an
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orderer. Its work seems to have been entirely mechanical and what was separated out of the primordial mixture, in spite of being spoken of in qualitative terms, was moved about in space. The mind then could move material things as the human mind moves our muscles. That the one predominant cause of things is distinguished from the inert grosser things is the start of a dualistic theory which was to grow to much larger proportions in later times. For before it was completely elaborated, mind became the universal agent; it became immaterial, spiritual, acting either in accordance with something to be called the reason or as it saw fit. It had purposes analogous to human purposes. Its patient became the material world, inert, utterly inefficacious. There were thus in later times two occupants of the philosopher's universe, Mind and Matter, God and Creation, Soul and Body, according to his predilections. And the former of each of these couples became Reality, the latter Appearance, though there remained no way of experiencing Reality except through its Appearances. But when the difficulties inherent in this point of view became pressing, men then tried to define a being which would never appear and yet remain purely active.

2. It is no longer possible to discover why Anaxagoras picked out the Mind as the one active being in the cosmos, but it is possible that men's attention had been directed toward mental activity by the simple experience of having to make great decisions in the face of external dangers, such as the Persian War. At such a time and after such battles as that of Marathon in which an army of ten thousand men defeated one of fifty thousand, it would have been as difficult to imagine that men's deeds were all determined by external material forces as it would have been after the Napoleonic Wars. The human will could not be thought of as ineffec-tual except by some elaborate metaphysical theory which no one at that time had drawn up. Not even as late as Aristotle was any

3 Cf. the remarks of the Abbé Bautain as quoted in G. Boas, French Philosophies of the Romantic Period (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1925), P. 33.
sharp distinction made between the will and the reason, any dis­
tinction such as was to be made for religious purposes by the
early Christians. The basic distinction was rather that between
the reason and the passions, and in the word "passion" was the
connotation of "being acted upon" in contrast to "acting." It was
assumed as a matter of course that unless a person was constrained
by force, he was free to make whatever decisions he wished to
make. He could make bad decisions to be sure, but they too were
his own and not the result of unknown outside influences acting
upon him.

The break between appearance and reality which we have seen
in Anaxagoras was paralleled in human affairs by that between
nature and custom. Other historians have pointed out how the
development of an urban civilization demanded closer attention
to psychology and consequently to the procedures of thinking. It
has been said that the rise of courts of law in which all citizens
might be called upon to act as both judge and jury, to defend
themselves, to argue and plead and debate, was enough to arouse
the desire for skill in both the logic of persuasion and that of con­
viction. There is doubtless some justice in this explanation. But the
dialectical skill of Parmenides is certainly as great as that of any
Athenian and he lived in a minor settlement in southern Italy. The
puzzles of his disciple, Zeno, have not yet been satisfactorily
solved, and if we work over them today, it is not because of any
need to win suits in court or to defend ourselves against charges
of felony. The most we can say is that during the Periclean Age
we have evidence of more interest in forensic technique than we
have for any earlier period.

There is no need for me to hold back the information that the
men who are said to have done most in this field are the Sophists

4 See especially E. Zeller, History of Greek Philosophy, trans. by S. F.
Alleyne (London: Longmans, 1881), Vol. II, p. 394; and G. Grote, History

5 One of the latest and most interesting solutions is that of Adolf Grün­
baum, "Modern Science and Refutation of the Paradoxes of Zeno," The
and Socrates. For our immediate purposes we can say that for the Sophists truth, goodness, and beauty were determined by custom, not by nature. The reverse was true for Socrates. Just what was meant by the two opposing terms requires further analysis.

When the colonial philosophers spoke of Nature, they seem to have meant something equivalent to the cosmos, the universal order of things. They also seem to have assumed that there was one consistent body of laws covering the behavior of everything both animate and inanimate. Their epistemology drew upon the data of investigations into such laws. One of the great differences, if we may trust Theophrastus, in the epistemological theories of the Greeks was their assumption of how sensory objects influenced the sense organs, some maintaining that each organ was affected by qualities similar to something in the organ, others that each was affected by something dissimilar. This conclusion is, as all such conclusions must be in view of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, a bit shaky. They may indeed have made psychological investigations which have been lost, since what is preserved is what interested the people who quoted them. But when we come to the Athenian philosophers, the question was bound to arise of how the supposed universal laws of Nature could cover human behavior and at the same time permit the variations, of which everyone is aware, in what human beings do and want and esteem. Laws, in the sense of customs and traditions, vary to a great extent, whereas Law, in the sense of natural law, ought to be uniform. If then all behavior of the human race obeys natural law, there should be no such variations. The conflict between Nature and Custom then was one which would be observed directly when a people came into contact with people of different cultures. That there was such conflict had already been noted by Herodotus. But, with the exception of the Egyptians, that historian and traveler seemed to have no feeling that the customs of non-Greeks or Barbarians were worthy of more than noting as ethnological curiosities. The situation was similar to that which prevailed among aestheticians up to recent times. The arts of Sav-
ages, and indeed even of the Chinese and Japanese, were not thought of as genuine works of art; an ethnologist might describe them, but an art critic would have nothing to do with them. For that matter it is only lately that ethnologists have dropped the distinction between civilized and uncivilized peoples. The most that writers would concede to the latter was that they were primitive, that is, the seed of our own civilization, baby cultures of which we were the mature fruit. In German such people were called Naturvölker, natural people, as if they were controlled by laws resident in the cosmic order, something akin to the animals, who had no civilization added to what Nature had bestowed on them. The distinction between a natural and a civilized people thus seems to rest upon the assumption that Custom was added to Nature. And when a philosopher had a high esteem for Nature, he was likely to depreciate Custom.

Custom in that sense became the logical equivalent of appearance; Nature the equivalent of reality. Like reality it had to be uniform and immutable. To discover it one had to penetrate the screen of local diversities and mutabilities. In an anonymous manuscript which apparently dates from the end of the fifth century, usually referred to as the Dissoi Logoi (or Dialexeis), we find a list of the contrary opinions held by various peoples concerning good and evil, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong, truth and falsity, the difference between sanity and insanity, wisdom and ignorance, and on the awarding of offices by lot. This, along with an extract from a treatise on correct behavior preserved by Iamblichus (fourth century A.D.), the author of which is referred to as Anonymus Iamblichii, and which is dated as of the middle of the fifth century, is the source of arguments which tend to prove that human values are determined by Custom.

The Dissoi Logoi is a perfect example of the kind of conflicting opinions which must be reconciled if moral and other standards

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6 This was also true even of "primitive" Italian painting as late as the opening of the Jarves Collection at Yale, for which an apologia was found in its historical interest.

7 For the Greek text, see Diels-Kranz, Vol. II, pp. 405 ff.
are to be demonstrated as based on Nature; it is merely one of those bits of moral advice which we find in more copious form in such writers as Maximus of Tyre (second century A.D.). A quotation from the *Dissoi Logoi* will serve to illustrate the source of the problem.

Double opinions are held in Greece by those who philosophize concerning good and evil. For one man says that the good is one thing and evil another; but another says they are the same, which to one man is good and to another evil. And to a given man a thing may at one time be good and at another time evil.

This obviously does not mean that there is no distinction to be made between good and evil, but rather that the value given a thing is determined by the occasion on which the value is assigned and on the person who assigns it. For the quotation continues by saying that food and drink and sexual intercourse are bad to a sick man but good to a healthy man who needs them. Oddly enough, here the value is determined by the effect of the things in question upon the individual, so that the author of the passage seems to be maintaining that apart from the individual’s appraisal, the things themselves may have some value. But, though the distinction is not made in so many words, it is clear that two kinds of value are being discussed: the value the thing has as a pleasant or unpleasant experience, and the value which it has as an instrument for the attainment of some end, in this particular case, health. The confusion between the two kinds of value appears throughout. Thus food, drink, and sexual intercourse may be bad for the incontinent but good for the person who makes money out of them. Shipwrecks are bad for the shipmaster, but good for the shipbuilder. For iron to rust is good for the smith but bad for other men. After pointing out the relativity of these values to individuals and groups, the author proceeds to point out the logical difficulties involved in identifying good and evil. If a man is asked whether it is good to beget many children and replies that it is, then, if good and evil are identical, it is also bad to beget many children. Such apparent paradoxes arise from forget-
ting what seemed to be the initial premise, namely, that values are assigned by the individual with regard to the situation in which he finds himself. But a reading of the Double Words will convince the most sympathetic critic that it is far from being a careful analysis of the question. Its burden is simply that good and evil are determined by human beings, not by Nature.

Now “nature” is one of the most ambiguous words in Greek literature. In Homer, where the word occurs once (Odyssey x. 303), it refers to the character or quality of a thing. But at least as early as Sophocles, it refers to the permanent or innate quality, as contrasted with the transitory. For instance, in Philoctetes (902) we find the clause, “When a man forsakes his own nature and does unseemly deeds.” Again in Ajax (472), when the mad hero is accused of cowardice, he tries to show that the accusation is false, and cries, “Some deed must yet be sought to show my aged father that his son is not in his real nature a coward.” The use of “nature” as the name for reality as contrasted with appearance is shown in the titles which the doxographers gave to the works of the early philosophers: “About Nature.” In Plato’s Laws (891c) we find Plato saying that when the early philosophers made fire and water and earth and air the primary elements, they called them the nature of things. It was this sense of the word which was contrasted with custom or law. But here again, what is characteristic of custom is its variability, and the real, it was assumed, could not be variable. Hence if good and evil were determined by Nature, they would be immutable and obviously not subject to tribal whims or traditions. The Sophists, as far as is known, were inclined to accept custom as the basis for good and evil; the anti-Sophists, Nature.8

3. The earliest and most serious of the Sophists was Protagoras and, though we have but one quotation from his works, “Man is the measure of all things,” we have reason to believe that a long

8 For a detailed account of Nature as norm, see Lovejoy and Boas, Primitivism in Antiquity, chap. 3 and Appendix. The index to that volume, s.v., will provide references to specific passages in which the normative meaning of the term is used.
speech of his given in Plato's dialogue, *Protagoras* (320c–323a), represents some of his ideas. We shall first discuss the various meanings of "Man is the measure."

This quotation is first given by Plato, as follows (*Theaetetus* 151ε): "The measure of all things is man, of things that are, that they are, of those that are not, that they are not." This may mean (1) that existence and nonexistence are determined by human nature as a whole, that there is no escaping the human equation or what Bacon was to call the Idols of the Tribe, that to penetrate to the character of Nature as if human nature did not exist is impossible, and that consequently all truth is human truth. But it may also mean (2) that each individual man determines his own individual truth and that there is no resolving the differences in opinion. In other words, human nature is as impossible to describe as Nature itself. There is no such thing as general laws true of all human beings, but each man's experience is a self-contained universe in which he is enclosed. It may furthermore mean (3) that the measure in question is not man's total experience, but his perceptions. Since perceptions vary with each individual, according to his age, state of health, sensory acuity, and the like, there will be no bridge between man and man and no possibility of criticizing the opinions of anyone. The reason for interpreting Protagoras in this way rests upon the belief that he accepted a kind of Heraclitean theory according to which the objects of perception are always in a state of flux and that therefore our perceptions of them are similarly unstable. He may indeed have believed this, though it would be singularly self-contradictory for a man both to argue that individual perceptions were alone true and to maintain anything whatsoever of the extraperceptual world. Philosophers have, to be sure, been guilty of inconsistencies, but this one would be so flagrant that a man of any critical skill would have avoided it.

It seems more reasonable to conclude that the import of the

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⁹ This is quoted again in the same words by Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* i. 66.
statement is the denial of the distinction between appearance and reality. What had been called appearance, Protagoras seems to be maintaining, is the only reality which we have. It is therefore useless to search for another reality behind the appearances. If this is what he was driving at, it is understandable that he also is quoted by Eusebius (fr. A₄) as saying that he did not know whether or not the gods existed, not that they did not exist. And in Diogenes Laertius (ix. 5₁) he is said to have added that the obscurity of the question and the shortness of life prevented his knowing. If Diogenes is quoting him exactly and if Protagoras was serious, he was apparently saying that if a question was clear, it could be answered. But for a question put by one man to another to be clear entails the belief that meanings are interpersonal. In which case at least some knowledge is common to several individuals. This is fortified by the acknowledged fact that Protagoras was a teacher.

We are a bit more fortunate in our knowledge of a contemporary of Protagoras, Gorgias of Leontini, though what remains of him is also fragmentary. There is first the account given in Pseudo-Aristotle's De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia, and a long argument preserved by Sextus Empiricus in his Adversus mathematicos (vii. 6₅ ff., fr. B₃). The quotation from Sextus is taken from a book by Gorgias called About Nonbeing or Nature, a significant title. The two accounts are fairly consistent, but since Pseudo-Aristotle is probably the earlier writer, we shall follow him here. The argument runs in summary (a) that nothing exists, (b) that if anything existed, it could not be apprehended, (c) that if it could be apprehended, it could not be put into words and communicated to others. The nonexistence of anything is proved as follows. He first collected the opinions of others, as in the Dissoi Logoi, which showed both belief in Being as many and in Being as one, in Being as having never been produced and in Being as having been produced. He then maintains that if anything exists, it must be either one or many, without beginning or with beginning. But for any-
thing not to be, is for it to be Nonbeing, and that amounts to asserting the paradox that what is not, is. But Nonbeing is Nonbeing and Being is Being; therefore both exist. But since there must be a basic contrast between Nonbeing and Being, if Nonbeing is, then Being must not be. Hence nothing could exist unless both Nonbeing and Being were identical, Q.E.D. In Sextus the argument is slightly different. He puts it as follows: If anything existed, it would be either the existent or the nonexistent, or both. The nonexistent cannot exist, for if it did, then it would be both existent and nonexistent, and that is absurd. Moreover, if it did exist, the existent would not exist, for that would make nonexistence an attribute of existence, which is again absurd.

Now if anything is, it must have always been or have come into being. If it has always been, then it is limitless (infinite), but the limitless cannot exist anywhere. For if it were somewhere, it would be in something different from itself and that something would limit it. But nothing can limit the limitless. Therefore it has not always existed. But neither can it have come into being. For nothing could come into being either out of Being or out of Nonbeing. It could not come into being, for that would constitute a change in Being—into Becoming?—nor could it come into being out of Nonbeing, for then Nonbeing would cease to be nonexistent. And nothing can come into being out of nothing. Hence since everything must either have been forever or come into being at some time and both are impossible, nothing can be.

Before moving on to the impossibility of knowledge, it may be worth while to examine this argument. First, it will be observed that this is exactly the same type of dialectic as that used by Zeno in his proof against the existence of motion. For in both cases it is assumed that whatever is being discussed must belong to one of two classes which exhaust the universe. If it belongs to one, it cannot belong to the other. Second, the Law of Contradiction is applied as if it were an existential description. Now so far as existence is concerned, a thing cannot move and be at rest at the
same time and in the same respect. But obviously a thing can now move and now be at rest. There is similarly no reason why something cannot now exist and then cease to exist. But if the term “the existent” is equated with everything which ever has been, is now, and ever will be, then it is removed from time and becomes the name for something to which the Law of Contradiction is irrelevant in so far as that law contains any reference to dates and respects. But though we use the same word “is” both to mean the copula which attributes a predicate to a subject and also to mean existence, Gorgias fuses the two meanings and slips from one to the other as suits his purpose. Third, it will be noticed that when Gorgias argues about the impossibility of both the existent and the nonexistent existing, he is not denying that some things now exist and then cease to exist, but that all things lumped together into a whole which he calls the existent, do not also not exist. For if it were a matter of individuals or groups less than the whole, there would be no reason why some things such as “chariots racing on the sea” (Ps-Aristotle, 980a) to which we might add chimeras and mermaids should not exist, while other things, such as men, trees, and mountains should and do exist. But Gorgias has to have one all-inclusive subject for his sentences. Fourth, though the whole argument is a priori and purely dialectical, he does resort to experience when he says, according to Sextus, that if the existent exists, it must be either a quantity or a continuum or a magnitude or a body. Regardless of the exact meaning of these terms, which is far from clear, how does Gorgias know that they exhaust the possibilities? The color red is none of them, a dream is none of them, and a law is none of them. And each is one thing in some reasonable sense of the word “one.” Sextus tells us neither on what grounds Gorgias thought the four to be exhaustive of the possibilities nor even if there could be any doubt about it. Moreover, Gorgias says that each of the four, according to Sextus, can be divided, and he uses this as an argument against their unity. But why should not a unit be divided? Presumably because, like
Aristotle later, he maintained that One is not a number but that of which numbers are composed,\textsuperscript{10} and that it is atomic.

Since his two remaining theses are presented more clearly in Sextus than in Pseudo-Aristotle, we shall follow the former in presenting them. The second thesis then is that if anything existed, it could not be thought. He reasons first to the conclusion that some things that are thought, such as flying men and chariots running over the sea, do not exist, thus making a sharp distinction between thought and existence. This turns the whole debate into an \textit{a posteriori} argument, for unless one already knew that men did not fly, one could not conclude that all things which are thought need not exist. Without such previous knowledge, one might argue that the limits of thought and existence were coincidental. But if they were coincidental, then that which is not thought would not exist and what does not exist would not be thought. But again we know that some nonexistent things, such as Scylla and the Chimera, are thought to exist. Gorgias is slipping here for he is no longer using purely logical arguments. Indeed he continues to slip and we find him saying, “Just as the things seen are called visible because of the fact that they are seen . . . and we do not reject visible things because they are not heard . . . (for each object ought to be judged by its own special sense and not by another), so also the things thought will exist, even if they should not be viewed by the sight nor heard by hearing, because they are perceived by their own proper criterion. If then a man thinks that a chariot is running over the sea, even if he does not see it, he ought to believe that there exists a chariot running over the sea. But this is absurd . . .” (\textit{Adv. Math.} vii. 81 f., fr. B\textsubscript{3}). Why is it absurd? Presumably because one knows and knows truly that chariots do not run over water. But this does not follow from the argument. It is knowledge acquired previously to the dialectical web. And similarly, if “each object ought to be judged by its own special sense,” then whatever “sense” judges that chariots do

\textsuperscript{10}See \textit{Metaphysics} 1016b 18, and Ross’s commentary on 1021a 12 and 1052b 23. For the meanings of “one” in Aristotle, see \textit{Metaphysics} ix.
run over the sea should be the test of the truth of that judgment.

What then has Gorgias succeeded in doing? Like Zeno he has shown the inadequacy of formal reasoning to demonstrating factual or existential judgments. Just as Zeno did not maintain that we do not see arrows flying, but merely that we cannot prove the possibility of motion, so Gorgias does not deny that we think of chariots running over water or of other impossibilities. The problem is how we know that they can or cannot exist as such.

His third thesis, that even if things can be apprehended or thought, our apprehension or thought cannot be communicated, is perhaps more cogent. For he points out that if all objects are grasped by special senses, vision, audition, and so on, and if our communications are made through speech, all that we communicate are words and not our sensory perceptions. Our words, moreover, are the names for the various sensory objects but are not identical with them. When spoken they are sounds. But these sounds are not the visible or other sensory things which they name. And, if one may add a point to Gorgias' demonstration, the names are universals, the things perceived particulars. Hence we do not pass on to others the sensory impressions which we receive from the external world. Each man, so to speak, lives in a self-enclosed world of his impressions and ideas, as Hume would have called it, and there is no way of breaking out of it. This version of the cognitive situation persisted in Occidental philosophy down to our own times, and we find the empiricists of both Great Britain and the United States busy with finding ways of escape, sometimes by arguing that what we perceive are universals and not particulars (essences), sometimes by what Santayana called animal faith, sometimes by maintaining, as Locke did, that some of our impressions resemble qualities of objects, sometimes by maintaining that our ideas are effects produced in us by ideas in the mind of God, to cite but a few of the proposed solutions.

Gorgias thus seems to flatten out the world into a world of perceptions which are the individual possessions of individual perceivers. That there is anything behind the perceptions which
might be called Nature, cannot be proved. The question, however, will be bound to arise of why, if there is nothing in the world but our personal experiences, the problem of there being something "behind" them should ever arise. It does arise nevertheless and arises from common sense, from that stock of beliefs which we inherit from our elders and with which we grow up. Such beliefs may turn out to be unjustified, but if so, they should not raise any problems other than that of why we retain or reject them. And that is a psychological problem with relevance only to our states of mind. The problem, for instance, of why some people still believe that the world is flat is not a physical but a psychological question. That it looks flat to people who do not travel for long distances can be explained by the geographer, but if someone still believes it to be flat after its real shape has been demonstrated, the geographer can shrug his shoulders and leave the field to the psychiatrist. But in the case of Gorgias, it is doubtful whether the common-sense beliefs about existence and communication can be explained if the views held by him are accepted. The best that such a philosopher can do is to attribute such beliefs to error and leave the origin of the error untouched.

If we call a view of this sort phenomenalistic, then we can say that it never became an integral part of the classical tradition in philosophy. Its role became that of a sharp critic of other people's ideas. The skepticism which was inherent in it developed well into Christian times and was of use to Christian apologists. It is interesting to note that Eusebius preserved the views of Protagoras about the gods in his *Praeparatio evangelica* to show that even some of the pagans were skeptical about polytheism. Moreover, even Plato felt the necessity of refuting the opinions of the Sophists as a group, sometimes contemptuously but sometimes, as when he deals with Protagoras and Prodicus, with respect. But it is precisely because their ideas were plausible that they required refutation, for philosophy progresses by debate. For our purposes they constitute the first serious attack on rationalism, and it was made by the rationalistic technique itself.
4. Just what Socrates stood for is no clearer than what the Sophists stood for. They, moreover, wrote copiously and bequeathed next to nothing to posterity; he wrote nothing and bequeathed more than any other one man except his pupil Plato and Plato's pupil, Aristotle.\textsuperscript{11} There are three primary sources for our knowledge of this extraordinary man, Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Plato. And unfortunately their testimonies differ in important respects. To Aristophanes he was a mischievous and pretentious scientist, teaching for money and willing to take on pupils who would learn to argue in order to win suits, regardless of the merits of their cause. His main caricature of Socrates appears in the \textit{Clouds} where, it is clear, Socrates is guilty of denying the traditional gods of Athens, just as he was accused of doing at his trial. In the middle of the play Honest and Dishonest Reasoning engage in debate, as in a morality play. Honest Reasoning is a spokesman for the Good Old Times when boys walked down to their music master's soberly in a column, behaved with modesty, and spoke in low whispers, whereas Dishonest Reasoning points out that such a life is hardly worth living. Dishonest Reasoning becomes the spokesman for Socrates.\textsuperscript{12} The debate is one between cunning logical tricks, "making the worse appear the better reason," playing on double meanings, holding out seductive pleas-

\textsuperscript{11} It is interesting to note that in the Parian Chronicle (264–263 B.C.) his death seemed an important enough event to be recorded along with the return of the Ten Thousand as the two outstanding events of the year. See Marcus N. Tod, \textit{A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), Vol. II, p. 308.

\textsuperscript{12} The debate begins at l. 889. In view of the discrepancy between the Aristophanic and the Xenophontic-Platonic picture of Socrates, the German philologist, Karl Joel, in his \textit{Der echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates} (Berlin: Gaertner, 1893–1901), maintained that the Socrates of the \textit{Clouds} is not a historical portrait of the man but a synthesis of him and Antisthenes. But it should be recalled that in Plato's \textit{Symposium} (221b) we find Alcibiades quoting l. 362 from the \textit{Clouds} as at least an accurate picture of Socrates' appearance. Moreover, in the \textit{Frogs} (1491–9) we have another picture of Socrates which agrees with that of the \textit{Clouds}. But is there anything unusual in finding a single man portrayed in diverse and conflicting ways by various writers? Americans have only to recall the various literary portraits of F. D. Roosevelt which have not ceased to appear or the harshly opposing interpretations of John Dewey.
ures as *argumenta ad hominem* on the one hand, and straightforward, honest common sense on the other. But it is also the battle between ancient simplicity and modern luxury, Spartan hardness and modern Athenian effeminacy. It is Socrates who leads youth into debauchery and incontinence, though the picture of him and his disciples in the *Phrontisterion* is one of squalor. In short, one might find in the *Clouds*, if that were all one had to go on, full justification of the charges brought against him in his trial, even of the charge of atheism. When Strepsiades swears by the gods, Socrates asks, “What sort of gods do you swear by?” and he adds that the gods are not current coin with his school (247 f.). And when he comes to invoke his own gods, he says (264 ff.),

> O Lord and Master, immeasurable Air, who holdest the earth from on high,
> And thou, Radiant Aether, and ye august Clouds, hurlers of thunderbolts,
> Arise, appear, O goddesses, from on high to the philosopher.

And when Strepsiades (367) asks him if Zeus is not a god, he replies, “What Zeus? Don’t talk nonsense. There is no Zeus.” And, finally, he asks Strepsiades whether he will disavow all other deities if admitted to his school except “these three, Chaos and the Clouds and the Tongue” (423).\(^\text{13}\)

The picture of Socrates in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* is drawn to show that not only did Socrates not corrupt men, but he elevated them and improved them by his example and teaching. He is depicted mainly as a teacher of ethics, though full attention is paid to his method of teaching, his purgation of his pupils’ minds, and his irony. The emphasis laid on his ethical teachings leads one to suspect that popular opinions supported Aristophanes, for it is safe to say that the People are more sensitive to examinations of traditional morals than to almost anything else. To them right is right and wrong is wrong and there need be no arguing about

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\(^{13}\) Socrates was also ridiculed in another comedy which appeared at the same time as the *Clouds*, the *Comus* of Amipsias. See W. J. M. Starkie in his translation of the *Clouds* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), p. xxix.
them. As for his atheism, Xenophon tries to refute that charge by laying stress on his piety and his dislike of cosmological speculation (Mem. i. 1. 11). Where Aristophanes got the idea that Socrates was an atheist, by which he meant a doubter of the old gods, I do not know. But if Socrates had read the book of Anaxagoras and if Aristophanes knew that he had read it, that might have sufficed to arouse the suspicion.

The Platonic Socrates is not discordant with the Xenophontic, but the difficulty in the dialogues is to tell who is Socrates and who is Plato. One thing is fairly certain: that in the Apology there would have been no reason for its author to put ideas into the mouth of his hero which were different from those which he held, though the words might be quite different. Crito and Phaedo also probably do not distort the Socratic position, since in them too an attempt is made to report what actually took place before the execution. The former tells of Crito's plan for his master to evade execution and Socrates' refusal to violate the law which has condemned him; the latter is an account of the last hours before he drank the hemlock. Plato says that he himself was ill and could not be present, but he gives a long list of those who were present, as if to point out that there were witnesses to what he reports. If then one restricts oneself to these three dialogues, one is in all likelihood not misrepresenting the thought and character of this man.

In the Apology (18b) Socrates recognizes the charges which were made against him by gossips, names unknown, and one comic writer (Aristophanes) that "there was a certain Socrates, a philosopher, who both meditated on heavenly things and tried to uproot all subterranean things as well as to make the worse reason the better." Such people believe that cosmologists are atheists. "These accusers are numerous and have been making their accusation for some time" (18c). The charges are then read: "Socrates is guilty and wastes his time seeking the things which are below the earth and in the heavens and making the worse appear the better reason, and teaching others to do likewise"
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(19b). To the charge of being a cosmologist, he replies by a flat denial, asking who has ever heard him even discuss such a matter. It is also false (19d, e) that he has ever taught for money. He would be glad to be able to teach anything worth paying for, but he has not that gift (20c). What then does he know? He then relates the story of Chaerephon’s asking the oracle of Delphi who was wiser than Socrates. The oracle replied that no one was wiser. After due search and reflection, he concluded that whereas others knew nothing but thought that they knew something, he alone knew nothing and knew that he knew nothing (21d). It was the search leading to this discovery which won him so many enemies. “This same search I still carry on as I go about, and in accordance with the god, I question anyone among the citizens and strangers who I think is wise. And when he does not appear to be so, coming to the aid of the god, I demonstrate that he is not wise” (23b.)

This habit of questioning people who have pretensions to wisdom has been taken up by the young men of leisure who have frequented his society, and when they have shown up in their turn the men whom they have questioned, it is not they but their teacher who has been held at fault. This leads to the second point: he is accused of corrupting the youth, of not believing in the gods of the city, and of substituting new gods in their place. He answers this charge by pointing out that he believes in the existence of daimones who are the children of gods, and hence, unless he believed in gods, he could scarcely believe in their children (27d). But there is one divinity in whom he believes and who is the cause of Meletus’ accusation. “Within me is this thing which began in my childhood; a certain voice arose, which, when it spoke, always turned me away from what I was about to do, but never impelled me onward” (31d). It was this voice which now turned him away from pleading for mercy, from bringing his wife and children into court as suppliants, from conducting himself as one who thought that justice should be administered by emotions rather than by reason. This voice he believed to be
divine. And after sentence of death was passed upon him, he turned to his friends and said (40b, c), "An amazing thing has happened to me. For the warning voice which has usually spoken to me at all times in the past has even restrained me in minor matters if I was about to do something wrong. But now there has come upon me, as you yourselves see, what would be thought of as the most extreme of evils. Yet neither as I left my house this morning was there any restraining sign from the god nor when I came up here to the courtroom nor when I was speaking did it hold me back from what I was about to say. And yet in other talks and in many places it has held me back right in the middle of what I was saying. But today at no time during this affair has it opposed me in anything I did or said. What then shall I assume is the cause of this? I shall tell you. In all probability what has happened to me is a good thing and the truth is that we are wrong to assume that it is bad to die. A great proof of this has been given to me. For it is not possible that the customary sign would not have stood in my way if I was about to do something which was not good."

Death, he continues, must be either a long sleep or a passage from this world to another inhabited by all the dead. Both are good, not evil. If one is to pass into a world where the spirits of the poets and warriors and of those who died an unjust death can still be seen and talked to, no greater pleasure could accrue to him. He could even continue his examination of those who think they know and know nothing. Thus his judges have really done him a great favor, though unintentionally, and that is why the voice has not spoken. He can only request that when his children grow up, they too be questioned, as he has questioned other people’s children, if they show any sign of putting wealth or anything else above virtue.

In this speech of Socrates there is little which indicates a systematic theory of two worlds, it is true, but nevertheless behind it is the firm belief that this world, whatever it may be called, is of lesser importance than another, the world governed by eternal
principles of right and wrong. These principles are given by God or by the gods—it matters very little to what special deities they are attributed—and are delivered through what we should call the voice of conscience. They are principles which do not vary from man to man nor presumably from tribe to tribe. The laws of a government which is unjust need not be obeyed, and earlier in his defense he pointed out how at one time he had refused to carry out the unjust orders of the Thirty (32c). The standards of good conduct then are not determined by Custom but by Nature; they are grounded in the order of the cosmos itself, and the problem becomes that of explaining how this is so. It was this problem which occupied his greatest disciple. But, as he is also represented as arguing in Crito, there are governmental laws which one should never disobey.

Crito gives us Socrates in prison awaiting his execution. His friend, Crito, a man of wealth, comes to visit him in order to persuade him to escape. Socrates refuses and his reasons form the philosophical basis for a reconstruction of one side of his position. His principal thesis is that he will not act until he has been persuaded by an argument which will stand up after close examination (Crito 46b). But reason is something that does not change from moment to moment nor because new events have taken place in the life of the examiner. The univalence of certain ideas is permanent, regardless of the number of people who deny them. Some are good, some bad, and even if the majority sustain the bad, that does not make them good. This would appear to be an out-and-out rejection of what seemed to the Sophists to be the consequences of the Double Words. One implication of this point of view is that there is some way of knowing which ideas are good and which bad. And this can be achieved without consulting common opinion. One has only to consult men of sagacity. "Hence," he says (48a), "we need give no heed to what the majority say to us, but rather must we listen to him who understands justice and injustice, which is one and the same as truth." If the truth, which is identical with the good, the beautiful, and
the just (48b), tells us that I can leave the prison without the permission of the Athenians, then well and good, I shall do so. But if it turns out to be wrong to bribe the jailer and escape, then I must stay here and accept the punishment which has been meted out to me.

With this as an introduction, Socrates then argues that it is never right to do wrong voluntarily and that evil does not become good because of the circumstances surrounding its commission. Therefore one should never oppose wrong with wrong, if it is never right to do wrong (49c). But among the things which are wrong is that which is forbidden by the Law. The Law is the judgment of the city, and once the Law is violated, wrong has been done to the city.\textsuperscript{14} Marriage, the education of children, the security of life, all are entrusted to the Law, and to do violence to it is to do violence to the very foundations of decent living. The city is more to be honored than one's father and mother and all one's ancestors; it is more august, more holy, and held in greater respect among the gods and among men of reason, and must be revered and given way to and appeased when angry more than a father is. One must either persuade the city or do what it commands, and suffer if it orders one to suffer something and do this quietly. And if it strikes or if it bind one, or if it leads one into war where one may be wounded or killed, one must follow, and righteousness will prevail. One must not yield or retreat or leave one's post, but both in battle and in the courtroom and everywhere else one must do what the city and one's Fatherland orders or else persuade it where justice lies. But one must never do violence to that which is sacred, either to one's mother or father or much less to that which is better than they, one's Fatherland (51a–c). If a man is not to agree to this, let him leave Athens and go where he will. But as for Socrates, he recognizes that he has given evidence that he loves his country, for he has never been willing to leave it, "except once when he went to the Isthmus." It

\textsuperscript{14} The commands of the Thirty were not the Law of the city but of usurpers.
is thus all the more proper that he submit to the city’s orders. If now he remains to be executed, he will have been executed unjustly to be sure, but he will at least have been a good citizen, will not have returned evil for evil (53c). “These things, my dear friend Crito, know it well, I seem to hear as the Corybantes seem to hear the sound of flutes, and in me the music of these words resounds and drowns out all else. But know that, as far as I now can tell, if you say anything against this, you will speak in vain. . . . Go then, Crito, and let us act thus, since the god is guiding us this way” (54d).

In this speech the Law is above all time and place and is the voice of the city, which is something more than the citizens. Its expression in the verdict of the courts may be wrong, but to obey it is a divine command. If we assume that Plato has given us here the thoughts of Socrates, as we have assumed, then he is in opposition to the Sophists on the point of believing in an eternal order of right and beauty and goodness.\textsuperscript{15} It is that order which is to be contrasted with the temporal order in which goodness, beauty, and truth may vary from man to man and from place to place. It is an order which in Plato was to become the world of ideas and later the Intelligible World as opposed to the Sensible World. In Socrates it is apparently known by some form of intuition which he speaks of in \textit{Crito} as the indications of the god, his \textit{Daimon}.

But Socrates’ belief in such an order is shown not merely in his opinions as recorded in the \textit{Apology} and \textit{Crito}; it is also entailed in his method of criticism. To begin with, the notion of the teacher as a midwife (\textit{Theaetetus} 149) seems to symbolize the theory that every man possesses knowledge in an embryonic manner and that learning is largely the development of this possession. Then the discovery of the truth through dialectic seems to be based on the theory that all questions can be tested by the test of self-consistency. A point of view which is self-contradictory is

\textsuperscript{15}I shall try to use the word “eternal” in this book to mean “timeless,” not “everlasting.”
self-condemned and one which does not give way under this test is self-substantiated. Unfortunately we have learned that consistent ideas are not necessarily true to fact and have had to make a distinction between logical coherence and factual truth, though if one's premises are true to fact, so will their implications be. In this matter Socrates appears to belong to the tradition established by Parmenides and his followers, according to which, as we have seen, an apparent truth must yield to dialectical criticism. Since the truth must be one and eternal, it can make no difference what people think about it. Error must be a factor of human psychology, not of the world outside the mind. And if one cannot find things in the objective world of daily experience which correspond to the truth, that does not prove that the truth is weakened. The truth in all cases becomes the standard by which we judge the validity of our opinions, not a generalized description of these opinions or of their subject matter. And since the word itself must be univalent, then it makes little difference whether the subject under discussion is the material world or the values which we find in it. Hence there is no separation between judgments of value and judgments of fact. Both must be tested in the same way. Just as the opinions of thousands of men cannot invalidate the truths of mathematics, so they cannot invalidate the truths of aesthetics and ethics. It is on this issue that Socrates joins battle with the Sophists.

One word more. If we make a clean-cut division between eternal and historical judgments, then there will always remain the question of how we reach the former. Since the development of the non-Euclidean geometries, it has become customary to maintain that all postulates are arbitrary or conventional. Yet the fact remains that the theorems do apply to—or control, if one prefers that word—certain events in the historical world of time. On the other hand, if mathematical propositions—or sentences—are derived from historical propositions, by abstraction or generalization, we have to face the corresponding problem of how they emerge from the temporal into the eternal world. No one
denies that our knowledge on the whole is about the temporal world nor that the terms of mathematical discourse have their origin in empirical situations. But no one can deny on the other hand that we have eternal knowledge, that is, knowledge of formal logic and of mathematics, and that sometimes it does not apply to what I can only call ordinary experience. The intuitive powers which Socrates believes us to possess and which in moral questions are symbolized in his *Daimon* may be called by us by some other name. But regardless of our nomenclature the problem to which they were an attempted solution remains as much a problem for us as for Socrates.

Oddly enough a Sophist such as Gorgias is a more orthodox rationalist than Socrates. By limiting his discussion to the most general terms, such as Being and Nonbeing, the One and the Many, the Immutable and the Mutable, he was able to remain in the realm of pure dialectic. His results were nihilistic when they were turned into existential judgments and it is true that he played upon the ambiguities of such a word as "to be." But Socrates did not play with such terms and criticized rather the more concrete opinions of his interlocutors, opinions about the correct definition of moral qualities, such as courage, friendship, and virtue. Here he was trying to find the eternal in the temporal and the only mark of the eternal which he knew was the consistency of the definitions. It is doubtful whether a comic writer would have become indignant over the examination of metaphysical opinions, but when it came down to the examination of traditional beliefs about the virtues, trouble was bound to ensue. No one has ever been investigated by Congress for having said that space is curved or that the velocity of light is the maximum velocity measurable. But when someone is suspected of having questioned the advisability of saluting the flag or of keeping secret the technique of making atomic bombs, the situation has been very different.
1. We have no very clear idea of how Anaxagoras reached his conclusions, for the remaining fragments are too scanty to give us the requisite information. But we can see from at least two of his fragments that he clung to the axiom that nothing can come from nothing. If, as he says (fr. B17), it is wrong to speak about coming-into-being and passing-into-nonbeing, it is probably because, as he also says (fr. B10), hair could not come from not-hair or flesh from not-flesh. The result of such reasoning was that all things had to be present in the beginning and that all change could be nothing but separation and combination (fr. B17). This was obviously the denial of creation.

But he apparently also assumed that in all change there must be an agent and a patient: things could not change of their own accord. But since change was separation and combination and it was not the four elements which separated and combined, or the atoms, but bits of the macroscopic objects, there must be tiny pieces of everything in everything and also there must be no limit in size in the inherent particles or seeds. What principle of limitation there was to the kinds of change which might occur, he does not state, and if everything is in everything, one might well conclude that anything could be separated out of anything.\(^{16}\) In brief, if the seeds of hair are in everything, then, given the proper conditions, to which the fragments pay no attention, hair might just as well sprout out of rocks as out of heads. The axiom that things could be divided \textit{ad infinitum} may have come from the principle that any extended bit of matter could be divided and there seemed to be no way of setting a limit to the possible divisions. Since no change could occur without an agent, he provided one in his \textit{Nous}, and the reason why \textit{Nous} had to be the purest of things (fr. B12) and contain no part of anything else is not only be-

\(^{16}\text{Aristotle was firm in rejecting such an idea, for he saw that only certain changes could occur and that change was not random (\textit{De gen. et corr. 333b 5}).}\)
cause it must be active and thus incapable of being acted upon, but also because there must be no danger of its being diminished by losing any of its contents. "It would not have the same power over anything as it has remaining by itself" (fr. B12). There is no indication that Anaxagoras saw the possibility of the patient's reacting upon the agent. Quite the contrary, having posited one active and one passive being, the former must be incapable of being acted upon and the latter incapable of acting. As this tradition developed, the patient became matter and the agent mind. And later, when the God of the Bible became the one absolute and universal agent, creating and controlling everything, He too was never acted upon.17

Yet there is also a puzzling fragment in which Anaxagoras is quoted as saying that "things in the cosmos are not cut off from one another by a hatchet, neither the hot from the cold nor the cold from the hot" (fr. B8). This may be simply a reassertion of his principle of the ubiquity of all the qualities or, in view of the particular qualities which he picks, it may be a recognition that the elementary qualities form a scale in which "things" blend into one another. If this is the correct interpretation, it would seem as if activity and passivity were matters of degree, in which case the most active being would not be separate from the things it acts upon and the Nous free from all mixture. If the Nous is simply at one end of the cosmic scale and the primordial mixture at the other, it might be the most active of all beings and still not necessarily cut off from the others. The most likely interpretation of his concept is that the Nous is peculiar in its separateness and that its action upon the cosmic mixture is that of an efficient cause, much like the Love and Strife of Empedocles. In that case its action would be directed to something utterly foreign to its own nature. This is the more probable in that Theophrastus (De sensu 27) lists him as one of the few philosophers who hold that perception occurs between opposites rather than between similars. On the other hand, both Plato (Phaedo 97c) and Aristotle (Meta-

17 This made the efficacy of prayer a problem.
physic 985a 18) criticize him for the little use which he made of the Nous once he had posited its existence.

2. The method of the Sophists, with the exception of Gorgias, seems to have few implications of a metaphysical kind. Yet to make man the measure of all things, of the things that are and of the things that are not, is to make him in some way the determinant of existence. If this is interpreted strictly, man determines his own existence as well as that of everything else. But that interpretation would perhaps be unfair. For before a man can have beliefs or make judgments, he must obviously exist. If we interpret the quotation in individualistic terms, then reality would have to be whatever each man thinks it is. If we interpret it as simply emphasis upon the human equation, then reality would be whatever the human mind as a whole believes it to be. The contribution of the Idols of the Tribe is surely not to be underestimated. As Bacon saw, the use of teleological explanation is a projection into the material world of behavior which is originally human. We find no unequivocal purposes in anything but human beings. By extension we may discover them also in animal behavior. But in that field which tradition called the meteorological, the discovery of purpose is based on pretty thin analogies. And since the only way we have of explaining any change whatsoever is through human knowledge, unless we believe that scientists are granted revelations, then we are forced to admit that knowledge may include factors which animal knowledge would not have. We rely, for instance, as the ancients realized, on our eyes for most of our knowledge. We even use words derived from vision as substitutes for cognition itself. The notions that knowledge is a reflection of an external world rather than a testing of it, that it is contemplation rather than manipulation, that our ideas are faint or bright copies of things, are all based on the metaphor of sight. If this is taken seriously, one has the right to be skeptical of our ability to know the world as it "really" is, that is, as it is when we are not looking at it. This does not imply that we have no knowledge whatsoever, but simply that our knowledge is human
knowledge and not some sort of superhuman apprehension of things-as-they-are.

In fact, even the most extreme use of the human equation in describing cognition would not make knowledge unreliable. For after all we are human beings and would be utterly lost in a completely nonhuman world. All that one has to do to accommodate this kind of humanism to science is to recognize the contributions of humanity to knowledge and to include them as some of the conditions relative to which one's judgments are true.

The method of Gorgias clearly determines what metaphysics he has. For by asserting the sharp opposition between two contraries, the denial of one becomes the assertion of the other, since it is assumed that the sum of the contraries is exhaustive of all possibilities. This is obvious in a purely logical universe. But when one is talking of the existent universe, one has first to examine the possibilities in an empirical manner. If, for instance, one observes that there are mammals, one can validly argue that all things, not merely animals, are either mammals or nonmammals. But this gives one little information about what nonmammals are. One does not even know whether some of the traits of mammals are not also found in nonmammals, as we know indeed they are. Such traits would be vision, reproduction, and so on. To continue by the method of dichotomy, a complete survey of the universe would demand a foreknowledge of just what characteristics are essential in the Aristotelian sense of that word. And though in certain areas, mathematics above all, this can be done by definition, in most it is supposed to be based upon an actual inventory of real things, not concepts. Now if one looks at the contraries which Gorgias is reported to have dealt with, one finds first existence and nonexistence, multiplicity and unity, coming-into-being and having-always-existed, motion and stability. If we assume that he has made out a good case for his thesis that there is no more reason to believe in existence than in nonexistence, and so on with the other couples, still we might argue that a possible being would be visible or tangible or located in space or in time. It is true that
Gorgias might have anticipated the modern distinction between Subsistence and Existence, according to which we say that mermaids subsist but do not exist, or that what we see in dreams does not exist but subsists. But in an argument of this sort one already knows that the word Being is used to cover all possibilities and actualities as well, all real and unreal things, and one introduces a criterion of existence such as Being-in-time-or-in-space. But to do this requires at least a grain of empirical knowledge. This was of course precisely what Gorgias was trying to avoid. As with Zeno, so with Gorgias: the dialectical method can be profitably used only in the field of purely formal science but has no applicability to experience unless its premises are true of experience.

We could for instance argue that the platypus does not exist, regardless of what explorers and naturalists tell us about it. First, one would say that an animal must be either a mammal, a bird, or a fish. (This is clearly inaccurate, but no worse than the premises of most a priori arguments and is, moreover, just the sort of premise that the dialectician would use.) Second, no mammal lays eggs. But the platypus lays eggs. Therefore, it must be either a bird or a fish. But birds do not have mammary glands. The platypus does have them. Therefore it cannot be a bird and must be a fish. But fishes do not breathe in the air. And the platypus is a terrestrial animal which does breathe in the air, though it also swims like the otter and the beaver. Therefore it is not a fish. But since it must be either a mammal or a bird or a fish and is none of them, it does not exist. The moral of this is that our divisions and classifications do not fit the world of nature.

What is peculiarly interesting in Gorgias' argument is that he did not argue about Becoming as the fundamental category. In Hegel's Logic, for instance, Becoming is the union or synthesis of Being and Nonbeing. But if we take it for granted that our common nouns name things which are already completed, as Aristotle

18 It is worth recording that the eleventh edition of the Britannica, art. "Monotremata," says, "In the strict sense of the term monotremes are not... mammals."
might have put it, then things in process of becoming something are not yet that thing, but nevertheless will be. But to accept this, Gorgias would probably have had to do what Plato reports the Heracliteans to have done (*Theaetetus* 179d), to have identified sensation and knowledge. This might have given him Becoming as fundamental, but it would have ruined the equivalence of words and things. Moreover, it would have been hard, if possible, to discover the exact “opposite” of Becoming if all things are in a state of change. For what contrary could there be to a universal predicate? Finally, those Sophists who like Cratylus “spoke in the Heraclitean manner” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1010a 11) maintained that all speech was wrong and that one could only move one’s finger—presumably at what one perceived. The reason for this is that since everything is in a state of change, all judgments become false as soon as they are uttered, nothing remaining constant long enough to be named or described. The lawfulness of the Flux apparently did not impress such people.

3. The method of Socrates was essentially critical, though he is said by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1078b 28) to have discovered inductive arguments and universal definitions. These were held to concern the “starting point and origin of understanding” (περὶ ἀρχὴς ἐξουσίας). Inductive arguments, as far as the evidence goes, were arguments based on a survey of all the examples relevant to the concept which was to be defined, and in Socrates’ case, these concepts were ethical. Universal definitions would then be common properties, and the common properties, being inherent in a number of things, would have characteristics which were peculiar to them and never found in particulars. These characteristics would include the ability to appear in several places and at several times without changing, in that they would resemble those mathematical beings such as circles and triangles, which might be here and there, big and small, and yet remain the same in their essential nature. We do not know how aware Socrates was of what was entailed in his method of inquiry, but we do know that when he questioned his interlocutors about “courage” or “friend-
ship” or any other of the moral qualities in which he was interested, he always pointed out that he was looking for a general definition of the concept itself and not for particular instances of it. But a general concept might mean at least two things: (a) the general concepts held by various people and limited in their reference to beliefs and opinion, and (b) general concepts which refer to particular instances regardless of whether anyone is aware of them or not. It seems to have been the latter meaning which was that of Socrates. Thus he would have said that an act could be just or brave or good whether anyone thought it to be so or not. So a shape could be circular or square or triangular whether anyone knew the definition of circularity or squareness or triangularity or not.

It is obviously impossible to tell whether a man who holds to the inductive method first assumes that there are general concepts of this nature which will be discovered by an inductive survey or whether his inductive survey leads him to the discovery of general traits which then arouse in his mind the idea that the general traits form a world of their own which is timeless and spaceless. For either might be true. If we believe that common nouns are univalent, then whenever we use one, we are likely to maintain that it refers to something beyond its specific instances. For we might say, “Why should this thing be called a horse if it does not have characteristics which are exactly the same as those of other things which we call horses?” This would be an argument drawn from linguistic usage and still be taken seriously. It is to be found in aesthetic discussion about the essence of tragedy or comedy or the beautiful or the ugly or of any of the other terms found in such conversations. We have more history behind us than Socrates had, much of which stems from Socrates himself, and we can see that certain of such terms have been used in a variety of senses. We have no revelation to tell us that when Shakespeare entitled a play *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, he was thinking of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. On the other hand, now that we have read Aristotle and dozens of other authors on the essence of the tragic,
we approach the matter with the information offered by them in
the back of our minds. And so we look for evidence of what they
say when we read *Hamlet*. There is also the possibility that there
is a feeling for the tragic rooted in human nature and reappear­
ing from time to mind in history. Socrates of course had no such
burden to carry. But he was aware of debates about morals, or
arguments in court about rights and wrongs, of criticism of him­
self in such plays as the *Clouds*, and unless each man was simply
expressing his opinions as he might express his emotions, he could
conclude that they must be talking about something real, not
merely uttering lyric cries.

Thus his critical method and a theory of Ideas in the Platonic
sense were intimately intertwined, for unless there actually were
such ideas, the critical method employed was futile. And if there
were no such ideas, all arguments were no more than exercises in
sadism.

Along with his critical method was what he called his mid­
wifery. How much of this is Plato and how much Socrates, I do
not pretend to know. But since most histori­
anns are agreed that
he believed in his *Daimon*, it is probable that he also believed in
our possession of the ideas from birth. Disregarding metaphors
and myths, it is clear that if a teacher questions a pupil by the
dialectical method, he assumes that the pupil knows the answer
but is not aware of it. Paradoxical as the contrast between knowl­
dge and awareness may be, it is common enough in our daily ex­
perience to be taken seriously. We know frequently enough that
we like or dislike certain things without being able to tell anyone
why we like or dislike them, and also without being aware of
what there is in them which we like or dislike. If I prefer Mozart
to Tchaikovsky, I may be aware of the fact, but I am not neces­
sarily aware of the general characteristics of what I will call the
likable and the dislikable. Similarly, if I am disgusted with cow­
ardly or pretentious or hypocritical acts, I need not be able to give
a definition of what cowardice or pretentiousness or hypocrisy is.
Yet if I want to be rational about it—and that is far from being
compulsory—I ought to be able to discover such definitions. Otherwise I shall feel that I am acting from impulse or passion or prejudice or servile obedience to a tradition or to something equally distasteful to a rationalist. Now it is quite possible that the 
Daimon of Socrates was simply the accumulated habits of moral judgment which he had absorbed from his total education, at home, on the battlefield, in the agora. The compulsive force of the habitual is not something superficial but becomes an integral part of our character. There are some things which a man of a given social class, religious training, and general education just will not do. He is revolted by the very thought of doing them. They may be simply the subject of food taboos or they may be the taboos of the Decalogue. Whatever their cause or origin, the man in question will strive to give reasons for his compulsions and, as soon as he enters upon that path, he must be able to present a clear and distinct idea of what he is objecting to. He is seldom, if ever, aware of the history of his distaste, to give it an earthy name. He will say, for instance, that his conscience forbids him to do certain things, or that he could not live with himself if he did them, or that they violate his deepest convictions. The maieutic of Socrates was the bringing to full consciousness of those repulsions and attractions, approbations and disapprobations. They in their turn become the innate ideas of Descartes and the English Platonists, in that one possessed them from birth but not in full consciousness of them.

The Dissoi Logoi and the Sophistic arguments about the relativity of standards, together possibly with the stories of varying customs told by Herodotus, could all, as we have suggested above, make men worry about their own and their country's standards. Were the laws of Athens simply the Athenian way of disciplining the citizens or were they grounded in Nature? Socrates took the latter alternative as his point of view, but instead of being dogmatic about it, tried to justify it critically. The justification would work if the men whom he interrogated did possess an inchoate knowledge of Nature's standards, but if they did not, the
maieutic would not work. No historical record exists of one of his conversations. We have simply the semifictional accounts of Plato and Xenophon. But even if the actual words, or the targets of those reported conversations, are imaginary, the method is the same. Socrates does assume that his pupils already possess, but unconsciously, the ideas which he is examining, and the interrogation is to bring them into the light of day. This point of view was elaborated in greater detail in Plato’s *Meno*.

The German historian, Wilhelm Windelband, has pointed out that the Socratic philosophy was “the philosophy of the dialogue.” A dialogue does not merely record the opinions of two people; it may also be based on the premise that at least two points of view are reasonable. It has often been noted, moreover, that the so-called early dialogues of Plato do not come to any conclusions but are “dialogues of search.” There is, nevertheless, one conclusion in all the early dialogues, the clarification of certain ideas by the rejection of those whose implications cannot resist criticism. To have discovered the weakness of one’s own position is a conclusion. And the man who leads one to it is usually an un-

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20 The first classification of the dialogues of which we have any record was made by Aristophanes of Byzantium (third and second centuries B.C.). This arrangement divided them into trilogies, like those of the ancient tragedies. Thrasyllus (first century B.C.), whose arrangement has been preserved, arranged them in groups of four and divided them into dialogues of investigation or search and those of exposition. For these arrangements, see George Grote, *Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (London: John Murray, 1885), Vol. I, pp. 292 ff. Albinus (second century A.D.) in his classification calls *Euthyphro, Meno, Ion*, and *Charmides* experimental, dialogues which test ideas. In Sextus Empiricus we find that one name for skepticism is the philosophy of search (zetetic). See *Pyrrh. hyp.* i. 3. Albinus did not think that the dialogues fell into classes that had nothing in common. On the contrary he believed that the Platonic philosophy forms a system. After pointing to the classifications of Thrasyllus and Dercylides, he says, “We say that there is no one and determinate beginning of the Platonic philosophy, for, being perfect, it resembles the perfect form of the circle. Just as there is no one and determinate beginning of a circle, so there is none of his philosophy.” See his frs. 6 and 7 in Mullach, *Fragmenta Graecorum Philosophorum* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, n.d.), Vol. III, p. 24. For recent discussions of this and related matters, see Harold Cherniss, “Plato (1950–1957),” *Lustrum*, IV (1959), 8 ff.
pleasant fellow whom one would like to silence. When he also shows the weakness of commonly accepted opinions through his method, he becomes an enemy of society and, since society has as its basic principle its own self-preservation, he will be punished. The retention of the past gives stability to any society and, as Socrates himself says in *Crito*, one must make every sacrifice for the security of the state. But in so far as the state is a set of ideals, those ideals must be cherished and can be changed only very slowly. But the Athens of Socrates' maturity was in a condition of dramatic flux. Solon at the end of the sixth century had already reorganized the constitution. He was immediately followed by the despotism of Pisistratus and his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, and though their rule may have been accompanied by economic success and political power for the city, the Age of the Despots was terminated by a revolution, and a democratic regime was instituted by Clisthenes just before the beginning of the fifth century. The first thirty years of that century, the period just before the birth of Socrates, were given over to the extension of Athenian power, the Persian Wars, and the foundation of what we would call today the Athenian Empire. In his youth and early manhood he lived through the Periclean Age. But that came to an end when he was forty. He saw the plague and the Peloponnesian War. He also saw the reign of the Thirty Tyrants. He had engaged in military service at the front. He saw the overthrow of the Thirty and the rebirth of the democracy. Surely no Athenian could have been more aware than he of the vicissitudes of cities. Is it not understandable that the men who were responsible for the preservation of the *status quo* should have seen in him and in the early Sophists, in anyone who was influential in weakening the citizens' faith in the old ways and ideas, an enemy? What they did not realize, and what none of their successors have realized, is that by killing a man one does not kill his ideas.

A further remark may not be out of place here. The fifth century was also the great age of tragedy. Greek tragedy is not a drama of heroes and villains; it is a drama of ideas, of laws, of
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customs, of choices, of divine decrees and human resistance to them. They are personal dramas only to us who are not Greeks and have no religious attachment to the stories they tell. That is why characters like Oedipus and Antigone and Prometheus can be turned into symbols for types of character. The Promethean drama can be interpreted as an allegory, just as the tragedy of Antigone can, and when we speak of the universality of the tragic themes, it makes sense precisely because the characters stand for something beyond their own personal problems. There is a legend that Plato as a young man was a dramatic poet. His dialogues have been seen as comedies in which ideas take the place of people. The Greek plays, even those of comic writers, do not simply tell a story; they also give us the battle of points of view. One of the earliest remaining examples of this is the debate between Apollo and the Furies in the Eumenides, to which we have already referred above. When the Chorus accuses Orestes of matricide, Apollo replies that he, the god, had ordered him to avenge his father's death. When the Furies point out that it is their function to pursue murderers, he answers that Clytemnestra too was a murderer. If, says Apollo (213 ff.), to slay one's husband is not to slay one's kin, how about the profanation of the marriage bed which dishonors Zeus, Hera, and Aphrodite? Finally Athena is called in to adjudicate the case and, after further arguments on the relative gravity of killing one's husband and killing one's mother, including a bit of biological theory, she delivers the following interesting verdict (737–44).

The task is mine, to give the final judgment.
My vote shall I cast for Orestes,
For no mother have I nor did one give me birth,
And I commend the male in all things save in marriage
With all my heart; I am the fruit of my father.
So I shall not prefer the fate of a woman
Who killed her husband, lord of her home.
Let then Orestes win, even if the votes are equal.

The votes are equal, leaving the issue on abstract grounds just
about what it was before. And the grace of Athena is responsible for the decision.\textsuperscript{21}

This sort of thing is common to the plays. In \textit{Agamemnon} (1500–66) there is a debate between Clytemnestra and the Chorus of Elders on the justice of her crime; in \textit{Seven against Thebes} (1105–end) we find Antigone arguing with the Herald about the necessity of burying her brother; and in the opening of Sophocles' \textit{Antigone} we have a similar argument between Antigone and her sister, Ismene. In \textit{Ajax} (1047–1160) is the argument between Menelaus and Teucer over the disposal of Ajax's corpse, and in \textit{Electra} that between Electra and the Chorus (122–315) on the rights and wrongs of avenging her father's murder. But even in Aristophanes we have a mock trial, that of Euripides in the \textit{Thesmophorians}, and in the \textit{Frogs} the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides for the throne of tragedy. The Greek public must have both liked and have been accustomed to long debates. Is it farfetched to say that the Socratic method was a transfer to the philosophic stage of the technique of the poets? Just as Oedipus had to be brought to an awakening of what he had done unwittingly, so the pupils of Socrates are brought to an awareness of what they unwittingly know.

\section{III}

1. It was in the field of the appraisal of life that the Sophists came into their own. Their very interest in debate and speech-making is sufficient evidence that when they were serious they thought life in need of improvement. When they were not serious, they had a kind of disdain for it. In the Pseudo-Platonic \textit{Axiochus} (369b), the date of which is sometime before the first

\textsuperscript{21} There is of course much more to the play than this, for it is clear that the basic dispute is over the rights of the Old Gods and the Young, the old order against the new. For a fuller discussion of this, see Headlam and Thomson, \textit{The Oresteia of Aeschylus} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 49 ff.
century B.C., Prodicus is mentioned by Socrates as having said in his presence that death was of no concern to either the living or the dead—the kind of disdain for one of the great sources of worry which is typical of those who refuse to take over the major troubles of their fellow men. This has little value as a "fragment," but probably does show the sort of attitude which Prodicus might have assumed. His speech called The Choice of Heracles, preserved by Xenophon (Mem. ii. 1. 21 ff.), is, as Xenophon admits, not an exact reproduction of the Sophist's words, but does give us, as far as we know, an idea of what Prodicus thought. This speech, which had an extraordinary fortune in the history both of philosophy and of painting as well, is a simple allegory of the strong man choosing the path of Virtue rather than that of Vice. Vice offers all sorts of attractive pleasures, Virtue a life of toil. When Heracles asks Vice her name, she replies (ii. 1. 26), "My friends call me Happiness, but those who hate me childishy call me Vice." To this Virtue says (ii. 1. 28), "Of things which are good and fair the gods have given none to men without toil and care. But if you wish the gods to smile on you, you must serve the gods; and if you wish the devotion of friends, you must show kindness to your friends; and if you desire to be honored by some city, you must render service to that city; and if you aspire to be admired by all Greece for your excellence, you must try to do well by Greece; and if you wish earth to bear bounteous crops for you, you must take good care of the earth; and if you think that you may grow rich on your flocks, you must cherish your flocks; and should you long to win in battle and wish to be able to free your friends and subdue your enemies, you must learn the arts of warfare both in theory and in practice. If you wish to be powerful in body, you must accustom the body to obey the will and exercise it with toil and sweat." This road, answers Vice, is difficult to travel, whereas her own is easy and broad. But, need-

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22 It is marked as spurious as early as the catalogue of Thrasyllus. See Diogenes Laertius, iii. 57.

less to say, Heracles chooses Virtue. His Twelve Labors became emblems of the toilsome life of Virtue and in time he himself became the patron god of the Stoic Sages, though Xenophon actually does not conclude the speech with the choice.24

That some of the Sophists, or at any rate men who have been counted among the Sophists, had no very high opinion of human beings is illustrated by a fragment from Critias.25 Critias was of course a man who had no reason to love his fellows, nor had they much to love him, but it is clear from this passage that he believed law to be necessary in order to keep the beast in man subdued, a task which is aided by religion. Whether his misanthropy was a rationalization of his political behavior or not, there is no saying.

There was a time when the life of man was unordered and bestial, at the mercy of force, when there was neither reward for the good nor even punishment for the wicked. And then men seem to me to have made punitive laws that justice might be lord alike for all and insolence be mastered, and that if any man should do wrong, he might be punished. And then, when the laws prevented them from doing open misdeeds by violence, they did wrong in secret; and thereupon, I think, some clever and wise man first discovered the fear of gods for mortals, so that evil men might be afraid, should they do or say or think anything in secret. He therefore introduced the divine as a spirit vigorous with imperishable life, hearing and seeing with his mind, and of great wisdom, and attending to these things and having a divine nature, hearing all that is said among men and able to see all that is done on earth. . . .

Both law and religion then are inventions to control the human race, which without them would be guilty of both overt and occult crimes. There is no thought in such a passage that man's conscience might suffice to keep him on the path of virtue. Critias' admiration for the Spartans, attested by his work on the Spartan

24 For the relation of this speech to "hard primitivism," see Primitivism in Antiquity, pp. 113 ff.
26 Fr. B25, ll. 1-21 (Diels-Kranz). For a discussion of this passage, which comes from Sextus Empiricus, in the context of antiprimitivism, see Primitivism in Antiquity, pp. 211 ff.
Constitution and the fragments which extol the rigor of their way of life, was probably not unconnected with his contempt for men who were not disciplined by the sort of law a tyrant would try to enforce.26 Stobaeus quotes three lines from an unnamed drama of his which might have been written by La Rochefoucauld: “Whoever goes about doing favors in all ways for his friends, will replace a present pleasure with future enmity” (fr. B27). Or again, “Dangerous is it when a man unthinking seems to think” (fr. B28). Though we can no longer tell what character in the plays said such things and in what situations they were said, they are preserved as if they represented the opinions of their author. But, it is true, if only the speeches of Iago were left of Othello, and the other plays of Shakespeare were entirely lost, our opinion of Shakespeare’s ethics would be vastly different from what it is now. Be that as it may, we have one fragment of Critias which resembles certain lines of Sophocles: “Nothing is certain except that once we are born, we shall die, and that while living, we meet with nothing but misery” (fr. B49).

Of Thrasymachus all that remains relevant to our present context is a fragment from a speech on Athenian politics (fr. B1), in which he argues that the Athenians ought to return to the ways of their fathers, for the miseries which they have undergone during the wars are the work neither of the gods nor of chance, but of the government. “For he is either insensible or very strong who will allow those so wishing to sin, and who will take upon himself the blame for the plots and evils of others.”27 Presumably, but this is only conjecture, men have a standard of justice, erected in ancient times, which is good forever, regardless of changes of situation and the problems which they might provoke. Their weak-

26 Critias was Plato’s uncle and is shown in a better light by his nephew than by others. One wonders, but must not do more than wonder, whether Plato’s admiration for Sparta was not influenced by the views of Critias.
27 Mario Untersteiner in his The Sophists, trans. by Kathleen Freeman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 326, following Th. Hirzel, Themis, Dike und Verwandtes (Leipzig, 1907), p. 372, says that the plea to return to the ways of our fathers “was always the battle-cry when party struggles broke out.” If so, the idea had no special significance.
ness is to have departed from this standard. In the first book of Plato's *Republic*, however, we have a portrait of Thrasymachus which differs essentially from any such traditionalistic spirit. There justice is defined by the Sophist as the rule of the stronger; his will makes law. Such a Nietzschean point of view would indicate no great admiration for the general run of mankind. It would appear to arise from the “realistic” observation that society is a mass of conflicting wills into which order must be brought. That order is introduced by the strong man, or by the stronger political party. There is then no ideal justice which can be defined without regard to historical considerations. Justice can presumably shift its meaning from time to time, and what might be just under tyrants would not be just under the rule of the Demos. But the only reason why the Demos would be just is that they have the power to enforce their will. A similar sentiment is expressed by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* (482c).

2. Ironically enough, it is Socrates, persecuted by his fellow Athenians, who seems to have a higher opinion of human nature. Like Condorcet, who wrote his sketch of human progress while under sentence of death imposed by the latest and most progressed of nations, Socrates delivered himself of his speech on the supremacy of the Law while awaiting execution. Though Plato is a bitter critic of the society in which he lived, Socrates seems to have maintained a calm acceptance of things as they were, reforming through example rather than through preaching alone. His method of examination was, to be sure, an attempt at reform, and one does not reform if satisfied with things as they are.

This apparent paradox takes on a new color when one realizes that for Socrates there stood on one side eternal man and on the other historical man. The former, an ideal, was by its very nature incapable of change and was also inherently good. The latter, being in time, did change and was an imperfect exemplification of man's eternal essence. Men as historical beings could be in error and be guilty of crimes. It was they who were in need of correction. But since they all carried within them a nucleus of the
ideal, one could not despise them, though gentle ridicule might be in order. Socrates did indeed believe that the men about him were for the most part ignorant. They might behave courageously, temperately, justly; but they did not know what their behavior really meant. They were "creatures moving about in worlds not realized." They might therefore be pitied, as children are pitied, or animals, but not punished. One had merely to awaken them to full consciousness of their real nature in order to perfect them. And this awakening would come with rational insight and examination. Part of his irony lay in the disparity between the two natures, in man's ability to have what Plato called true opinion without an awareness of what truth consisted in.

The emphasis upon knowledge, knowledge based upon reason, is characteristic of the Socratic tradition, whether it appears in Plato, Aristotle, or the minor Socratics. It might look as if the man who acted bravely without being aware of the nature of ideal courage was no different from the man who acted bravely in full consciousness of what he was doing. The two acts are outwardly identical. But it is precisely the insistence upon considering human behavior from the internal point of view which sets the rationalistic philosophers apart from their opponents. The difference appears in such anti-intellectualistic proverbs as, The poet is born, not made. To a Plato the rhapsode who sings under the impetus of inspiration is not so important as the poet who knows what he is up to, if there be any such. As the rationalistic tradition loses force in the Hellenistic period and disappears under the influence of Christianity, submission to divine guidance, not only in matters of artistry, but also in matters of belief, the feeling of human impotence in almost all affairs except that of stubbornly willing to accept the will of God—these take the place of reason. But if one took it for granted that man was essentially a rational animal, one was forced to reject the irrational faculties of the soul as anything more than evidences of our animal nature. The notion that they might also partake of superhuman nature was flatly rejected, if even considered.
It was also impossible for Socrates to take such an attitude as that of Thrasymachus. One could not derive any standard of goodness from observation, for all that observation could give one was a picture of historical man. Standards must be found in the realm of eternity if they were to be binding on all men in common. And one advanced toward eternity through dialectic. Socrates himself seems never to have reached his goal, for he is never shown us as formulating any definition of his ideals. He admitted his ignorance, as we have seen, but he also knew why he was ignorant and what he must do to be wise. No definition could be more than nominal if it contained inner contradictions. Hence one could examine all proposed definitions and see whether they would withstand questioning. When Socrates insisted that he must remain in prison and drink the hemlock lest he violate the Law, he was arguing in effect that if he took advantage of offers to escape, he would be setting up a law for himself and that this would be an admission on his part that the Laws did not have universal applicability.

It cannot have escaped one's notice that if this interpretation of Socratic method is correct, then it is in conflict with Aristotle's statement (*Metaphysics* 1078b 29) that Socrates was primarily interested in inductive arguments and (1086b 3) that he did not separate his definitions from particulars. For if he did find the essences of things in the things and never separate from them, the Laws which he found would have been the laws of Athens at the time of his trial plus the laws of all other countries. There would have been inconsistencies in such a collection, as the Sophists had pointed out. If he had said that a man ought to obey the laws of his own country, regardless of their relationship to the laws of other countries, then the universal character of Law as such would have evaporated. Moreover, he must have known that even the laws of Athens had changed, for such knowledge must have been common enough to provide material for Aristotle's *Athenian Constitutions*. Which laws should he obey? If it was those of his own period, then why were they superior to those of any earlier pe-
period? This question was not discussed by him in *Crito* and we can only guess at what answer he would have given to it. Our guess is that he was thinking of Law as something above historical statutes, for once he would have admitted the relativity of law to historical incident, his whole dialectical method would have collapsed and he would have been in the same position as that of the Sophists.

There is then in Socrates a fundamental respect for the dignity of human nature, not, to repeat, of individual human beings who may be good or evil, but of humanity in the transcendent sense of that term. In both Plato and Aristotle this distinction between the perfect ideal and the imperfect temporal beings was retained. It was what gave their philosophies that air of detachment from terrestrial concerns which made them both so useful to the early Christian philosophers. They could reason to reforms in a purely deductive fashion. We have no evidence that Socrates ever went so far as they did. He indicated the way, but did not travel it. There was, moreover, in his life as a whole the source of many philosophies. He is represented as a man who was able to withstand pain and hardship by controlling his senses through reason; but he was also represented as one able to enjoy the pleasures of eating and drinking with convivial companions. If he spoke of his ignorance, he also practiced logical criticism. Though he was accused of denying the gods, he firmly believed in the presence of a god within. It is impossible to construct any single set of consistent theorems which would adequately expound all that he stood for; at any rate no one has been able to do so to date. It was his personality to which men turned for their inspiration, not to any set of dogmas which he preached. He lives on in the writings of his followers, not in any books of his own. And that is perhaps why he has remained as the outstanding master of a variety of men rather than as the head of a single school.

3. The most fervent contemners of the human race were the Cynics. Of this group the most famous are Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope. Though there are certain differences between these
two men which make one hesitate to group them in the same “school,” nevertheless we shall follow tradition and do so.

Antisthenes is mentioned by Plato only once. He is recorded as one of those who were present at the execution of Socrates (Phaedo 59b), but no record is made of any comments of his or of any of his acts. Aristotle refers to him at least five times, but three of his references are to his epistemological or logical views. There is one reference to him in the Politics (1284a 11) mentioning his use of the fable of the Lion and the Hare. The Hare in this fable demands equal rights for all. The Lion is supposed to have replied, “Where are your teeth and claws?” If this story is a fair account of his attitude toward egalitarian democracy, it would put him in a class with Thrasymachus of the Republic. And a man who identifies justice with the will of the stronger can safely be called one who has a fairly low opinion of the human race. A simile of his with a comparable tendency is cited in Aristotle’s Rhetoric (1407a 9). Here he compared the lean Cephisodotus to frankincense, “because it was his consumption which gave one pleasure.” But a fuller description of the philosopher is found in Xenophon, though it is simply a speech put into his mouth at a banquet (Symposium iv. 34–43) and of course invented by Xenophon. But we may assume that it represents faithfully enough the speaker’s views.

The speech might be called a eulogy of poverty. With a paradoxical opening, such as seems to have been characteristic of the Socratics, to the effect that the speaker, who has little or no money, yet thinks himself rich, Antisthenes then pronounces the dictum that men do not have riches or poverty in their material possessions but in their souls. Material wealth does not assuage the hunger for money: some rich men will go to any length to increase their fortunes still further; others are content with what they have. He has nothing but pity for those who are in the grip of the amor habendi, for it is a kind of disease. He himself needs no money, for he never eats beyond the point of satisfying his hunger or drinks except to quench his thirst. His clothing is
simple, but adequate to keep him warm. When stimulated by lust, he satisfies it on any woman whom he happens upon and she is grateful since no other man would be likely to take her. But his greatest satisfaction in his poverty is that if his possessions were taken away from him, he would find it easy to replace them. When one lives simply, pleasures come easily, for it is the need for food that creates one's pleasure in eating, not its cost or luxuriousness. Finally, he is really rich who can spend what he has liberally, and both he and his master, Socrates, have that kind of wealth.28

The use of the reason in an argument of this sort follows a pattern which was going to predominate in literary paradoxes and set speeches. One first asks oneself, as it were, what is the reason for eating, drinking, wearing clothes, copulating, talking, working, or for any of the other customary acts of men. One next defines the act as a means to an end, omitting all traits which do not serve that end: one eats to keep alive; one drinks to quench one's thirst; one wears clothes to protect one from the weather, and so on. The third step is to look at the same acts as generally practiced and, it goes without saying, one finds that they are often performed for ends which are not resident in and sometimes obstructive to the purposes for which one has decided that they exist. Reason then tells one that such ends are bad. Only one purpose must be assigned to each act. If that purpose is pleasure, nothing else but the pleasure which it procures for a man need be considered. If it is the preservation of life, that alone is to be sought. The outcome of this practice of reasoning was sometimes more paradoxical than might have been expected. When taken over by some of the early Stoics, it led to its own refutation. Thus Sextus Empiricus notes that sometimes Reason was used to defend what was both “contrary to Nature” and “contrary to

28 In the Memorabilia (i. 6) there is given a conversation between Socrates and Antiphon, the Sophist, in which Socrates is represented as a believer in the Simple Life much in the manner of Antisthenes. If this conversation is based on Socrates' real views, there is some justification for making him one of the sources of this type of Cynicism.
custom” (Greek), as when Chrysippus in his book on the State
endorses the “unnatural” practices of pederasty, incest, and can-
nibalism.29

But the main topos of the Cynic was the pursuit of autarky,
self-dependence, freedom from external needs, personal sov-
eignty. This in different ways appears as well in Plato, in the
Epicureans, in the Stoics, and even in the Skeptics. The wise man
was he who could dispense with goods, who was independent not
only of material possessions, but also of society as an organized
system of laws and regulations. To be free in the case of the
Cynics often meant to “follow Nature,” though they seemed to
differ somewhat in their ideas of where Nature was to be found.
The speech of Antisthenes, which we have briefly summarized,
does not emphasize Nature as the norm of correct living. It is
rather praise of the simple life on the ground that superfluities
are shackles on freedom. If the end of life is freedom, and if
superfluities reduce one’s freedom, then Reason tells one to do
away with them. There is little here of the contempt for man-
kind which is to be found in the anecdotes told about Diogenes.
In fact, when Antisthenes condemns Alcibiades, his condemna-
tion ran counter to the preaching attributed to Diogenes. If Alci-
bades followed the Persians in committing incest, Diogenes would
have said that he did no more than the beasts do and their acts are
the criteria of the natural.30 If an act is natural, what is wrong
with it? But to Antisthenes, the question is not one of being
natural or unnatural, but of becoming a slave to a passion. Clement
of Alexandria reports him as saying that if he could catch Aphro-
dite, he would shoot her, for she corrupts good and decent
women; love is nature’s evil, a disease (fr. 35). Yet he is also said
to have believed that the Sage should marry in order to have
children, begetting them on the handsomest women (fr. 58). Such
conflicts of opinion are to be expected when one has to rely al-
most exclusively on anecdotes for the reconstruction of a man’s

29 Outlines of Pyrrhonism iii. 246 f.
thought. We should run into more if we discussed all the various apothegms reported to be by him in Diogenes Laertius. But none of them exhibit those revolting ideas which made Diogenes of Sinope famous. We may safely say of him that he stood for simplicity but not for asceticism, was cautious of becoming entangled in civic affairs, and thought that autarky was the highest good. All three of these opinions cast a shadow on the way most human beings live and Antisthenes must have looked down with a certain ostentation on the general run of mankind. Though his own words are probably no longer to be read, his very desire to deny the commonly held values is enough to establish him as a severe critic of his fellows. Most of the so-called fragments derive ultimately from Xenophon’s *Symposium* and indeed his remarks in that work suffice to found a legend. But there is even less to go on in the case of the more famous Diogenes of Sinope.

Since Diogenes was only about thirteen years old when Socrates was executed, he does not figure in any of the Platonic dialogues. He is mentioned once by Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric* (1411a 24), as calling the taverns the mess halls of Attica. Demetrius, the author of the rhetorical treatise *On Style*, gives us two anecdotes about him, one showing his sense of the absurd and the other his sarcasm, both being used by the author to illustrate the idea that “every form of Cynic speech seems at once like a dog fawning and biting.” Most of the anecdotal data are cast in that mold which still today is called cynical. Though it is precarious to systematize them, certain general ideas emerge from them all. There is first of all an extreme cultural primitivism, based on the ideal

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31 See esp. fr. 89, which may of course be spurious.
32 The contrast between Antisthenes and Diogenes is strongly emphasized in a book by the late Farrand Sayre, *Diogenes of Sinope* (Baltimore: privately printed, 1938). This study, based on a doctoral dissertation, though the work of a “gentleman scholar” is worth reading with care and its thesis is well documented.
33 *De elocutione* v. 260–61. W. Rhys Roberts in his introduction to this work in the Loeb Classical Library dates Demetrius at the end of the first century A.D., rather than 300 B.C., the traditional date given to Demetrius of Phalerum to whom the treatise is usually attributed. Most of our information about Diogenes comes from Diogenes Laertius.
of self-sufficiency. He is reported by Epictetus (Discourses iii. 24. 67 f.) to have said, "Since Antisthenes set me free, I have not been a slave. . . . He taught me what things are mine [or my concern] and what are not. Possessions, kindred, family, friends, fame, familiar places, my occupation, these are all alien to me."

The use of appearances alone is a person's concern. In this realm a man is absolutely free and self-sufficient. In order to make use of appearance as he pleased, he avoided everything which was costly or which involved trouble or much labor.34 Stobaeus in one place (Floril. ciii. 20) quotes him, an out-and-out hedonist, as saying, "Happiness consists solely in this—that a man truly enjoy himself and never be grieved, in whatever place or circumstances he may be." But in another place (ix. 49) this is qualified by the insistence on the "right use" of a man's sense organs: "He who uses them rightly gets pleasure from seeing and hearing, from food and sex; while for him who uses them wrongly, dangers arise from those things which are most valuable and necessary." How right and wrong use are distinguished is not explained, but one can guess that some experience is required in order that no pleasure may be sought which would infringe on a man's autarky. If this guess is correct, then the hedonism of Diogenes, in spite of the anecdotes of his shamelessness, the purport of which is that neither incest nor cannibalism were against nature, is far from being the whole of his philosophy.35 There are also stories that he took the beasts as exemplary, as if they were more natural than man. What the beasts could do without, man could do without. For that reason he lived in the shelter of his famous wine jar, ate raw food, wore the simplest of clothes—which later evolved into the well-known Cynic cloak—withdrawn from all

34 Dio Chrysostom Orat. vi. 30–34.
35 On the cultural primitivism of Diogenes, see Primitivism in Antiquity, pp. 135 ff. His shamelessness became legendary. For instance he is reported to have "performed the work of Demeter and of Aphrodite," including masturbation, in public. But when shamelessness becomes a legend, the historian becomes wary. For the persistence of the legend in our own times, see Bayle's Dictionary, art. Diogene.
public affairs, and in short became the stock symbol of the self-sufficient individualist.

The importance of all this for a history of philosophic ideas is the definition of the natural as an ethical norm. There is probably no ancient philosopher whose works have survived either in their original form or in secondhand reports who did not use that adjective as a term of praise and who did not criticize human behavior on the basis of its naturalness or unnaturalness. But as we have said, what they meant by this term varied widely. One might imagine that the nature of anything was revealed in the general characters of the class to which it belonged. But to discover that class involved one in a circular definition, for before one knew, one was adding the adverb “naturally” to the clause “to which it belonged.” It demands no great amount of meditation to see that a thing may belong to a great variety of classes, as determined by the traits which it shares in common with other things. Man has been defined as a rational animal, an animal which laughs, a featherless biped, a social animal, a being with a sense of sin and of estrangement from God, and so on, and all of these definitions, with the exception of “a social animal,” would be useful in given contexts. But to derive standards of behavior from definitions, though common practice, is a dubious enterprise, for if the definition is real and not nominal, then every member of the class defined ought to be covered by it. If then man is really a rational animal, to take but one and not the least famous of these definitions, all men ought to be found to be rational. And the problem of making them rational ought not to arise. One does not ask a person to be what he is.

But reformers have to have something to reform and in general their task, if they use the technique which we are discussing, is to devise means of making men live up to the definition which has been framed of their nature. In short, it is soon discovered that some men are unnatural. Now the definitions of “natural” which were most in use were roughly as follows. Natural man was the chronologically primitive man, in Greek legend man of the Golden
Age or of the Age of Cronus. This in Hebrew legend was man before the Fall of Adam. The Pagan Fall was attributed to a variety of acts: uncontrolled degeneration, the institution of private property and the desire for possessions, the love of luxury, the emergence of injustice, the appetite for animal food; in fact, there was scarcely any characteristic of civilized life which was not used as the source of man's unnaturalness. Yet no one satisfactorily explained why any of these evils should have entered the scene to corrupt human life. In spite of the Fall, there were, it was assumed, always some remnants of the state of nature to be discovered. Either reason or instinct or intuition could light upon them, though in each case these faculties found different traces of man's original nature. Reason, for instance, might lead to asceticism or the simple life; instinct might lead one to copy the animals; intuition might lead one to love, as in Tibullus (Elegies ii. 3), or, in our own times, to the supposed innocence of childhood. In Diogenes the animal was the natural, if we may trust the anecdotes. Hence to live according to nature was to live according to animal ways of living. But what animal was the most natural? 

It is interesting to see that it was Diogenes, not Antisthenes, who became the typical Cynic. And it is from his way of living that our own word, "cynical," got its connotation of contemptuous, scornful of human motivation, and sneering. The later Cynics are described in Lucian's Cynicus as bearded, unshorn, shirtless, half-naked, barefoot, worn out by hardships, homeless, and dirty. They lived on as pagan mendicants, and the German scholar, Helm, maintains that "Cynicism disappeared with the disappearance of paganism, after monachism had taken over into itself in part the characteristic features of the Cynic life." The monks

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36 For a thorough analysis of the various meanings of "nature" and its derivatives, we refer once again to A. O. Lovejoy's Appendix to Primitivism in Antiquity.

37 I follow tradition in calling it Lucian's, though most modern classicists think it spurious. See Primitivism in Antiquity, p. 136.

of course were not motivated by the same considerations as the Cynics, but outwardly they were indistinguishable from them, being stimulated by an equally powerful \textit{contemptus mundi}. And in spite of the disgusting stories told about Diogenes, his stamina was admired by many writers, among the Stoics by Epictetus and among the Neoplatonists by Julian the Apostate.

\textbf{IV}

In general it may be said that Greek ethical teaching split on the question of how to make man what he \textit{really} is. The Sophists seem to have believed that men, like everything else, had no common nature, or at least none which was relevant to ethics. Socrates and the Socratics, on the contrary, maintained that man's eternal nature as distinguished from his historical nature could be discovered in a world of ideals and that it served as a standard by means of which one could correct the behavior of individual men. The aim of the Socratics was to bring eternal man down into history and the self-sufficiency (autarky) which they sought was in effect the liberation of eternal man from temporal entanglements. Yet both groups turned out, with the possible exception of Prodicus, to be individualists of an extreme type, the Sophists in utilizing society for their own ends, the Socratics in their inevitable withdrawal from society.

1. If the \textit{Dissoi Logoi} are to be taken seriously as evidence that moral standards have no roots "in nature," but are created by men for their own ends, then it is folly to move any farther in the direction of social obligation than the extent to which it will bring one peace, or keep one out of trouble. If one is living in a society which demands military service, then one does one's military service because it is easier to conform than not to conform. If a society demands certain religious performances, such as celebrating the nation's birthday or putting a pinch of incense on the altar of the Emperor's genius, one does so rather than make one-
self a nuisance to others. But none of this means that one believes in the inherent rightness of such behavior, and if one could evade military service or the prescribed religious rites without danger, one would do so. No one can be a martyr to an ideal if he does not believe in the existence of ideals. And if what are called ideals are simply the prejudices of one’s fellow men, there is no reason why one should give them more than lip service.

There is, however, one aim which can be attained without reasoning to its justification, pleasure. It is probably true that animals and children seek agreeable experiences and avoid painful ones. And since the most fantastic acts and occupations can become pleasurable, even those which are antibiological, it becomes impossible to argue that a man does anything without a hedonistic motive. Self-sacrifice, suicide, hard work, asceticism, and all the acts of saints and martyrs can be described as giving pleasure to the man who performs them. It may not be the pleasure of the majority, but that is of no account. It may be the pleasure that comes from the approbation of those whose approbation one seeks. It may be the pleasure that comes from self-approbation. But in both cases the hedonist will call it pleasure. What ought to be done is what one does. And if all men seek some sort of pleasure, then that is what they ought to seek. That this leads to moral anarchy is indubitable, if one is thinking of the theoretical structure of an ethics. Theoretically there is no reason to maintain that all men will seek the same goals, even if one use a very abstract term like pleasure to name what all men seek. Actually it may turn out that there is at least a high probability that all men’s goals will be identical. For instance, it may be true that all men seek sexual satisfaction above everything else and that if they cannot get it in the normal way, will find it in abnormal ways. We have been told in recent years that the very denial of sexual satisfaction on the part of some individuals may be a disguised form of it. In any event, all that we have here is a statistical generalization of fact and there is no sense in telling men that they ought to do what they do anyway. When a Sophist such as
Thrasymachus in the first book of the Republic argues that justice is the satisfaction of the will of the stronger, he is making a descriptive statement and the only rule which he can give to his fellows is that of not being misled by the ideas of men who would like to substitute the fulfillment of their desires for that of someone else. The Prince is an excellent handbook for the disciples of Thrasymachus, for it sets down the recipes by which a strong man can induce others to accept his rule. But the thesis that all men seek to impose their will on others is not deduced from any axiomatic premise, but like the universality of the hedonistic motive, is an empirical generalization.

The Dissoi Logoi, as we have seen above, were opinions both of individuals and of societies. If the Sophists wondered about the cause of such a variety of opinions, we have no evidence of it. It would have been possible to ask why an individual wanted the things he wanted, whether there was something in a man’s soul and body which drove him to one kind of behavior rather than to another. When it was a question of national opinions, the Athenians preferring one thing, the Spartans another, the same question might have been put. Why, for instance, did a military state put such emphasis on comradeship and so little on family life? One might even go farther and ask why Sparta became a military state. Plato in the Republic gives reasons why all possessions should be in the hands of the Philosopher-Kings, why children should be educated by the state, why wives should be given to men as the rulers saw fit. These reasons are of course part of a purely theoretical structure, but nevertheless analogous reasons might have been looked for in real societies. We have, for instance, some idea of why the Pharaohs and the Kings of Persia married their sisters; the reasons may not have been good ones, but they make the rule intelligible. We also can see that in a regime which permits private property, theft should be punished, and we also can see that in a hierarchical society the wickedness of homicide should be weighed against the rank of the person killed. Such investigations would seem to us, I imagine, a natural
step to be taken as soon as one has become committed to any sort of cultural relativism. But we have no evidence that the Sophists took it.

The only document which we have on which to construct a Protagorean ethics would be Plato’s dialogue, *Protagoras*. But here we learn simply that the Sophist believed that virtue can be taught, as if it were an art. We find him protesting against the view, suggested by Socrates, that goodness is identical with pleasure, as well as making no use of his epistemological relativism. His introduction of the myth of Prometheus accentuates his belief that man without the arts would be at the mercy of the elements, but precisely how the art of becoming virtuous would be taught is nowhere explained. We are thus left with nothing but conjecture to help us reconstruct the ethical views of the greatest of the Sophists.

2. There is both a hedonistic and an ascetic element in the behavior of Socrates himself. He is pictured by both Plato and Xenophon as enjoying the pleasures of the table and of companionship; but he is also depicted as able to withstand the rigors of war, as being satisfied with very little in the way of bodily comfort, and acting as a mild Cynic. Pleasure masters him as little as pain. Evil and good are not determined by human preferences but by a superhuman order. Temperance, courage, friendship, like truth and beauty, are ideals which do not vary but are fixed in the realm of eternity. In his opinion it would be, for instance, senseless to criticize a man for cowardice if there were no such thing as cowardice-in-itself, regardless of people's opinions about it. If you can argue about a virtue, it is because there is something real to argue about. We may not know for certain just what it is, but that amounts to no more than being unable to frame a good definition of it. Socratic ignorance is limited to the area of the definition. But such ignorance does not prevent our recognizing a virtuous act when we come across one. A person may recognize a dog or a horse without being able to formulate a good definition of caninity or equinity. Yet somehow we must possess an idea,
however nebulous and obscure, of the things which we can recognize, and it is our duty as rational animals to clarify the obscurity of our intuitive ideas.

Let us assert once more then that for Socrates ethical ideals are a part of the natural order and are not created by men. If this thesis is developed, the distinction between Greek and Barbarian as essential collapses, for what is wrong for a Greek is wrong for all men and the local laws are irrelevant to the issue. We are again faced with the problem of why in that case Socrates should have been so insistent on obeying the laws of Athens. Why should such a law not have been simply the opinion of The Many and as wrong as any other opinion? At the risk of reading too much into Socrates' stand, we can see that statutes could be thought of as the closest approximation to the right that men can attain; like beauty and virtue, the right is never perfectly incorporated.

Or, to suggest another interpretation, that man alone is free who can discipline himself into doing something which is difficult. To evade the law is cowardice and Socrates has never been thought of as a coward. A third possibility was indicated by his defense when he said that he had not much longer to live anyway and that death is nothing to be feared. Yet there is a curious inconsistency in his attitude. He reminded his hearers that when he and four others were ordered by the Thirty to go to Salamis and bring back Leon so that he might be put to death, his four companions obeyed the order, “But I, I took myself home” (Apology 32d). “At that time it was not by words but by deeds that I showed that I cared little about death... but to do nothing unjust, nothing impious, that was my whole concern.” Could it not have been said that the orders of the Thirty were just as much the Law as the orders of the court which tried him?

The difference between the two kinds of government is not brought out by Plato as the reason for Socrates’ disobeying the commands of the one and refusing to disobey the commands of the other, though both commands were unjust. That difference is one which we have advanced for ourselves. But in Plato it was
the promptings of the *Daimon* which determined his acts. In neither case did the *Daimon* check him in his decision and for that reason alone he felt free to act as he did. This being so, the right was revealed by intuition; he knew what was right by being told what was wrong. Generalizing, one can say that man goes about his business until the moment comes when his conscience tells him to refrain from acting. There was precedent for this in the decision of Antigone to bury her brother's body. She too had to choose between obeying the law of the gods or that of the state. And she too had to suffer death. There was therefore in Greek tradition an adumbration of the idea that right and wrong were fixed by supernatural law and that even a government could be in the wrong. To disobey its commands, even if unjust, was to suffer death but death was preferable to impiety. To this idea the Sophists had no reply. For if the right is determined by the opinion of society in general or by national tradition, then the question is bound to arise of why some individuals who are after all brought up within that tradition and subject to the same influences as everyone else within it yet are recalcitrant to its commands. Strictly speaking, one comes to the conclusion that both the state and the conscientious objector are right. There is merely a conflict between their opinions and there is no harmonizing the conflict. One could not even say that the state should allow the objector to go free since his conception of right and wrong is his own, and therefore as well substantiated as that of the state. There should be no outcome except a tragic one to such an impasse, for if the objector goes free, the state—like Creon in *Antigone*—suffers, and if he is punished, *he* suffers.

But behind all this is an idea which it is likely that Socrates held about natural law, and that is that it is always teleological. In the Xenophontic *Memorabilia* (i. 4) is a long argument which is in the nature of a cosmological proof of the existence of God. Furthermore, in Plato's *Phaedo*, which has been cited above, we find Socrates saying that the trouble with the *Nous* of Anaxagoras was that it did not work purposively; it did not explain why one kind
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of world was better than another. Neither of these references proves that Socrates actually had ever advanced the cosmological proof or that he thought even physical events to happen for a purpose. But they are not complete misrepresentations of his views and we may assume that they represent the general tendency of his thinking. If then natural law is teleological, to Socrates' mind this would imply that natural purposes are good. He certainly did not believe that God was evil. To conform to God's laws—or to those of Nature—would be to act in accordance with divine purposes. The harmony between moral ideals and natural law would be complete and the virtuous man would act in consonance with "what ought to be" or, in Plato's words, with what "really is real." The man whose life is "in accordance with Nature" might well be the man who could both be incapable of putting the divine law into words and at the same time have an intuition of it. Also, since it was a single universal law, it would be binding on all men. We are obviously expanding here the thought of Socrates, but it is unlikely that we are stretching it to the breaking point.

3. We have no evidence whatsoever of the theoretical framework of Cynic ethics. We simply know how the Cynic lived and the aims for which he strove. We know that these aims were bound up with the ideal of autarky and that the attainment of self-sufficiency was brought about by the renunciation of everything which a man could give up and still live. The self-sufficiency of Socrates could be inferred from his awareness of his dependence upon the Laws, however paradoxical that might seem. It was an awareness that he had to create for himself by self-examination. He had to liberate himself from common opinion, even when common opinion was true. The Cynic, as far as anyone knows, had no such thesis to defend. He gave no reason for his desire for freedom; he simply laid it down as an axiom that a man ought to be free. The repulsion which he had to slavery was largely rhetorical or, if one wishes, it was something which seemed self-evident to a Greek. If one were asked if slavery to others, to
society at large, to one's bodily desires, to material possessions, to public opinions, was good or evil, it was expected that one would immediately answer that it was evil without further debate. But that was playing upon the emotional connotations of the word "slavery." For if it was true that it was man's nature to live in society, as Aristotle was to say, and that meant also to have certain possessions, to satisfy certain bodily desires such as those for a wife and children, or to maintain a decent reputation among one's fellows, then it would be folly to name that kind of life by a pejorative word. The renunciation of the normal values of mankind is a noble end if there is some reason for it other than the emotional charge of a word. The monk, for instance, was vicariously expiating either the sins of mankind or his own, was praying to God for the salvation of his brothers, was worshiping God twenty-four hours a day. He could justify what he was doing by his theological system. But the Cynic who simply said that one must renounce the world to attain self-sufficiency and who gave no reason why self-sufficiency should be any nobler than the mutual dependence of social beings, was fundamentally capricious. When Cynics are represented by later writers as saying that the very contempt for pleasure is most pleasurable, that "those who have by discipline become habituated to its opposite find a greater pleasure in their scorn of pleasure than in the pleasure themselves," they are probably correctly pictured. For there is indeed a great pleasure in having one's own way, regardless of the obstacles which exist in the road to having it. And however anarchistic the Cynic was, he would not have thought of that as a serious objection. Social life with all the obligations to others which it entailed was an evil. The begging friars of the Middle Ages may have thought so too, but it goes without saying that one can beg only from others.

4. That the Sophists must have been interested in logic is obvious. But it is also obvious, at least from their arguments, that they

39 Diogenes Laertius, vi. 71. See Primitivism in Antiquity, chap. 4, for further discussion of this side of Cynicism.
saw the difficulties of applying logic to a world in flux. If man is the measure of things that are and of things that are not, and if the truth is a picture of what is and falsity of what is not, then clearly man is the measure of truth and falsity. Among the *Dissoi Logoi* are examples relating to this (Diels-Kranz, Vol. II, pp. 405 ff.). They deal with the application of words to things. If a man is accused of a crime, for instance, and tells his story in denial of it, then his story is true if he did not commit the crime and false if he did. This seems to the author to prove that, since the facts are not before the court, the story is both true and false. Silly as this sounds, it points to a difficulty in determining the truth of a statement referring to the past, if we define the truth as a verbal expression of “that which is.” But the criterion of truth is not the truth. Judging from the other examples given, the truth must, in order to be different from the false, be the expression of something which does not change, something which is beyond the flux. But if something is over and done with, it has been part of the flux. How then can one discover the truth about it?

The word “is” in a purely formal statement has no tenses. Mathematical formulas are timeless. But there seems to have been a preconceived idea in the minds of some of the Sophists that the verb is not merely grammatically in the present but refers also to something existing in the present. If the two meanings are not distinguished, then it is impossible to predicate anything of changing things, of past and future things, as well as to make generalizations. Yet we do make generalizations and we also assert judgments of the past and future. It is clear that the date of making an assertion is not necessarily the date of that about which the assertion is made. When Gorgias says that nothing exists, he may simply be saying that all things are changing. When he says that if anything exists, it cannot be known, he may again simply be saying that knowledge is always later in time than that which is known. There are undeniably genuine epistemological problems involved in this, but the answer to none of them is that nothing can be known, unless one has already so defined knowl-
edge that it must always have the unchanging and the present as its object. But not only does the word “is” have two meanings in these arguments; so does the verb “to know.” First it means the direct apprehension of a perceptual datum; second, knowledge about what is perceived or inferred or reported. The distinction has been recognized in modern times and given the following pairs of names, immediate and mediated knowledge, knowledge-of and knowledge-about, acquaintance and description, kennen and wissen (or connaître and savoir, i.e., cognoscere and scire). The two experiences are ostensibly different and the conditions of their occurrence are different. As early as Aristotle it was recognized that the direct apprehension of a sensory quality was not knowledge in the same sense as beliefs were knowledge. To see red, hear B-flat, smell a smoky smell, taste bitter, are not the same as to know that an apple is red, that the piano is capable of striking B-flat, that something is on fire, or that gall is bitter. One may be the origin of the other, the evidence for the other, the cause of the other, but origins, evidence, and causes are not identical with that of which they are the origins, evidence, and causes.

There is still another complication involved in logic as it was conceived by the Sophists. If falsity is the assertion of that which is not, this would seem to entail the belief in the existence of Nonbeing, a manifest contradiction in terms. Yet if there is a one-to-one correspondence between ideas, judgments, thoughts, and their objects, there must be an object corresponding to each idea, judgment, or thought. But there cannot be anything in what we have come to call the external world corresponding to that which is not. But if any ideas are to be false, there must be something which is their object. In our own day this puzzle was handled by the invention of a world of “subsistence” inhabited by illusions, falsities, impossibilities, fictions, dreams, and so on. This was an effort to avoid ideas which corresponded to nothing, which

40 The most eminent proponent of this thesis in the United States was the late W. P. Montague. See his *The Ways of Knowing* (London and New York: Allen and Unwin, and The Macmillan Co., 1925).
traditionally were called purely subjective. But the ancients had no fear of the mind, whereas the most influential Anglo-American philosophers have at least from the time of Hobbes treated its existence as a problem rather than a fact. The more basic question for the Sophists was involved in a notion that fused logic with ontology. And though the puzzles which they elaborated because of this fusion were often absurd and their arguments purely verbal, yet by using them and tormenting their fellows with them, they may have been responsible for Aristotle's clarification of the technique of reasoning. Aristotle did not make the distinction between logic and ontology, and his theory of truth presents as many problems as the sophistries of his adversaries, but at any rate he showed why they were sophistries and that was a step in the right direction.

It may be well at this point to indicate two other meanings of the verb "to be." Sometimes, as in parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in Neoplatonism, and some contemporary forms of theology, it means that predicate which can be attributed to everything whatsoever. Everything, whatever else it is, at least *is*, they say. This kind of Being is not supposed to be identical with existence, though sometimes it is talked about in the same language. Sometimes, as in Plato, we find the verb qualified by the adverb "really." That which is really or that which is really real is in a different sense from that which simply is or exists. Sometimes the verb means "equals" or "is identical with," as when we say that "two plus two is four," or, "George Washington was the first President of the United States." As in definitions, so here, the predicate may be substituted for the subject and vice versa. Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* (iv. 7) has left us the first extant set of distinctions between the various meanings of this word, and some years ago George Santayana published an article doing the same. The distinctions made in that essay reappear in his *Realms of Being*.

Now the Sophists played upon these ambiguities, either per­versely or sincerely, and though the effect of their dis­putations was demoralizing to some, they were performing a useful func­tion in awakening other thinkers to the need for clarity of defini­tion. 

In the nihilistic arguments of Gorgias one finds still another logical device to which attention must be invited. That is the device of which we have frequently spoken in this book of dividing the world into two sets of beings, such that nothing can belong to both at the same time. These sets were called opposites or contradictories. In the most abstract symbolism they are $A$ and $\text{not}-A$. But here too a further distinction has to be made, and Aristotle made it, between contradictories and contraries. A thing cannot both be and not-be red at the same time and in the same respect, but it can be red and round and round is not-red. A sentence cannot be both true and false. If now I say that the apple is red, I cannot also say that it is not red. The trouble arises because we have to distinguish between negating the predicate or negating the copula “is.” We can say without contradiction that the apple is both red and not-red if we mean that it is both red and round, but we cannot say that the apple both is and is-not red. These very simple examples do not seem very important, but they do illustrate the need of keeping a cool head when talking about logical matters. How does one know when of two couples of predicates one set is a set of contradictories and the other a set of contraries? How does one know that red and green (or some other color) are contradictories but that red and round are contraries? There are obviously two ways of knowing this: (1) through “experience”: we see apples that are both round and red; (2) by formal definitions: we define a genus, such as color and divide it into species, red, green, blue, and so on, and then lay down the rule that nothing can belong to two species of the same genus at the same time and in the same respect. Whether we could use the second of these methods without previously having learned from experience that there are various species of color seems to us very
doubtful. But those who believe in the absolutely nonempirical nature of logic and mathematics would not agree. The general trend of ancient logic was in the direction of finding nonempirical ways of splitting up classes into subclasses. One method which had a great vogue was that of dichotomy, splitting a class by negating the characteristics which were common to all the members of one of its included classes, e.g., colored and noncolored things, material and immaterial things, existent and nonexistent things. To say that something must be either $A$ or $\neg A$ is of course valid, but to say that it is $\neg A$ does not tell us much about what it is, unless we have previous knowledge to the effect that $\neg A$ names only one predicate. But how do we know this? We can say that a thing must be or not be; but not-being may include becoming, having-been, and about-to-be, all of which are not-being. One might imagine that common sense would tell us, but one of the tasks of philosophy is to criticize common sense. Common sense tells us that people at the antipodes must be standing on their heads, that the sun rises and moves round the earth, that the stars are points of light stuck in the sky, and that the earth is flat. It also tells us all the contradictions of proverbial philosophy. Hence even if common sense happens to tell us the truth, one has to test it and find out on what foundations it is based, for otherwise we are accepting its conclusions as dogma. And dogma is the antithesis of philosophy.

5. One or two of the logical opinions of the Sophists appear in what is left of Antisthenes. Aristotle tells us in the *Topics* (104b 21) that he said that contradiction was impossible. His reason is given in the *Metaphysics* (1024b 32) as the impossibility of describing anything except "by its own logos," which may mean by its definition, so that truly there could be no predication. It follows from this, says Aristotle, that both contradiction and error would be impossible. Yet he admits later (1043b 24) that there was some justification for the opinion of Antisthenes "and other such uneducated people" that the essence of a thing cannot be defined, since the essence is simple and the definition is complex.
Essences, Antisthenes seems to have said, can be clarified only by similes, as when we say that silver is like tin.

One cannot reconstruct the logical ideas of Antisthenes from these few scraps. But nevertheless one can see why he held the strange conclusions which he appears to have drawn. If a definition gives us the essence of something, it is simply a long-drawn-out description of what a thing is. The peculiar quality of a thing is a single whole which is apprehended either by perception or imagination or intuition. We all know the quality of redness without necessarily being able to define it, and if we only know the definition of this quality, that it is, let us say, the color which one sees when light rays of a length approximating 0.000759 mm. are reflected from it, we still have no idea of what it looks like. Other definitions are of course possible: it is the color at the end of the visible spectrum opposite the violet; it is the complementary of green; it is the color of blood; but these are all defective. This would be the case were we trying to communicate an idea of any quality: the verbal formula may explain the origin of the quality, its position in a scale, its similarity or dissimilarity to other qualities; but none of these devices does what we want.

But Antisthenes was not limiting his objections to defining sensory qualities. If to be a man or a tree or a house has some "nature" which we can grasp as a unit, and if we can grasp it before knowing anything about it, if in other words we can be acquainted with things without being able to define them, then Antisthenes would have something to say on his side of the debate. We have suggested above that his supposed master, Socrates, did believe that certain moral ideas can be apprehended without our being able to define them. And we all know that in aesthetic matters we can be deeply moved by the quality of a musical composition or a painting and be incapable at the same time of making our feelings articulate. No verbal description of Hamlet or Giotto’s Annunciation in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua or Mozart’s Requiem is a substitute for the direct experience of them. This is a commonplace. But if it is valid, all the predicates in the
world will stop short of communicating the essence of anything. I confess that I am unable to see why this should make contradic-
tion impossible, though it might make error impossible. But any epistemology based on immediate knowledge makes error within the area defined by immediacy impossible. No one can be mis-
taken about what he sees or feels, though he may be mistaken in his identification of it, as Aristotle himself admitted in the case of sensory data, in his explanation of why it occurs, in his assertions that it belongs to a physical or imaginary object. Many of our experiences are of this nature, in that “they must be seen to be appreciated.” Maybe Cratylus who thought it was the course of wisdom to say nothing and only to point to things was not so stupid as he seems. For if all true knowledge is direct apprehen-
sion and if direct apprehension is inarticulate, then predication at best will be only partly true and one man’s experience is as valid as another’s.

This would also permit the similes that Antisthenes seemed to permit. For if a man has never seen the color of, let us say, an exotic flower, one can compare it to the color of a flower which he has seen and in this way give him some idea of what it is like. Silver actually is like tin in color, though it differs from tin in more ways than it resembles it. If someone asks today what silver is, he is told that it is an element with the atomic weight of 107.88 and the atomic number 47, that it is a white, rather soft metal with the specific gravity of 10.5 and the melting point of 960.5 degrees centigrade. This works very well for an amateur chemist, but the man who asks the question would be better satisfied in all probability if he were shown a piece of silver.

The denial of error in Antisthenes is not a denial of truth, though dialectically one might argue that if all statements are true, then none are true, for truth is supposed to single out certain char-

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42 See Aristotle Metaphysics 1010a 12.
43 It will be observed that the description given in the text, with the ex-
ception of its mention of color and softness, is derived from operations which are performed upon the metal and not from sensory perceptions in the raw.
acteristics and by implication exclude all others. But if he is confining his conclusions to direct apprehensions, then he could reserve error, as Aristotle himself did, to descriptions, or what Aristotle called synthetic assertions. But since we do not know what restrictions he made, we had best not extend our discussion of his logic.

6. The Sophists by using rational techniques began the overthrow of rationalism. And they did this at the very time that two of the greatest rationalists in the history of philosophy were developing their work. It did not take very long for the suspicion to arise that all reasoning was futile and that a general skepticism was the only intelligent attitude for a man to take. More skeptical than Antisthenes was Pyrrho of Elis, whose life ran on into the first quarter of the third century. Less is known about this philosopher than about most of the others who have been discussed in this chapter, and yet his name has been given to a school of thought which exists even today. The earliest source of our information is the famous Silloi and the Imagines of his pupil and admirer, Timon of Phlius, but what we learn from him is very meager. Sextus Empiricus in his Outlines of Pyrrhonism and Diogenes Laertius furnish more information, but the former is probably attributing more to him than is reasonable and the latter, as usual, is largely relating anecdotes. We can at least say that Pyrrho urged his disciples to suspend judgment since nothing could be known for certain, but what reasons he gave for this are obscure. Later we shall find Skeptics who explain the ground for their skepticism and we shall discuss these grounds at the appropriate place. But it is important to note the existence of this sceptical trend as it first appeared, even if we can do no more than note it. We now turn to the major defender of rationalism, Plato.