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GREEK IDEALS
AND MODERN LIFE

MARTIN CLASSICAL
LECTURES

*These lectures are delivered annually
at Oberlin College on a Foundation
established by his many friends in
honour of CHARLES BEEBE MARTIN,
for forty-five years a teacher of
classical literature and classical art
in Oberlin College.*

GREEK IDEALS AND MODERN LIFE

By

SIR R. W. LIVINGSTONE

President of Corpus Christi College
Oxford

*It is not too soon for us in our new world
of mechanical civilisation to take up once
more the old search for wisdom.*

GRAHAM WALLAS

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PREFACE

THE substance of this book was delivered as lectures on the Charles Martin Foundation at Oberlin College, Ohio. In publishing it I should like to express my thanks both to the kind hosts who made my visit to Oberlin delightful and to those friends in America who welcomed a stranger with the generous hospitality characteristic of their country.

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INTRODUCTION

THE title of these lectures is *Greek Ideals and Modern Life*. They are a plea for Greek studies—not as a field of scholarship, not as a mental discipline, not even as the key to one of the two greatest literatures of Europe, but as indispensable to the spiritual life of our civilization. They are based on three assumptions: first, that Huxley was right in his belief that ⁱ no human being, and no society composed of human beings, ever did, or ever will, come to much, unless their conduct was governed and guided by the love of some ethical ideal'; second, that the chief weakness of this age is a vague mind and a feeble grasp, so far as ethical ideals are concerned; and third, that Greece offers us a corrective of our errors and a guide in our uncertainties.

Those who doubt the remedy will not deny the disease. We know that the world is, economically, in grave difficulties. We have begun to see that its spiritual condition is at least as unsatisfactory, and that the future may admire us less than we used to admire ourselves. Ages are not taken at their own valuation by posterity, and the achievements which they view with most complacency often appear to their successors negligible or even ridiculous. It was so in Greece. Aeschylus expected to be

remembered not as a poet, but as a combatant at Marathon. Isocrates speaks as if the greatness of Athens lay in its empire. Every generation is a bad judge of itself. Much of which it is proud is forgotten by its successors. Whole epochs which were well satisfied with themselves are found in the sequel to matter nothing to the world, and to have made no contribution to its progress. Two hundred years hence our own age may be regarded as one that possessed, for its time, considerable material civilization but very little else, a substantial body and a soul which died from fatty degeneration.

The real cause of our *malaise* is the absence of what Huxley (afraid of the word 'spiritual') called an 'ethical ideal'. This explains, if not the disease, the difficulty of curing it. We do not know what we believe; therefore we do not know what we want. So we succumb to heady emotions, like nationalism, fascism, communism, imperialism, pacifism. *L'esprit croit naturellement la volonté aime naturellement; de sorte que, faute de vrais objets, il faut qu'ils s'attachent aux faux.¹² We become the slaves of our material civilization and not its masters. No steady wind of purpose fills the sails of our ship. The modern world has no definite view of life. Christianity, though still a living religion and, even with

¹ Of course all of these may be rational convictions ; but more frequently they are emotional disturbances,

² Pascal, *Pensees*, 81.

those who reject it, a powerful influence, is no longer the creed of Europe, and nothing has taken its place. The majority of men have exchanged the certainty of faith for a twilight of opinion. Here the pagan world was better provided than the twentieth century. It had at least the two great ethical creeds of Stoicism and Epicureanism by which men could anchor their lives and ride out whatever storms might come. But, apart from Christianity, our age has no such definite philosophy. Intellectually it is adrift. That is, ultimately, a graver danger to the world than economic collapse, or even war. Without a clear and accepted view of life, men waste and misuse material resources and are as lost in their rich profusion as travellers in a tropical forest who have neither guide, map, nor compass. Without it the abundant intelligence and goodwill in the world is dispersed instead of centring on a universal purpose. Without it there can be no unity or common ideal for mankind. This is apparent in international affairs. What we are witnessing in Europe and elsewhere is much more than the normal ebb and flow of conflicting political tides. It is the confusion brought by the collapse of a spiritual ideal. The whole trend of civilization is to unite men. Each improvement in transport and communications brings them together. Science, thought, and their creations are the common possessions of humanity. And yet, in spite of the unexampled growth of these uniting forces,

there is less unity in Europe to-day than fifty years ago and, in the things which matter most, less than in the Middle Ages. Material unity exists; spiritual unity is gone. The latter is more important than the former, and confusion may grow into chaos unless it is restored or replaced. But this is impossible without a clear view of life. Nor is it only in international relations that such a view is needed. Without it the individual cannot bring harmony and order into the tumultuous mixture of instincts, desires and opportunities which compose life. He, too, becomes confused and chaotic. 'Barbarism is the absence of standards to which appeal can be made.' If so, to judge by our films, advertisements, and cheap press, we are living in an age of barbarism.

If our greatest needs are clear standards and a definite philosophy of life, the classics can help us. This, though it is one of the strongest arguments for their study, is not the one to which we are most accustomed. The Greeks did of course produce a great art and architecture, and a literature greater still. They were the creators of science, philosophy, political thought, and much else. But they did something even more important. They were the first people to ask rationally what is the right life for man and to give, if not the most satisfactory answer ever given to this question, at any rate one which no intelligent man who realizes the problem can ignore. The attempt to make life rational and

worthy, to introduce harmony into its discords, order into its chaos, system into its profuse abundance—how rarely has it been made, how seldom succeeded ! There are only three instances in the history of that western civilization which America shares with Europe; the Roman Empire; the Medieval Church ; and that Hellenism from which the other two took so much, and which still survives, significant and fresh, The Greeks started with the chaotic beliefs of a primitive people. Their work in the world might almost be defined as bringing order out of chaos. In nature, starting in a world where lightning was a weapon of Zeus and the winds were alternately imprisoned in and released from a leather bag, they reached the conception of a universe formed out of atoms in infinite space. In religion, starting with a multitude of gods feasting and quarrelling on Olympus, they ended in pure and lofty theism. In ethics, starting with the moral confusion of the Homeric poems and the Hesiodic age, they achieved the exalted conceptions of Platonic and Stoic philosophy. ' In the beginning', said Anaxagoras, ' all things were together; then mind distinguished and ordered them/ The words describe the part played by Greece in human civilization.

'The classics' are the story of the birth and growth of these conceptions and their application to the life of men. In this Greece and Rome played

different parts. As the Bible expounds a religious ideal in its essential purity, while the history of the Church is the attempt to apply that ideal to the complexities of the social and political life of mankind, so with Greece and the Graeco-Roman world. Greece developed on the small stage of the city-state a conception of what human existence should be : part of the interest of Roman studies is to see this ideal applied in the organization of a great empire and to the life of a practical people.

The following chapters deal with some aspects of the relation of Hellenism to the present day. The second traces the new attitude to Greek studies that developed in the nineteenth century among thinkers who were disillusioned with their age and perceived that Hellenism offered a corrective to many of its faults and an ideal by which men could live. The third, after pointing out that our conception of a civilization based on science and technology originates in Greece, discusses the meaning and value of the Greek ideal of humanism. The fourth chapter suggests some criticisms which a Greek thinker might make on our attitude to politics and economics. The fifth points out the close analogy between the spiritual problems of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and those of our own day. The last deals with the general relation of Christian to Greek ideals and indicates some points in which Christianity corrects and supplements Hellenism.

Before proceeding to my subject, I wish to anticipate certain criticisms. Some people put the Greeks out of court at the outset because they owned slaves. That, it is implied, deprives their life of significance for us.

It is hard to understand the logic of this argument. Does it mean that the character of Socrates, the ideals of Plato and the Stoics, the genius of Homer or Aeschylus or Aristotle are meaningless to us because they lived in a slave-owning society? That is clearly not true. Or is it suggested that a society in which bad institutions exist has no message for posterity? If so we must cease to read Shelley and Wordsworth because the labour of children working sixteen hours a day in factory and mine entered into the coal that they burnt and the clothes that they wore; we must reject the virtues of every epoch—including our own—because they co-existed with institutions and customs in which succeeding ages find much to reform. Or does it mean that the peculiar virtues of the Greeks could only exist in a slave-owning society, and that therefore they can have no value for us? That also is untrue. The leisure which the Greeks owed to perivile labour is made possible for us by technology. The machine has replaced the slave, and if we were fortunate enough to produce a Plato or an Aristotle, they could live in this modern world, without slaves and with infinitely more comfort, the lives which

they led in Athens. We do not avert our eyes from Washington or Jefferson or Alexander Hamilton because (in the eighteenth century after Christ) they kept slaves. We need not be severer to the Greeks.

But there are graver counts against them than an institution which survived them for nearly 2,000 years, and a critic might object that I have ignored these and described not the real Greek, but a Hellene of the imagination. Greek life was lived on a lower level than this book suggests. Much was corrupt in the soil from which the flowers of its art and thought sprang. There can have rarely existed more unpleasant old men than the acquaintances of Cephalus,¹ and the law-court speeches of the orators show Greeks very unlike Plato and his friends. Yet these find no place in the following pages, and slavery, *paederastia*, *hetaerae*, the crude Olympian mythology, the savage political quarrels are not mentioned in them.

They are omitted deliberately and, I think, justifiably. There are two ways of studying a civilization. It may be summoned to an amateur Last Judgement, its virtues and vices exhaustively recounted, the balance struck between good and bad, and an honest verdict pronounced. The method is legitimate, but the work requires super-human knowledge and rare impartiality, and perhaps

¹ Plato, *Republic*, 329.

we might apply to it the words in which Plato describes the task of the Higher Critic as ' the occupation of a very clever and laborious and rather unfortunate man V Further, it may be misleading as well as unprofitable to catalogue elaborately the vices of a people. A complete estimate of England would include Cromwell, Chatham, Burke, Wesley, Wilberforce, but also Bute, George IV, and Northcliffe; *The Times*, but also less admirable journalism; the town-building of the nineteenth century and the ribbon development of the twentieth; the slums, the prisons before Howard, the penal laws of the eighteenth century, the abuses of the enclosures, the cruelties and injustices of the Industrial Revolution; the ' dogs ' and the films; the Liberator frauds and the Hatry scandal; the aspects of social and financial life which occasionally see light in the law-courts. Long before the catalogue was ended, we might wonder whether this was the way to know England. Such a procedure is no more illuminating in the case of Greece.

A civilization may be studied, less ambitiously but not unprofitably, in a different way. We may estimate its significance to the world and its permanent contribution to history and human progress, concentrating on its greatness. That is the method of this book. It does not indeed deal with Greece as a whole. So vast a river has many streams. Here

¹ *Phaedrus*, 229 ἄλλαν βαινοῦ καὶ ἐπιπτόνου καὶ οὐ πᾶν εὐτυχούς ἀνδρός.

ignoring foul or stagnant waters and lesser confluents, I have tried to indicate a main current and called attention to certain aspects of Hellenism which are of particular interest and value to our own generation.

II

THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF HELLENISM

THERE are two views of life, and only two, which have won the allegiance of large masses of mankind in the West. Of these one comes from Palestine, the other from Greece. They are different though not incompatible. We owe to them the noblest patterns of life which Europe has produced and almost all that is vital in our civilization. In religion Palestine stands first; but the greatness of the achievements of Greece in the spiritual as well as in the intellectual and the artistic world is often forgotten. For the enthusiasm which its admirers feel for Hellenism—*sciunt cut crediderunt*—is more than equalled by the ignorance of the public about it. To the public Latin and Greek are ¹the classics', grouped together without discrimination, ranked chronologically in the wrong order, and labelled 'dead languages', which, thanks to the mortmain of tradition and the conservatism of the schools, a large number of boys and girls still learn—both languages fortunately, and especially Greek, in diminishing numbers. The educated know better. Yet even they sometimes forget that the least difference between Greek and Latin is linguistic, that their properties and powers are quite unlike, that the

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effects of potash and of nitrate of soda on a growing plant are not more unlike than the influences of Greek and of Latin on a developing mind, and that the classics need to be applied in education at least as intelligently as are manures in a garden.

The two languages, literatures, and histories grouped together under the general title of 'the classics' are complementary. Each has qualities which the other lacks. That is why they are so admirable in combination. With Latin these lectures make no attempt to deal. It took the predominant place in education, for what is in a sense an accidental reason; because it was the language of the Church and of the civilization which the Church succeeded and in part preserved. It has retained its predominance partly because it is the basis of the most important group of European languages, partly because it is the necessary foundation for higher studies in History, Law, and Literature. Apart from this, those who learn it to any purpose have two great gains denied to those who study only modern languages. It is a great advantage to be able mentally to contrast one's own civilization with a famous civilization, akin to it yet widely dissimilar. It is a great advantage to be acquainted with a language whose genius and capacities are totally unlike one's own. These advantages—and nothing in a purely modern education can quite take their place—a student of Latin has. But no one could assert that

Latin either is a substitute for Greek or has the same power to stimulate and form the mind; and it is doubtful, if education had to be totally reconstructed to-day, whether Latin would take the precedence over Greek.

Latin of course is much the simpler of the two. It comes from its source to us in an unbroken tradition. Its spirit is that of the natural Anglo-Saxon, unless he is an artist or poet. It is therefore easily intelligible and has always been readily understood. It has made the same appeal to all ages, 'he same impact on the imaginations of very different men. Milton, de Quincey, Poe strike the same note in speaking of it.

Praetors, proconsuls to their provinces
Hastening, or on return, *in* robes of state,
Lictors and rods, the ensigns of their power...
Or embassies from regions far remote
In various habits, on the Appian road.

The heart-shaking sound of Consul Romanus.

The grandeur that was Rome.

Shakespeare, who shows no sign of appreciating the significance of Greece, goes at once to the heart of Rome in

Let's do it after the high Roman fashion.

It is otherwise with Greek, which has appealed in different ways to different ages and people. For

Milton its literature had one message, for Pater another; Macaulay and John Stuart Mill, Dryden and Matthew Arnold, read it with equal enthusiasm but saw it from different angles. That is a testimony to the richness of a jewel which shows many facets and colours, and reveals a deeper meaning in Dr. Johnson's saying 'Greek, sir, is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can'. It has always been admired, even when it has been misconceived. For with works of art admiration comes before understanding. Their greatness is felt before it is appreciated.

It would be interesting to plot the influence of the classics on English thought since the Renaissance; and such a diagram would have surprising features. The classics would appear as monopolizing higher education through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and retaining a dominant hold there to a much later date. Yet their greatest influence would not necessarily appear in the period when they were supreme in school and university. Hellenism is a far more powerful force to-day than when the classics held an undisputed sway in higher education. Further, for the greater period, the line of Latin would be strongly ascendant, that of Greek irregular and for the most part depressed. Mounting slowly through Ascham and Spenser it would rise high in the Cambridge Platonists and in Milton, whose

Satan, at least, shows a real grasp of its significance, as he ranges from Homer,

Whose poem Phoebus challenged for his own;
to

What the lofty grave tragedians taught. . .
Of moral prudence, with delight received,
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life;
High actions and high passions best describing -

or to those

whose resistless oratory
Wielded at will that fierce democracy,
Shook the Arsenal and fulminated over Greece.¹ . . .

There is not much amiss here in the Devil's literary judgement, and it was hardly fair to silence him by the statement that Greek poetry is inferior to the Psalms.² From Milton there would be a gradual decline until the nineteenth century, in which Greek grows steadily in importance, leaving Latin far behind, and in which for the first time the full significance of Hellenism begins to be understood.

What! it may be said, were Greek studies depressed in the great age of Bentley and Porson? Had they a slight influence on Pope who translated Homer, on Dryden who found him 'more according to my genius' than Virgil, on an age when every writer read and imitated the classics? Is Hellenism

¹ *Paradise Regained*, Book IV, 1. 260 f. ² *Ibid.*, 1. 331 f.

only understood in a day when Greek is steadily squeezed out of the schools, claiming one student where Latin claims one hundred, and, passing apparently into the twilight of lost causes, survives only by the tenacity of an obstinate conservatism or the loyalty of an intellectual *elite* ?

These questions will be partly answered, if we remember that the classics can be approached from different angles, and that their devotees fall into three main types. To some men Latin and Greek appear as fields for textual and grammatical study, for literary or historical or antiquarian research. Others find in them great literature. To a third class they are treasuries of wisdom. Obviously these divisions are not exclusive. Thomas Gray was not merely a poet and critic but also a considerable scholar. Matthew Arnold found in the classics both models of literary excellence and guides to the art of living. In our own day Gilbert Murray combines all three interests. But it is not uncommon to find them separated. Just as Shelley and Arnold were passionate admirers of classical literature and thought without being eminent scholars, so there have been scholars who saw in the classics little but a field for scholarship. The scholar's interest in the classics is apt to be specialist, indeed almost technological. He applies his technique, he dissects their corpses, with his eye on text or grammar or language or political or literary history, and often asks no more. There

is a world of difference between Browning's grammarian settling '*Hoti's* business' in a conscientious and entirely praiseworthy manner, and Gray exclaiming over Thucydides' description of the Retreat from Syracuse, 'Is it, or is it not the finest thing you ever read in your life ?' It is an error to estimate the influence of the classics on an age by the number and distinction of the classical scholars which it produces. The closest knowledge of the text does not necessarily imply the deepest draught of the spirit. The scholar is indispensable to the understanding of the classics, but, in a sense, he may never understand them himself. Scholarship plays in the study of a civilization the part which dogma plays in religion. It is a guide towards truth, a fence against error. But though it performs the essential work of making vital appreciation of a civilization possible, it is no more that appreciation than dogma is religion. That is why the influence of the classics is not necessarily deepest in the scholar who devotes his life to the study of the classics and knows most about them. Shelley and Matthew Arnold owed more to Greek than did Bentley or Bywater, though they did less for it. It would, of course, be ungrateful and childish to depreciate or sneer at the scholars. Without them no texts, no understanding of the texts, no history, no archaeology; we should know neither who the ancients were, nor what they did, nor what

¹ *Letters*, ii. 147.

they said, nor what they meant. The scholars have opened the classical world to us and are still opening it. But not all of them have cared to enter it themselves.

But if we must not confuse classical scholarship with real understanding of the classics, neither must we suppose that mere literary appreciation takes us to their heart. There is no age when men have not realized that Homer and Virgil are writers of the first rank. No one can read the death of Hector or the story of Orpheus and Eurydice without realizing that this is supreme literature. There have been devotees of the classics, such as Dryden and Gray in the eighteenth century and Landor and Fitzgerald in the nineteenth, who have been chiefly or wholly attracted to them by their literary features. Yet as the classics are more than material for scholarship, so they are more than literature. They are text-books of life. 'Let us remember how great the ancients were; and especially how the Socratic school holds up to us the source and standard of all life and action/'¹ Here, even if we disagree with the thought, speaks a different voice from that of the mere scholar or the mere lover of literature.

The point will become clearer if we study some different ways of reading Greek, taking first an attitude common in the eighteenth century. Addison read and knew the classics—Greek chiefly through

¹ Goethe, *Maxims* (tr. Saunders), p. 161.

translation. They are the chief of all the influences that formed his mind. His method of approaching them is far more rational and serviceable than the lifeless and dry study of grammar and style, which deadened classical education in the later nineteenth century and still has not entirely lost its hold. It is fundamentally the Renaissance method—the study of the classics as supreme examples of literature and wisdom. The following passage from his *Notes on Ovid's Metamorphoses* shows his attitude and gives his criticisms on other attitudes to the classics less sensible and by no means dead.

'There are few books that have had worse commentators on them than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Those of the graver sort have been wholly taken up in the mythologies, and think they have appeared very judicious, if they have shown us out of an old author that Ovid is mistaken in a pedigree, or has turned such a person into a wolf that ought to have been made a tiger. Others have employed themselves on what never entered into the poet's thoughts, in adapting a dull moral to every story, and making the persons of his poems to be only nicknames for such virtues or vices: particularly the pious commentator, Alexander Ross, has dived deeper into our author's design than any of the rest; for he discovers in him the greatest mysteries of the Christian religion, and finds almost in every page some typical representation of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But if these writers have gone too deep, others have been wholly employed in the surface, most of them serving only to help out a school-boy in the construing part. The best of Ovid's expositors is he that wrote for the Dauphin's use, who has very well shown

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the meaning of the author, but seldom reflects on his beauties or imperfections; for in most places he rather acts the geographer than the critic, and, instead of pointing out the fineness of a description, only tells you in what part of the world the place is situated. I shall, therefore, only consider Ovid under the character of a poet, which I am the more willing to do, because I believe such a comment would give the reader a truer taste of poetry than a comment on any other poet would do; for Ovid is confessed to have something of the best and worst poets, and, by consequence, to be the fairest subject for criticism.¹

If the 'pious commentator' has perished, we still have editors and teachers who 'dive so deep or are soⁱ wholly employed on the surface', as to forget that great literature is read because it is great literature. Here Addison is at his best. He saw the classics with the eyes of a competent critic and a great writer,² and more schoolboys would have enjoyed the *Metamorphoses* in his eighteenth-century reflections on them could have replaced the school editions under which many generations have groaned or slept.

But Addison went to the classics for wisdom as well as for literature. He reads the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* because it is worth while to consider what men of the most exalted genius and elevated imagination have thought of the future life. He studies the second Alcibiades dialogue in order to

¹ Addison's *Works* (Bohn), i. 141.

² Cp. *Works* (ed. Bohn), i. 161, 'On the *Georgics*'; ii. 505-6, 'On Imitators of Pindar \

show ' what were the notions of the most refined heathens' on prayer. He translates Prodicus' myth of Virtue and Pleasure ' for the benefit of the youth of Great Britain \ He consoles the calumniated by observing the conduct of the old philosophers, how they bore themselves up against the malice and detraction of their enemies', and summons Bias, Socrates, Epictetus, Anaximander and others to reinforce a sermon of Dr. South.¹ This seems to us naive and old-fashioned ; yet in a sense it is the way to read the classics. Homer and Plato did not write to provide posterity with philological or textual puzzles, and they would have found little congenial in many of the scholars who have made them intelligible to posterity. Addison and his contemporaries knew this, as the Renaissance knew it, and in spite of ignorance and misconceptions, read the classics in the right spirit. Since their day came Bentley, Porson, and many others. They gave us texts which are intelligible, and laboriously gathered the knowledge which enables us to translate the languages and enter into the life and thought of antiquity. But we have paid a price for their labours. , The scholar and the schoolmaster magnified their office. They dug their exploratory pits in the classics, stayed at the bottom of them and kept their pupils there, till pupil and teacher alike sometimes forgot that the study of a language is not an end in itself but only

¹ *Guardian*, 135.

a means of access to the beauty and wisdom imprisoned in it.

In all this I may seem to have been disproving my contention that Hellenism was less appreciated in the eighteenth century than to-day. Where is the weakness in Addison's attitude to it? He makes mistakes which any schoolboy would detect, spells the accuser of Socrates Melitus and attributes the second Alcibiades dialogue to Plato. Though he sees that the greatest passages in the eleventh *Odyssey* are the episodes of Anticleia and Ajax, he is blind to the real horror of the Homeric after-world, the pale and unsubstantial life of the νεκρῶν ἀμειννὰ κά-
prjva, and he misses the whole significance of what he strangely calls 'the pool of Holy Blood'. Worse still he supposes that Homer wrote to edify, 'and scarce introduces a single person who does not suggest some useful precept to his reader, and designs his description of the dead for the amendment of the living'. These are the faults of ignorance. Sometimes even his taste goes astray. The *Spectator* essay on Sappho shows how completely a gifted man may misconceive a poem which he admires. It is a small thing that he calls her famous Ode the 'Hymn to Venus'. But Addison, after speaking, in phrases **that raise our** hopes, of Sappho's 'pathetic simplicity'

¹ i.e. the trench which Odysseus fills with blood that the dead may drink and be able to speak to him. *Tatter*, 152.

² *Ibid.*

and 'genuine and natural beauty, without any foreign or affected ornaments', totally forgets these admirable sentiments and prints a translation which treats Sappho more cruelly than Pope treated Homer. It is no alleviation that the actual translator was not Addison but Ambrose Phillips.

O Venus, beauty of the 9kies,
To whom a thousand temples rise,
Gaily false in gentle smiles,
Full of love-perplexing wiles :
O goddess! from my heart remove
The wasting cares and pains of love.
The birds dismiss (while you remain)
Bore back their empty car again:
Then you, with looks divinely mild,
In every heavenly feature smiled,
And asked what new complaints I made
And why I called you to my aid!
What phrensy in my bosom raged,
And by what cure to be assuaged ?
What gentle youth I would allure,
Whom in my artful toils secure ?
Who does thy tender heart subdue,
Tell me, my Sappho, tell me who ?¹

A man who wrote or approved such stuff misconceived—at least for the moment—the whole genius of Greek literature. Addison admires; but how little does he understand!

Put by his side a Hellenist of the Victorian age

¹ *Spectator*, 223.

—Matthew Arnold. Like Addison, Arnold read the classics as literature and as a guide to life, or, as he would have said, as a 'criticism of life'. He was, of course, a scholar in a sense in which Addison was not. He had profited by the knowledge accumulated in a century and a half. His appreciation of Greek literature goes far deeper than Addison, who could have written neither the lectures *On Translating Homer* nor the preface to the poems published in 1853. But these are not the deep and fundamental differences between his attitude to the Greeks and Addison's. The Greeks had done more than feed Arnold with casual mouthfuls of morality and common sense. They had opened his eyes and changed the aspect of the world for him.

{Rigorous teachers seized *my* youth,
And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.

No doubt, as I shall indicate, Arnold's views of the Greeks are not beyond cavil. His literary criticism is in general sure, but when he attempts to present Hellenism as a gospel of life his conceptions are vague, and frequently unjust to the original. Still, the significant thing is that he conceives Hellenism as a way of life. To Addison the Greeks and Romans were indiscriminately and collectively 'heathens' or 'pagans', who lived in a distant past and differed from us in having spoken languages unlike our own,

Arnold couples Hellenism with Christianity as a 'great spiritual discipline of which the aim is man's perfection or salvation'. Addison would not even have understood the meaning of such a statement.

As one climbs a mountain the view continually changes. Apparent heights dwindle and what seemed to be lesser eminences emerge as dominating peaks; the landscape comes gradually to be seen as a whole and the summit ever recedes. Such has been the history of Greek studies since the Renaissance. Linacre and Grocyn started at the foot of the mountain; we have perhaps reached one of the higher shoulders. More progress has been made in the last hundred years than in the previous three centuries. Indeed the nineteenth century is a second Renaissance of Greek studies, destined perhaps to be as important as the first. It may seem a paradox to think so. The clear current of Hellenism mixes unmarked with the abundant and turbid stream which we call modern literature and thought. The thinkers whom it has influenced are comparatively few. But it has influenced these very deeply; and they are the thinkers who, not content to be barren critics of their own age, have divined the future and done most to give it definite form and content. It is noticeable, too, to-day how many people to whom Greek itself is unknown find, when some chance brings them in touch with its literature, their own

half-unconscious beliefs and instincts expressed there with lucid simplicity and formulated in an intelligible creed.

The germ of what I have called a second Renaissance of Hellenism is to be found in Shelley.

' Although the scheme of Athenian society was deformed by many imperfections which the poetry existing in chivalry and Christianity has erased from the habits and institutions "of modern Europe; yet never at any other period has so much energy, beauty, and virtue been developed ; never was blind strength and stubborn form so disciplined and rendered subject to the will of man, or that will less repugnant to the dictates of the beautiful and the true, as during the century which preceded the death of Socrates. Of no other epoch in the history of our species have we records and fragments stamped so visibly with the image of the divinity in man.'¹

Shelley already has the two marks of this second Renaissance. He sees Greece and Rome in their true perspective and on their different planes, and not simply as two civilizations barely differentiated and together composing ' the classics '. And he sees that the world owes to Greece not merely great literature and art, but a pattern of life. This tribute to Greece from one who was not only a great poet but a great literary critic does not mention Greek literature. The eighteenth century may have done justice to Greek poetry. The nineteenth was to

¹ *A Defence of Poetry.*

realize that Greece had also created an ideal of life which remains as a permanent light of humanity.

Turning from poetry incarnate in Shelley to incarnate prose in John Stuart Mill, we find a change of emphasis, but the same gospel. Mill began Greek at three and Latin at eight—the order reveals the deliberate and intelligent purpose controlling his education—and had read and analysed Aristotle's *Rhetoric* when he was twelve. We are surprised that, if he survived this strange diet of infancy, he was not permanently sickened of it. Yet Mill's mind and character were moulded by Hellenism. He owes indeed much to the Christianity which he rejected, but his characteristic virtues are those which he thought typical of

·the *Socratici viri* the justice, temperance; veracity, perseverance, readiness to encounter pain and especially labour; regard for the public good; estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their intrinsic usefulness; a life of exertion in contradiction to one of self-indulgent ease and sloth'.

His interest in Greece is narrower than Shelley's; its poetry, its literature, though he recognizes their greatness, do not occupy his mind. But like Shelley, he found in it a practical inspiration and pattern of life. As Shelley's words show what an English poet saw in Greece, so the following quotations show what a champion of English liberalism and one of **the** most eminent of Victorian thinkers owed to **her**.

Greece gave Mill a moral ideal, an intellectual ideal, and an intellectual method. It gave him a moral ideal. He imbibed, he says, from the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon ' a deep respect for the character of Socrates; who stood in my mind as a model of ideal excellence .' It gave him an ideal of the intellectual life.

'To question all things; never to turn away from any difficulty; to accept no doctrine either from ourselves or from other people without a rigid scrutiny by negative criticism, letting no fallacy, or incoherence, or confusion of thought, slip by unperceived; above all, to insist upon having the meaning of a word clearly understood before using it, and the meaning of a proposition before assenting to it; these are the lessons we learn from the ancient dialecticians. With all this vigorous management of the negative element, they inspire no scepticism about the reality of truth, or indifference to its pursuit. The noblest enthusiasm, both for the search after truth and for applying it to its highest uses, pervades these writers, Aristotle no less than Plato, though Plato has incomparably the greater power of imparting those feelings to others. In cultivating, therefore, the ancient languages as our best literary education, we are all the while laying an admirable foundation for ethical and philosophical culture.'

It gave him an intellectual method.

' The Socratic method is unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting the errors, and clearing up the confusions incident to the *intellectus sibi permissus*, the understanding which has made up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology. The close-searching *elenchus* by which

the man of vague generalities is constrained either to express his meaning to himself in definite terms, or to confess that he does not know what he is talking about; the perpetual testing of all general statements by particular instances; the siege in form which is laid to the meaning of large abstract terms, by fixing upon some still larger class-name which includes that and more; and dividing down to the thing sought—marking out its limits and definition by a series of accurately drawn distinctions between it and each of the cognate objects which are successively parted off from it—all this, as an education for precise thinking, is inestimable, and all this, even at that age, took such hold of me that it became part of my own mind.¹

This nineteenth-century Renaissance of Hellenism is due to causes very different from those which brought its Medieval Renaissance. In the fifteenth century the rediscovery of Greek texts led naturally to eager admiration of the treasures of literature and thought which they contained. But the nineteenth century could make no such rediscovery. The texts were well known. They had long formed the basis of higher education, and their literary greatness had long been appreciated. The fifteenth century found in Greek literature a wealth of forgotten knowledge; it learnt botany from Theophrastus, medicine from Galen and Hippocrates, biology from Aristotle. These masters had no lessons in science to teach the nineteenth century except

¹ The extracts from Mill are taken from the *Autobiography*, pp. 13, 27, and from the *Inaugural Address at St. Andrews*, p. 17, an apologia for classical studies which might well be reprinted.

the love of knowledge and the disinterested pursuit of it. Mill, Arnold, Ruskin were drawn to Greece by a reason very different from that which had attracted Linacre or Fabricius.

There are two great causes for the rise of Hellenism in the Victorian age. The first was the reaction against both the philosophy and the results of the Industrial Revolution ; against the ideals of the prosperous manufacturer and the conditions of the labourer and artisan; against a democracy which had shown little signs of pursuing—much less of realizing—the Aristotelian ideal of the state, as an institution existing for the good life. This reaction was independent of Hellenism and appears in thinkers who were little touched by it. Carlyle recalls Plato in his distrust of democracy and his desire to rebuild a society, under a rule of Hero-Kings, which embodies 'the divine Appointments of the Universe, the Eternal Laws ordained by God the Maker'.¹ The phrases are Platonic, but Carlyle did not learn his gospel from Plato. Had he done so, he would have diagnosed the situation more profoundly, seen its difficulties more clearly, and conceived a more satisfactory ruler than the Hero-King—a composite figure, to which Mahomet, Luther, Knox, Cromwell, and Frederick the Great contributed miscellaneous and sometimes incongruous features. The Bible and history were

¹ *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, i.

Carlyle's inspiration; and he candidly says : ' In the classical field I am truly nothing.' But those who knew Greece naturally turned from Cobbett and the Manchester school to Pericles and Plato, from Leeds and Wigan to Athens, from self-satisfied mercantilism to a civilization without machines or vast towns or great material resources, but with a soul. Ruskin was drawn to Greece less by Greek art, which he considered an unsuitable model for to-day,¹ than by the sight of ^c the first people that were born into complete humanity' ² Athena, not Aphrodite, as he saw, was their characteristic goddess.³ And the first volume in the ' series of classic books' which he hoped optimistically 'to make the chief domestic treasures of British peasants' is the *Economicus* of Xenophon, because he thought that it contained ' a faultless definition of wealth', ' the most perfect ideal of kingly character and kingly government given in literature', and ' the ideal of domestic life'.⁴

So, too, with Matthew Arnold. No less than Dryden and Addison he loved the classics as gre~t literature, and he understood their greatness better. But the hold of Greek literature on him lies even more in the view of life which it reveals and the spiritual qualities with which it is instinct. In the Preface to his *Poems* (1853-4), where he gives his view of

¹ *Works*, xx. 32. ·xx. 249. ³ xviii.

⁴ *Bibliotheca Pastorum*, I. ix.

poetry, and defines what a modern writer can learn from the ancients, he writes :

' In the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not.'

But it is not for subjects or for technique that he urges the poet to read the classics. It is for qualities that are more than intellectual.

⁴ They can help to cure us of what is, it seems to me, the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals; namely, that it is *fantastic* and wants *sanity*. Sanity—that is the great virtue of the ancient literature: the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power. I It is impossible to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them.'

And again:

' Commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steady and composing effect upon their judgements not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age : they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want.'

In these quotations we find a view of the classics which is rare indeed before the nineteenth century, but which is increasingly found throughout it—the view that in them, and especially in Greek, are to be found vitamins without which the human spirit cannot enjoy health. Nor is it only literature which needs them.

What disquiets Arnold and draws him to Greece is not merely the weakness of which he complains in literature, but the whole life of his age. He turns with disgust from contemporary ideals in politics, religion and social life, from the 'Thyestean banquet of claptrap which English public life for these many years past has been ', from ' the conception of free-trade, in which our Liberal friends think they have found the secret of national prosperity', from the belief that our coal is the real basis of our national greatness ', from ' a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons ', to ' the spectacle of the culture of a *people* . . . , the middle and lower classes in the highest development of their humanity that these classes have yet reached ', which, Arnold thinks, makes ' a handful of Athenians of two thousand years ago more interesting than the millions of most nations our contemporaries'. Seeing a world with wealth which it misspent and liberty which it misused, he attempted to propound to it the old Socratic commonplace *Know thyself*. . . , to bring

things under the light of one's intelligence, to introduce into the 'narrow and inadequate Puritan's ideal of perfection' some Hellenic 'sweetness and light'.¹

It is not surprising that thinkers educated in the classical tradition should feel thus. More significant is the appeal which Plato made to a young man who knew nothing of Greek, but who, some ten years after the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, read the *Republic* in translation, lying on the grass slopes of Up Park Down above Harting. Mr. H. G. Wells has recently recorded how he felt the Influence of Plato 'like the hand of a strong brother, taking hold of me and raising me up, to lead me out of a prison of social acceptance and submission', and giving him 'the conception of a society in which economic individualism was overruled entirely in the common interest'. Wells, no less than Arnold and Ruskin, is attracted to Greece by its vision of a social order better than that of Victorian England.²

No doubt the disciples sometimes misinterpreted the gospel. Plato would have been surprised at some further lessons which Mr. Wells supposed himself to have learnt from the *Republic*. Ruskin called *The Queen of the Air* his best book. It could not have been written if Roscher's *Lexicon* had been known to its author. Even Arnold, who understood

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*', pp. 163, 150, 19 ; *Mixed Essays*, p. 39.

² *Experiment in Autobiography*, vol. i, p. 178.

Greece far better, was not happy in defining its genius. The famous phrase 'Sweetness and Light' is a nebulous, inaccurate and inadequate description. One could wish in another world to hear Socrates cross-examining Arnold on the meaning of 'sweetness' and on its applicability to the Greeks. Hellenism is much more than 'the impulse to see things as they are'. Arnold's view that 'the Greek notion of felicity is perfectly conveyed' in the words 'C'est le bonheur des hommes quand ils pensent juste', is a strange misrepresentation of Aristotle's *Eudaimonia* or Plato's vision of the Idea of the Good. His notion that Greece collapsed because it paid insufficient attention to conduct, though still a favourite doctrine, is not based on fact. And how horrified would a Greek thinker have been to hear that the way out of the moral confusion which Arnold describes is by imbibing the right atmosphere from the study of literature !' But to say all this is only to confess that Arnold's analysis of Hellenism is sometimes less happy than his appreciation of it. Nor does it alter the fact that, in a sense undreamed of by Addison or Dryden, characteristic thinkers of the Victorian Age looked towards Hellenism as a new gospel, found their ideal in it and sought from it light for the redemption of their times.

This then is one explanation of what I have called

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 103.

the Second Renaissance which began in the nineteenth century. The dissatisfaction with the religious, political, and social conditions of the time, which is expressed from different points of view by Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, turned thinkers to the Greek world, where they found something wanting in the Victorian Age and discovered aspects of Hellenism which their predecessors had overlooked. The other reason for the new attitude to Greece was the altered position of religion in the nineteenth century. Christianity was attacked from two sides, by scientists who challenged its current cosmology, and by critics who applied their microscope to its Sacred Book. Many abandoned its creed ; others, retaining it, modified their position to meet the new knowledge. For both classes Hellenism gained new interest and importance. Those who ceased to be Christians found themselves without a philosophy, and because human beings cannot live by negation or nourish themselves on the acids of criticism, they looked for a faith and an ideal which could in some degree at least replace what they had lost. The only reasoned views of life which Europe knows come from Greece and from Palestine. It was inevitable that thinkers who had lost the one, should turn to the other. Hence men began increasingly to find a great philosophy of life as well as a great literature in Hellenism. It is significant that so many nineteenth-century writers who show Greek influence

were agnostics. Shelley, Mill, Arnold, Ruskin, Pater are instances; though the latter returned to a peculiar Christianity of his own.

This is not to imply that a man may not be both a Christian and a Hellenist. Indeed the influence of Greek is conspicuous in nineteenth-century theology. Those who accepted the principles and chief results of the Higher Criticism found it impossible to base Christianity on an infallible Bible and emphasized the supports given to Revelation by Philosophy. Hence a second Christian Platonism was born, more influential, because more needed than the first; Jowett and Inge are its chief representatives in the Anglican Church; in the Roman Communion its influence can be seen in von Hugel. Liberal theologians, no less than political thinkers, social reformers, and agnostics in search of a way of life, turned to Hellenism.

Other forces helped to spread its influence. Much in current conceptions of the nineteenth century made it difficult to understand the Greek attitude to life. There is obviously an immense gulf between Hellenism and the age when Lord Shaftesbury declared on the election of a Professor of Poetry at Oxford, that he ^c would vote for Sternhold and Hopkins, Nicholas Brady or Nahum Tate against a whole host of the mightiest geniuses in the art of verse, if they were Tractarians',¹ and Dean

¹ Hammond, *Lord Shaftesbury*, p. 240.

Burton ended a sermon on Darwinism with the words 'Leave me my ancestors in Paradise and I will leave you yours in the Zoological Gardens'.¹ The unimpeded activity of thought which is as characteristic of Euripides or of Plato as of our own day had its battle still to win when Victoria came to the throne ; and those who opposed it might indeed understand Pindar or Sophocles, but would miss much in Plato and would find Protagoras and Euripides uncongenial, if not meaningless.

My point is even better illustrated by Macaulay. Few men have ever read the classics so widely and with such enthusiasm. It was nothing to him in the heat of India and in the midst of his official duties to read in a year 'Aeschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once; Pindar twice; Callimachus; Apollonius Rhodius; Quintus Calaber; Theocritus twice; Herodotus; Thucydides; almost all Xenophon's works; almost all Plato; Aristotle's *Politics* and a good deal of his *Organon*^ besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's *Lives*; about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenaeus', in addition to an equally formidable list of Latin authors.² And he read to purpose. The comments pencilled on the margins of his classical editions are an education in the art of reading: if more school-

¹ Inge, *Outspoken Essays* (1st series), p. n o.

² *Life*, i. 443. 'He read Plautus, Terence, and Aristophanes four times through at Calcutta and Euripides thrice (ibid. 445).

masters knew them, fewer schoolboys would be bored by Caesar and Cicero. Yet how differently he reads the classics from Gilbert Murray or Lowes Dickinson, and how much these see in Plato which escaped him ! Macaulay can write of the *Republic* : ' there is an enlargement of mind in this work which I do not remember to have found in any earlier composition and in very few ancient works'; and (of the 8th book) ' I remember nothing in Greek philosophy superior to this in profundity, ingenuity and eloquence '; and ' Nothing was ever written, or spoken, approaching in sober sublimity to the latter part of the *Apology*'. Yet one might almost say that the whole significance of Socrates had escaped a man who could say of him, ' He evidently had an ill-natured pleasure in making men—particularly men famed for wisdom and eloquence—look like fools.'¹ It does not seem to have occurred to Macaulay that the chief obstacle to progress, on the purely intellectual side, is the catchword, the ' slogan', the unanalysed phrase, for whose currency ' men famed for eloquence' are often responsible; and that perhaps the greatest service of Socrates to the world was his warning against the *ἀνεξέτακτος βίος*, ' the unexamined life.', and his attempt to teach the lesson, which we never learn, of analysing the real meaning of our own and others' catchwords. Nor again does Macaulay show any appreciation of the real purpose

¹ Contrast J. S. Mill's appreciation, p. 28 f. above.

of that *Republic* which he praises so highly ; or he would hardly have dismissed Plato's doctrine of communism with the words ' Plato has been censured with great justice for his doctrine about the community of women '. With equal justice might a critic 'censure' the anti-social effects of the sentence, ' If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, ... he cannot be my disciple'.¹ Macaulay never realized the true significance of the *Republic*—the attempt to create a society, whose rulers, laying aside everything which could foster individual selfishness and therefore renouncing private property and family ties, lived solely in order to 'lift up the eye of the soul and fix it upon that which gives light to all things ; and having surveyed Goodness itself to take it as a pattern, to be copied in the work of ruling their country and their fellow-citizens and themselves.'² Yet, in other respects, how admirable are his comments on Plato !

The fact is that Macaulay, secure in the powerful but narrow entrenchments of Clapham Evangelicalism and Whig doctrine, had never known the destructive scepticisms which drove Plato to reconstruct the foundations of morality and politics. Unconscious of the forces which Plato was combating, he was unaware that there had been a combat. Unconscious of the need which Plato felt, he did not

¹ Luke xiv. 26.

² *Republic*, 540.

know how Plato met it. But later Victorians—or some of them—were conscious both of the need and the combat. That is why many nineteenth-century thinkers turned to Greece in a new way, recognizing in it a land where their own age had been in some sort anticipated, and hoping from it, if not a solution of their problems, at least light on them. The first Renaissance was the rediscovery of a human ideal. The second Renaissance, which for England began in the nineteenth century, is the same. The world to-day is riper for the lesson and needs it more than when either Shelley or Arnold wrote.

II

GREEK HUMANISM

WE have seen the new attitude to Greece which developed in the nineteenth century, some of whose most characteristic thinkers were interested in Hellenism as a spiritual, rather than an artistic or intellectual, model, and were attracted by the Greek view of life even more than by Greek literature and art. It was a return to the spirit in which Pico della Mirandola or Marsilio Ficino or the Cambridge Platonists had read the classics. But the nineteenth century brought to their interpretation far more knowledge and insight than did the earlier age; its need was more pressing and it drank more deeply of the spring. I stress this because the general public is, or was, apt to ignore this side of Hellenism. It knows that the Greeks carved statues in a style which art critics approve and which is popularly supposed to be appropriate to the decoration of town-halls. It may be aware that they created one of the two great literatures of the West, and even that they are the parents of European thought and the scientific spirit. But it is apt not to realize that they created something more remarkable still—a life which has fascinated the imagination of men. This life lacked most things that we have come to regard as indispensable. No printing,

no newspapers, no books; no motors or aeroplanes; no cinemas or wireless ; no machinery; no coal, gas, or electricity; no proper hotels, no sanitation; theatres on perhaps seven days in the year; travel difficult and restricted. Yet this is the world of which such different men have written with such enthusiasm.

' Of all peoples the Greeks have dreamt the dream of life best.'

'The study of modern history is the study of kings, financiers, statesmen and priests. The study of ancient Greece is the study of legislators, philosophers and poets ; it is the history of men compared with the history of titles. What the Greeks were was a reality, not a promise. And what we are and hope to be, is derived from the influence and inspiration of these glorious generations.'

' Man as represented to us by the writers of Greece is compounded of traits which are at once simple, great, and also, from many points of view, beautiful. The study of a character like the Greek must have a specially salutary effect on an age, in which, from numerous circumstances, the attention is drawn more to things than to men, more to masses of men than to individuals, more to external values and use than to inner merit and enjoyment, and where high and many-sided culture has led us far from primal simplicity.'

' No other people has combined simplicity and naturalness with so high a culture.'

' The state of Athens at its climax, that is of human nature at its climax.'¹

¹ Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections* (tr. Saunders), p. 99 j Shelley, *Discourse on the Manners of Ancients*; W. von Humboldt (quoted Paulsen, *Gesch. d. gelehrten Unterrichts*, ii. 203. It is curious to find him attributing these modern weaknesses to the eighteenth century) j Gladstone, *Life*, ii. 706.

There must be something strangely admirable in a world which, from their opposite poles of temperament and life, Shelley and Gladstone agree to praise.

The deficiencies of Greek civilization amaze and perhaps appal us. Yet the best way of appreciating its merits is to dwell on them and compare its poverty with our wealth. Let any one contrast a year of his life as it is and as it would have been in Athens; to-day in parliament deciding on sovereign issues of policy; perhaps, by the accident of the lot, presiding over it; a juror in the law-courts; on garrison duty at Phyle; a member, or commander, of a military or naval expedition; watching the first production of plays by dramatists as great as the Elizabethans; at a religious festival, like the Anthesteria or the Eleusinia, with their rich and varied ritual, their moving spiritual significance; and all this, not as an occasional privilege reserved for the fortunate few, but as the ordinary texture of the life of every citizen, rich or poor—not as the vagaries of a dilettante, but in combination with some occupation, by which a livelihood is earned, farming, banking, export or import trade, the manufacture of armaments or pottery or oil. Inefficient it may be and unsatisfactory; yet how satisfying ! and what a school for human beings ! For the intellectual there were men famous in the history of thought and art to talk to—Hippocrates on medicine, Zeuxis on painting, Phidias on sculpture, Socrates on every-

thing under the sun, and many others, natives of Athens or visiting there, as in that group which Plato shows us gathered before dawn in the rooms and porticoes of an Athenian house to talk of astronomy and music, and geometry and questions of morals and politics.¹ This existence, if we could revive it, would be a cure for our *malaise*. We should not feel strange in its intellectual atmosphere. With its various activities to delight, stimulate and satisfy, we should not require those pale *simulacra* with which we attempt to fill our days and satisfy our needs. When ordinary life was full of varied incident, we should not seek to enrich it by watching the grimaces of Hollywood.

Now it is all gone, never to recur or to be recalled. It was an accident of geography and individualism ;

¹ *Protagoras*, 316 f. This is the scene. 'When we entered, we found Protagoras taking a walk in the cloister, with the two sons of Pericles on either side of him and Antimoerus, the most famous of his pupils. A train of listeners followed ; the greater part of them seemed to be foreigners, whom Protagoras had brought with him out of the various cities visited by him in his travels.... There were also some Athenians in his company. ... After him I saw Hippias of Elis sitting on a chair of state in the opposite colonnade, and round him were seated on benches strangers whom he had brought with him from his native city of Elis and some others. They were putting to Hippias certain questions on astronomy and physics. Also I saw Prodicus of Ceos: he had been lodged in a room formerly a storehouse; but as the house was full this had been cleared out and made into a guest-chamber. Prodicus was still in bed, wrapped up in sheepskins and bed-clothes of which there seemed to be a great heap. I was anxious to hear what he was saying, but I was not able to get into the inner room, and his fine deep voice made an echo which rendered his words inaudible.'¹ {Shortened.)

of a country where mountains isolate small districts, each with its seaport, plain and upland pastures, and of a people with so vivacious and vigorous a spirit that, though self-interest could not unite them, yet isolation could not make them provincial. Those who live in Northern Ireland or in the smaller Baltic States, communities with one large town and an agricultural *Hinterland*, may have a glimmering of the character of the life of the *ΠΟΛΙΣ* to which their scale conforms,¹ but not more than a glimmering. The city-state and its life have passed away—a necessary sacrifice to efficiency, to the specialized life where a man concentrates on a single job in order that he may do it well, to the economies and possibilities of large scale organization. We cannot revive it.

But we can learn from it. This does not mean a return to Greek life as it was lived in Athens. Archaism is only a respectable form of suicide. The real lessons which the sixteenth century learnt from Greece were not facts like the movement of the earth, but intellectual curiosity and free inquiry, not the letter which kills, but the spirit which makes

¹ Politicians who talk of the absurdity of dividing Ulster from the Free State have forgotten both that other causes than physical geography create frontiers, and that Plato and Aristotle had something in their minds when they insisted that a state should be small enough for its citizens to know each other. A city-state is less powerful and perhaps less efficient than an empire; but there are possibilities in its political and social life which vast agglomerations lack.

alive. So too with the twentieth century and Greek life. Nothing would be falsier to the spirit of Hellenism than unthinking worship or slavish imitation of Greece, nothing emptier than an archaism which attempted to revive a past civilization and ignored, for instance, the ideals of Christianity, or the methods of psychology or the gifts of applied science, because they were unknown to Plato. The forms of Greek life have passed away. The body is buried in the dust of cities that have nothing of the, past except their names and a few shattered buildings. But the spirit remains, a living and intelligible" ideal. It was admirably and epigrammatically defined by Pliny in a letter to a friend; *projecturus es ad homines maxime homines*. ' You are going to visit men who are supremely men.' What he said in the first century before Christ, Goethe, von Humboldt, Shelley, and Gladstone said more than 1,800 years later. Each of these five was struck by one characteristic of the Greeks. Each saw in them a perfect human type, the ideal man. Perhaps this side of Hellenism is the most important for us at the moment—more important than Greek literature and art; though of course it is embodied and revealed in these.

No one observing the Mediterranean world at the beginning of the millennium before Christ, could have guessed what seeds lay hidden in a soil that gave no promise of such unique fertility.

People sometimes ask how the Greek achievement is explained; how this insignificant people, in unpromising circumstances, at an early stage of the development of the race, did what other nations, bigger, richer, and more experienced, failed to do, and created one of the two human ideals that still attract and challenge us. We may find the explanation in some accident of heredity and external circumstance—the right temperament matched with the rare opportunity. But we may also answer that the Greeks created a human ideal because they desired one. They knocked, and it was opened to them; they sought, and found. The question—What was the right life for man?—absorbed the lattention of some of their greatest and ablest men. Such a quest is rarer than one supposes. What other European people has followed it, or asked the question, or even been fully aware of its importance?

The Greeks were happily free from some necessities which might have absorbed their attention and from some interests which might have distracted it from the search for a human good. They were neither too poor nor too rich, nor too religious nor too scientific. They were not too poor. Their energies were not absorbed by the need to earn their bread. Greek poetry and thought is mainly the creation of private property (though not of large fortunes). Aristophanes and Xenophon were landed

proprietors. The family of Sophocles had a business in wood- or iron-working. Thucydides owned gold-mines. Lysias (like the father of Demosthenes) had an armament factory. Herodotus, Plato, and Andocides were rich men—as riches went in Greece. Aristotle had independent means. Even Socrates, who was always poor, does not seem to have had to take his trade of sculptor seriously. In general the thinkers and writers of Greece could give their whole minds to following their bent without troubling about a livelihood.¹ On the other hand they did not suffer from the distractions of wealth. ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου συμπνίγει τὸν λόγον καὶ ἀκαρπός

was not true of them. Theirs was a society without extremes of poverty or riches, and its fortunes would have seemed penury to a Roman of the late Republic or the Empire. A competence without wealth was the ideal of their thinkers. Plato, who held that ⁱ 'the state where neither poverty nor riches exist will have the noblest life', will only allow the richest citizen in his ideal commonwealth to have five times the wealth of the poorest.³ And, in fact, they were a poor people. ⁱ 'Poverty', said Herodotus, ^c 'is always congenital to Greece.' **And**

¹ The Sophists made money by their teaching and the orators by the speeches which they wrote for law-court use.

² Matt. xiii. 22. 'The deceitfulness of riches chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful.'

³ *Laws*, 679, 744. For Aristotle's discussion of the subject see *Politics*, i. 8 f.

' wisdom fell to the lot of poverty, because they are sisters '. It was the same five hundred years later and in a wealthier world. ' The Athenians', said the philosopher to Lucian, 'are brought up to poverty and to philosophy'; and he goes on to contrast the freedom and unpretentious style of Athenian life, its peace and learned leisure, with the restless, artificial, luxurious existence of Rome, which like 'a torrent sweeps away modesty, virtue and uprightness, and in their place grows the tree of perpetual thirst, whose flowers are many strange desires'.²

The Greeks were neither too poor nor too rich to pursue with a disinterested and undistracted ardour the search for the good life. Nor were they hampered by religion, which in the Middle Ages and long after was unfavourable to such free quests. Creed, Dogma, Church, Revelation, Infallibility, Authority are not in their vocabulary. Their religion had no organized priesthood to enforce its tenets. Indeed it can hardly be said to have had tenets at all. Hence it is a commonplace to contrast the liberty of the Greek world with the ecclesiastical obscurantism of the Church which used influence, and often force, to discourage roving speculation. The contrast exists. But the explanation is not as simple as is often assumed. At its worst the Church hampered the free exercise of reason as hostile to

¹ vii. 102. Eur. fr. 642 *ἡμῶν δὲ σθένος θάλαξ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*.

² Lucian, *Nigrinus*, 12 ff. (tr. Fowler).

its vested interests and its established dogma. But it also persecuted, because it had something worth persecuting for, because it believed itself to possess a treasure so precious as to need defending by every means in its power. Christianity enshrined so valuable a belief that it seemed criminal even to weaken its outworks. Criticism of the cosmology of Genesis or the morals of the Book of Judges was resented partly from mere conservatism, but partly because they were bound in the same volume as the Prophetic books and the Gospels and belonged to their lineage. If the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the ideals of the earliest Christian Church had been part of Greek religion, if the Olympian worship could have ever been to men what Christianity was to St. Augustine or St. Francis or the mystics, or to those many men and women, nameless or known, to whom it was indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the criticisms of it might have been less calmly received. But the popular Greek religion, apart from Orphism and the Mysteries, offered nothing to satisfy spiritual hunger. A man who went to it for comfort or guidance came away unhelped. In the 2nd book of the *Republic* Plato shows us how it appeared to an educated man of the fourth century; with its stories of the King of Heaven eating his infant son in order to avoid the danger of dethronement, and the son later retaliating by castrating his parent; of a god thrown out of

heaven because he took his mother's part when his father, Zeus, was beating her. There could be little temptation to persecute men in order to maintain such legends. Indeed the very defects of Greek religion were a spur to a spiritual quest, and determined the direction which this quest took. Not only were the Olympian deities incapable of satisfying Plato, but their weaknesses drove him elsewhere in search of satisfaction. If men could not turn to the gods, where could they look ? They were thrown back on themselves. ' Greek morality, and indeed Greek religion, could not be based on the relation to the ancestral Pantheon. It was from Man and his freedom, from the Soul and its powers, from what it had and what it had not, that the way to a new Divinity had to be found.'¹ The path to Humanism was indicated and opened.

During most of the Christian era religion would have made the work of Plato and Aristotle impossible and perhaps unnecessary. To-day the chief obstacle might have been science. They would have found it not only absorbing human attention by its fascination, its possibilities and its material rewards, but also drawing it away from spiritual quests by diminishing the scale of human beings in the scheme of Nature. One effect of science has been to displace man, in theory at least, from his old position in the centre of the Universe ; and though

¹ Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon*, i. 62.

the displacement is mainly theoretical, it appears to reduce his significance. For the Greeks the human problem remained in the centre of the field. Even when they conceived the idea of an infinity of worlds, they felt no excessive modesty in their presence, nor did they doubt the supreme importance of man, because the universe was vast and man an infinitesimal atom in it. Their temper was that of Pascal. ' L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature: mais c'est un roseau pensant. . . . Quand Tunivers l'craserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt, et Tavantage que Tunivers a sur lui: Tunivers n'en sait Hen.'¹

Nor were the Greeks distracted from human problems by the material promises and gifts of science. Indeed it offered them none. Science flourished in the ancient world, but technology was backward. It is characteristic that the Greeks made least progress in chemistry, materially the most fruitful of the sciences, and most in mathematics, the purest and poorest. They sought knowledge, not for its rewards, for longer life and better health, quicker locomotion and increased resources, but for itself. It meant to them not aeroplanes or rayon or wireless, but knowledge. Something was lost by this attitude, but it gave a disinterestedness and a balance which we sometimes lack. The scientist

¹ *Penstes*, 347.

and business man, who for different reasons think that 'instruction in science should form the basis of secondary education', are not to be found in ancient Greece. How could people who cared for knowledge think of limiting it to the material world, or suppose that the study of the universe could be exhausted, and the problem of human existence and conduct solved, by physics, chemistry, and biology? Still less could they suppose that it would be solved by applied science.

Thus in the Greeks we find a people neither crushed by poverty nor engrossed by wealth, neither fettered by religious authority nor dazzled and confused by the achievements of applied science. When they became self-conscious and, ceasing to live by instinct and tradition, asked themselves what human life should be, they started their inquiry with singularly free and open minds. Their religion was too primitive to help them. Their science was not such as to delude them into fancying that it could solve their problem, or into ignoring the existence of a problem. In determining the good for man they had to start from man himself. To find their goal they must study him—~~ἐλίζησάμην~~ **ἐμαυτόν**, said Heraclitus, 'I searched myself.' Their inquiry—its methods and results—make the study of Greek of supreme interest to any rational man. No other nation—at least among those who have

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contributed to European civilization—either undertook such a quest or realized that it was necessary. If we wish to see men studying, without prepossessions, by their unbiased intelligence and unaided resources the greatest of all problems, and are curious to know to what conclusions such study leads, it is to Greece that we shall turn. In turning we shall do much more than satisfy a natural intellectual curiosity. It would indeed show a strange insensitiveness to be uninterested in one of the great human ventures of spiritual discovery. But Greek civilization is something more than a brilliant achievement and a vital part of our own prehistory. Socrates, Plato, and their successors have affected our spiritual development more than any force except Christianity; but they have done more. During the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. they laid for all time the foundations of natural religion and natural morals.

In studying Greece we study a picture of the world, of man, and of the right life for man made by the unaided human mind. What is that picture? Some previous phrases in this chapter may have suggested that it omitted what we sometimes call civilization. That is not so. Greek civilization was indeed infinitely simpler than ours; but in essence its principles were the same. When Plato is about to consider the nature of the state, he starts with

what he calls an *ἐνταγκαίστη πόλις*,
 minimum

state', the smallest possible unit that can supply the necessities of life, the embryo that contains the essentials of the complete and full-grown organism. What the 'minimum state' is to the developed adult community, that Greek civilization is to our own. It is the skeleton outline of our own world. It contains, reduced to their simplest form, but fully conceived and clearly grasped, the main principles which underlie modern society.

Our world is based on three underlying conceptions—science; technology, by which I mean those applications of science which have given us the material fabric of our civilization; and a certain ideal of human nature and conduct. All these the Greeks had in the germ. They were the creators of the idea of the first two—science and technology. Like us, they regarded these as the basis of civilization. And, for the third, they had a clearer ideal of what life should be than we have. Take first science—the idea of finding a rational explanation of the universe, continually extending our knowledge of it, and basing on knowledge a progressive civilization. This idea comes from Greece. The Greek started at the bottom of the ladder, with rain magic and crop magic. Unhelped except by his own instinct and intelligence he created a civilization based on the scientific attitude to life. That is a feat whose magnitude and difficulty it is easy to

overlook. Probably it is the greatest intellectual achievement of man. I am not thinking of the actual scientific work of the Greeks, of such things as Aristarchus' discovery of the heliocentric theory, Archimedes' statement of the fundamental principles of hydrostatics, Eratosthenes' calculation of the earth's circumference at 7,850 miles; or of such brilliant premonitions of modern science, as Democritus' idea that the universe consists of atoms in infinite space, the anticipation of Darwinism in Anaximander's notion that 'man originated from animals of a different species', or Antiphon's statement of a view to which medicine has paid more attention in the last thirty years, 'in all men the mind controls the body, for good health and for bad'.¹ These discoveries, considering that the first Greek scientist was born into a world which believed that the sun and moon were gods and that thunder was produced by Zeus, are remarkable achievements. But time antiquates all scientific discovery and Greek science for us has only an historic interest. Infinitely more remarkable, in the thick darkness of savagery and primitive superstition, is

¹ Fr. 2. Antiphon practised a sort of psychological medicine. 'He composed a Handbook on Freedom from Distress, analogous to the treatment which doctors give the sick. Taking a

house in Corinth near the market and announcing that he could cure the distressed by reasoning with them (διὰ λόγων), he comforted sufferers, inquiring into the causes of their condition (πυνθανόμενος τὰς αἰτίας παραμυθίζετο τοὺς κἀμνου-
τας). But deciding that this art was beneath his capacities, he turned to rhetoric* Plutarch, *Vit. Orat. i.*

the emergence of a temper not too common even in our own times—the scientific temper.

If a man was preaching sermons on the cardinal virtues of science, it would be easy to find a text in Greek for each of them. What are these virtues? Among them the following would probably be reckoned: the passion to know, which is the source and spring of all discovery; belief in the arbitrament of reason; modesty, caution, patience, industry. It would be difficult to find better texts for them than the following. For the passion to know: 'I would rather discover one scientific fact (αἰτιολογία) than become king of Persia.'¹ 'The happiness of man lies not in the body or in wealth but in Tightness and richness of understanding' (ὀρθοσύνη καὶ πολυφροσύνη).² 'Life is worth living because it enables us to contemplate the heavens and the order of the universe' (τὴν περὶ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον τάξιν).³ For the belief in Reason: 'No law or ordinance whatever has the right to sovereignty over knowledge: it is a sin that Reason should be the subject or servant of any one: its place is to be ruler of all.'⁴ For the modesty of Science: 'In reality we know nothing; truth lies in the depths.'⁵ 'The opinions of men are like children's play.'⁶ For its caution and patience: 'Sobriety and scepticism are the

¹ Democritus, fr. 118.

² Id., fr. 40.

³ Anaxagoras (quoted in Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216 a 14).

⁴ Laws, 875.

⁵ Democritus, fr. 117.

⁶ Heraclitus, fr. 70.

sinews (*ἀρθρα*) of the mind',¹ 'Let us not make random judgements on the greatest things',² 'It is better to discover one's own errors than those of others'.³ For its industry: 'The price at which God sells us all good things is labour'.⁴ and the contemptuous comment of Thucydides on certain historians; 'so unlaborious for most people is the quest for truth; they prefer to have recourse to what lies to their hand'.⁵ We can find in Democritus the justification of the specialist: 'Do not seek to know everything or you will be ignorant of everything';⁶ and in Heraclitus a warning to the learned: 'Abundance of knowledge does not teach men to be wise'.⁷ It is no paradox to say that the authors of these sayings understood the scientific temper as well as it has ever been understood, and that to live with them should be a training in it.

Our civilization stands on two closely connected pillars, the scientific spirit and applied science. The Greeks had the scientific spirit. But in what sense had they applied science? Certainly no motor-car tore along their primitive roads, no aeroplane broke the silence where the eagles wheeled:

οἷτ' ἐκπατρίοις
ἀλγεσι παίδων ὑπατοὶ λεχέων
στροφολινοῦνται,⁸

¹ Epicharmus, fr. 13. ² Heraclitus, 47. ³ Democritus, fr. 60.

⁴ Epicharmus, fr. 36. ⁵ i. 20. ⁶ Fr. 167. ⁷ Fr. 40.

⁸ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1. 49 f. (tr. Murray):

As eagles cry,
Whose nest is plundered, and up they fly,
In anguish lonely, eddying wide.

and the 'books of Anaxagoras' which the Athenian bought for a drachma in 'the orchestra' were not written in printer's ink. Yet Plato's summary description of civilization includes technology in its four ingredients and might have been written about our own. 'States and constitutions and arts and laws and much evil and much good.'¹ The 'arts', by which are meant not the fine arts, but the useful ones, to him are an integral part of human life. The Greeks had divined the conception of a progressive civilization built on advancing science and the development of the 'arts'. The idea appears, complete in its outline, as early as 460 B.C. in the writings not of a professed philosopher but of the poet Aeschylus. Prometheus, in the play called by his name, describes the early state of man, living in caves, without fire, the meaningless chaotic life of figures in a dream. This is his picture of primitive humanity:

Sight they had but saw in vain;
Hearing but heard not; as shapes wax and wane
In dreams, aimless for ever and confused,
They moved; no binding of the clay they used,
No craft of wood, to build in the bright sun
Their dwellings; but like feeble ants wind-blown,
Hid them *in* crannied caves, far from the day. . .²

Then Prometheus traces the stages of progress; the gift of Fire, the use of animals for transport, the

¹ *Laws*, 678.

² *Aeschylus*, P. V, 447 f. (tr. Murray).

invention of the sailing ship, the discovery of medicine, of divination, of the metals. The picture is crude, but Aeschylus has grasped that idea of civilization, which is at the base of our society, the conception of man climbing upward from the life of a beast to heights beyond the reach of imagination. He has grasped too the material base of this progress, the development of the arts. His words are a hymn to applied science, and to the men whom Virgil places in his heaven because *Inventas vitam excoluere per artes*. The progress of man, Aeschylus thinks, has been achieved by the discovery of τέχναι, ¹ 'arts', of meteorology, of mathematics ¹ 'queen of all the arts', of writing, 'that remembers all things and is the mother of the Muse', of transport, of medicine, and, above all, of fire, 'Whence man shall learn many arts V The tiny seed of flame which Prometheus hid in a fennel-stalk and gave to men is the obscure and distant ancestor of the boiler-house and factory chimney of modern industry.

This has been no divine revelation : indeed it has been done in the teeth of Zeus, who has crucified the inventor for making civilization possible. No doubt Prometheus is not a mere man ; he is a Titan, a demigod, a superman, as it were. But if we pass on a few years, we shall find the picture of civilization repainted in the same colours by a far less speculative writer than Aeschylus. Here the

¹ Aeschylus, P. V. 457 f., 254.

conservative Sophocles shares the views of his predecessor, and expounds them in a famous ode of the *Antigone*.¹ With less detail and less insight than Aeschylus, Sophocles recounts the early growth of civilization—the discovery of agriculture and seafaring, hunting and fishing, the development of 'wind-swift thought and the dispositions that shape a state'. Here is no question of Prometheus as an intermediary. Man has done the work for himself. 'He taught himself (*ἐδιδάξατο*) each new knowledge. Not that he himself is strong; this is no work of superhuman power or effortless wisdom. This poet of human progress also wrote, 'Ah! generations of mortals, how like to nothingness do I count your life!'² Yet with the knowledge of human feebleness goes pride in man and in human achievement and a sense of infinite vistas opening before the race. **πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει . σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ἔχων.** 'There are many wonderful things and nothing is more wonderful than man. . . , Clever beyond belief is the ingenuity of his skill'. The words are the epitome and explanation of the Greek achievement. If any one wanted a motto for a history of civilization, they might serve his purpose; and to them might be added two other passages from Greek. The first was written by Xenophanes in the sixth

¹ *Antigone*, 332 f.

² *O.T.* 1186.

century B.C. at the outset of the voyage of Greek discovery.

Knowledge came not to men from the first by divine revelation,

But man's search, with time, all things more clearly reveals.¹

The second is from a play by a Greek comic poet Alexis and was written some two hundred years later.

All that is sought, is found
Unless you leave the quest or shun its toil.
For see how man's discovery has mastered
Provinces of the heavenly world remote,
The rising, setting, wheeling of the stars,
The sun's eclipse ! What then shall 'scape man's search
In the related, kindred world below ?²

The Greeks then were the first to conceive the idea of progress based on human effort and advancing knowledge. In some fields of technology their achievement was considerable. The Parthenon and the Propylaea witness to mechanical skill as well as to artistic genius. The tunnel, carried 1,000 yards through a hill, by which in the sixth century B.C. Eupalinus brought water to Samos, involved problems both of ventilation and of general engineering. The engines made by Archimedes show a great scientist applying himself to practical invention.³ But the development of applied science in Greece

¹ Fr. 18. ·Fr. 30.

³ Plutarch, *Vita Marcelli*. *Diel's Antike Technik* has some popular essays on Greek technology.

was hampered by the notion that, while science was a natural and splendid activity of the human mind, its use for practical purposes was rather ignoble. This view is perverse but it is less pernicious than the opposite extreme, to which science is only valuable for its utility. There is something magnificent in Aristotle's unquestioning assumption that practical discovery is inferior to pure science.

' At first it was natural that any one who invented an art that went beyond the common perceptions of men should be admired, not merely for any utility in his discovery, but because he was regarded as wise and superior to his fellows. But with the progress of technical inventions, some bearing on necessities of life and others on our leisure (*ἡδονή*), we have come to regard the inventions of the latter as wiser than those of the former because their sciences do not aim at utility.'¹

It needed real greatness of mind to think like this. But we understand why the Greeks divined, yet never developed, the possibilities of technology.

The Greeks then were the first to conceive the idea of civilization and of progress based on human effort and advancing knowledge. We have realized

¹ *Metaphysica*, i. 5. We are astonished to find scientific research thought of as recreation, the natural occupation of our leisure. But if we could reach this attitude of mind to which happiness consists in the exercise of our faculties, we should have half solved our modern problem of unemployment and leisure. (Cp. the Greek word for a school (*σχολή*). Its original meaning is 'leisure'. Hence it is used of the place where leisure hours are naturally spent, i.e. a school. How deplorably remote from this is our usual conception of school!)

their dream. We have our applied science, the 'arts' as the Greeks called them, carried to a perfection which they never imagined. But, I had almost said, we have stopped there and, in our preoccupation with Nature, forgotten man. The Greeks did not stop. Had they done so, we should have owed them the least part of our debt. Like us they would have used their intelligence to great purpose on material civilization, and remained indifferent to the human problem. At one time this seemed likely. The early speculation of Greece dealt with the physical world, and its acutest brains were occupied with questions of cosmology. Socrates himself was once absorbed by it, as he, or Plato, tells us in words that still keep the freshness of the curiosity out of which science was born. 'When I was young, I was passionately attracted by what is called Physical Science (φύσεως ἱστορίαι) : I thought it a splendid thing to know the causes of each thing, why it comes into being, why it exists, why it perishes. I was always worrying over problems like these.'¹ And that is how Aristophanes describes him—engaged with his pupils on astronomy, geometry, cosmology, and biology. Yet it was Socrates more than any one who, shifted the balance of interest from Nature to Ivlán. Alter him GreeK science continued its voyage of exploration, but the human soul and human conduct

¹ *Phaedo*, 96.

became and remained the most momentous and urgent of the problems of its inquiry. 'The noblest of all investigations is the study of what man should be and what he should pursue/¹ that its explanations, not indeed of the c

Socrates abandoned science because he thought *kosmos*, but of human nature and human conduct, were superficial and unsatisfactory. It is as if some modern scientist of genius suddenly felt that chemistry, physics, and biology could not solve our difficulties and that the real problem lay elsewhere; as if he abandoned natural science and attacked the problem of conduct by the methods of intelligence, knowledge and hard thinking, which he had employed in his scientific inquiries, gathering around him a band of students, who after his death carried on his work, though the quest led all of them farther than their master, and some of them to ideals remote from his. If that happened to-day, though physical science continued to advance, religion, ethics, political science, and psychology might come to seem no less fascinating and even more important.² This at any rate is what happened in Greece.

¹ *Gorgias*, 487.

² It is interesting to see a similar conception, nearly two and a half millennia after Socrates, crossing the mind of Sir James Jeans : 'If there is an avenue of escape, it does not, as I see it, lie in the direction of less science, but of more science—psychology, which holds out hopes that, for the first time in his long history, man may be enabled to obey the command "Know thyself"; to which I, for one, would like to see adjoined a morality and, if possible, even a religion consistent with our

Socrates taught his countrymen a lesson which they never forgot, that life is essentially a human problem.

That brings us to the heart of our subject.

What life did the Greeks think that man should lead against the background of material civilization? To this question they gave a variety of answers, which, however, can be roughly grouped under two heads.¹ On the one hand stood those for whom the lines of Glycon described the universe,

All's nothingness, all ashes, all a jest,
Made of Unreason and by it possessed :²

and those of Palladas summed up human destiny,

All kept and fed for Death are we,
Like swine in shambles butchered wantonly.³

It was not surprising that they drew the moral,

Naked to earth was I brought, naked to earth I descend.
Why should I labour for nought, seeing the naked end ?⁴

Sentiments like these, which are thought to illustrate the spiritual bankruptcy and final pessimism of the pagan world, are common in the *Anthology*.

new psychological knowledge and the established facts of science. (Presidential address

¹ Roughly the distinction is between those who believed in *dper* (see p. 69 f.) and those who did not.

Anth. Pal. xii. 33.

Ibid. xii. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.* xii. 30 (tr. W. M. Hardinge).

But the same mood in its essence appears early in Greek literature. It is present in Mimnermus.

What is life and what delightful when the Queen of Love
has past ?

When her gifts are mine no longer, may that moment be
my last!

When sad age deforms all beauty, fair and unfair blent in
one,

By ill care's unbroken onset then our spirit is undone,
And the heart no more rejoices in the sunlight and the
sun.¹

For this temperament Epikurus provided a reasoned philosophy, admirable in its clear-headedness and courage, and as lofty as its tenets permit—an ethical system which turned its back on religion, science, literature, political activity, power and wealth, but claimed to leave men in the secure possession of a, self-sufficiency and peace. In any account of Hellenism these views of life must not be forgotten. They are forms of humanism, possible deductions from a survey of the world and life. But clearly they do not lead us far, nor would they have led the Greeks far.

A different humanism created the philosophy, science, and political ideals of Greece and all that is greatest in its literature: it is with this, the main current of Hellenism, that I shall deal. As in their view of Nature, so in their philosophy of life, the Greeks started with primitive beliefs in a world

¹ Fr. i.

where a hero sacrificed captives at the funeral of his friend, and gods lived and feasted and quarrelled on a high mountain-top. They reached the conception of 'a world full of good things but no less full of their contraries. We have to fight an unceasing battle in which amazing watchfulness is needed. Gods and spirits are our allies, and we are the property of these gods and spirits. Wrong, arrogance, and folly are our ruin, righteousness, *sophrosyne*, and wisdom our salvation; and these have their home in the living powers of the gods, though some faint trace of them is also plainly to be seen dwelling here within ourselves.'¹ How did the Greeks achieve this transition from the ideals of Homer to those of Plato ?

It is almost true to say that one clue guided them through and out of the jungle of childish belief to this serene air. They noticed that everything is capable of a 'perfection', 'a best'; or, as they put it, that everything has an *ἀρετή*, a 'virtue'. This is true of an eye, a knife, a foot; whose respective 'virtues' are to see well, to cut well, to walk or run well. But it is also true of human beings. They, too, have their 'virtues', which they aim at achieving and which we expect them to achieve. The 'virtue' of a cobbler is to make good boots, of a sculptor to carve fine statues, of a salesman to sell goods effectively. But beyond the 'virtue' of which each of us

¹ Plato, *Laws*, 906.

provided other tests, and standards. They asked what was the **ἔργον** of man—his 'work', his function—as one might ask about a tool or piece of machinery what it was made to do; or what was his **φύσις**, his 'nature', studying him like any other natural object, in order to understand his capacities and uses; or what was his **τέλος**, his 'end', so bringing into the history of thought one of its most influential and debatable conceptions—that of teleology. But these words, **ἔργον**, **φύσις**, **τέλος**, only repeat the notion of **ἀρετή** in a different form. They are more scientific and reveal the rational temper, inquiring and wishing to understand. But none of them ever supersede the earlier word, even in the technical writings of philosophy; none have its spiritual challenge or appeal in quite the same way to the imagination.

It seems very elementary; yet this conception of **ἀρετή** is extraordinarily potent and fruitful. Out of it came—and could not fail to come—an ideal for man, a great moral system. Given a people with the intellectual gifts and spiritual capacities of the Greeks, only time was needed for its development, '**Ἀρετή**', like the mustard seed in the parable, which 'grew and became a tree and the birds of the air lodged in the branches of it', had in it the power of almost unlimited expansion. We may now glance at the secret of this expansive power and, taking the clue of **ἀρετή** in the hand, see to what scheme of

morality and what path of life a man who accepts it is implicitly committed and instinctively drawn; what type of character it will create within him. The unfolding of its implications are tentative and slow, hindered by outside causes, by the fitful and imperfect nature of human insight and the weaknesses of the will. But, though thwarted and cramped, in the end the seed grows into the mature plant. The story of Greece is much more than one of war and economic growth and political experiment, and literary and artistic achievement: it is the story of the making of an ideal for and of man. Through the ages during which Hellenism shaped the lives of thinking men, first in the Greek, and later in the Graeco-Roman world, this ideal provided in the realm of conduct what Archimedes sought in physics—a *πρῶτον ἄκωτον*, a fixed and firm point on which human nature could take its stand and build up a spiritual life. Twenty-five centuries have not made it obsolete. It offers the modern world the solid ground, the firm standpoint that we need. It is an ideal which has the cardinal features of a great moral system, which is disinterested, which is progressive, which is free from narrowness, and which compels men to accept, desire and pursue it. These characteristics of it I shall now illustrate. First, its power to draw men away from lesser aims to follow it: a power such as that which Aristotle ascribes to his Final Cause, which, itself unmoved, 'moves by

the love that it inspires and through this motion moves all other things \ Second, its power of developing from lower to higher conceptions of good, in a vision which is progressively purified and enlarged as human experience grows. Third, the richness and fullness of the ideal of life to which it leads; its freedom from the narrowness and provincialism which have beset other systems. Fourth, the disinterestedness of its ideal; leading men to desire the good, in all its forms, not for results or accidental advantages but for itself, and so driving them on past the lesser ideals of money, position, and power, to be content with nothing less than the best of which human nature is capable.

The best, when its existence is known, must be desired and sought. Once realize that each thing—including man—has a perfection, and you are afloat on a stream that will take you far. The idea of an a best in things, stirs the mind out of its sleep. If human nature has a ' perfection ', it is self-evident that this perfection must be desired and sought. There we have a categorical imperative as peremptory as Kant's.

Its power is seen as early as Homer and can be illustrated from that primitive and unpromising source. One is apt not to connect ethical ideals with the Homeric hero. He lived in a lawless and brutal world—his occupation to kill and be killed:

yet, behind the bloodlust, he is dominated, almost possessed, by a passion for ἀρετή. His 'virtue' is not ours, but it is pursued with an ardour and held to the death with a tenacious faith, which is often not given to higher ideals. The 'virtue' he seeks is to be brave and steadfast in war. That is his religion and to that he subordinates everything else. Here are three instances of such sacrifice—in the first the sacrifice of ease and inclination, in the second the sacrifice of life, in the third the sacrifice of life and of something even dearer. In the first case the Greek army is in difficulties and their leader wishes to abandon the attempt to take Troy. It is a situation, in one form or another, of common experience, and Agamemnon represents the human mood of discouragement in face of an enterprise, begun with bright prospects, which is not going well and indeed has become apparently hopeless. But this is how Odysseus (who, as his words show, has no illusions about war) receives the proposal to retreat, 'Son of Atreus, what a word has escaped your lips' barrier. Wretched man, would that you commanded some other, paltry, army, and were not King over us to whom, methinks, from youth to age Zeus has given to wind the web of grievous war, till we perish, all of us.'¹ Whatever weaknesses the Homeric heroes have, they have no doubt of their ἀρετή and no hesitation in sacrificing everything to it. In the

¹ *IL*xiv. 83 f.

second instance the temptation is personal and even stronger. Achilles has been insulted and injured by the commander-in-chief. He has withdrawn from the war. He has a good reason for sailing home. He knows that if he stays he is fated to be killed, and that the next world is such that it is better to be the hired labourer of a poor man on the earth than king over all the dead. But that does not cow his spirit or unnerve his hands. ' Well I know of myself that it is appointed me to perish here, far from my dear father and mother; howbeit anyway I will not refrain till I give the Trojans surfeit of war.'¹ The third instance is the strongest of all. Odysseus sacrifices ease and security, Achilles his life, to a vision of ἀπὸρτή. Hector sacrifices even more in face of the most moving of appeals, when Andromache reminds him that her father and her seven brothers are dead in battle and that he alone is left to her, and begs him to stay out of the battle, ' lest they make thy child an orphan and thy wife a widow. Then Hector of the glancing helm answered her: Surely I take thought of all these things, my wife: but my heart forbids me, since I have learnt ever to be valiant and to fight in the forefront of the Trojans, winning my father's great glory and my own. Yet of a surety I know this; the day shall come for holy Ilios to be laid low, and Priam, and Priam's folk.'² So, in spite of the certainty of death, he leaves

¹ // . xix. 420 f.

² Ibid. vi. 440 f.

his wife and goes into the battle. The Homeric poems are not a treatise on morals. But no moralist has ever expressed more ardently the passion for an ideal to which all lesser things give way.

That is one fruit of the conception of ἀρετή: implicit in it is the desire to achieve it. The mere idea of human perfection justifies itself and constitutes a self-evident claim on the human spirit.

Implicit, too, is an impulse to progress. There is nothing fixed or static in ἀρετή. The definition of it grows with the growth of the intellect and rises as high as the imagination can take it. The 'virtue' of an eye remains the same in all ages; the 'virtue' of a horse will change with the uses to which a horse is put; but the 'virtue' of a human being admits of almost infinite interpretation, at least among a race with the intellectual and imaginative power of the Greeks. So for every successive age of their history ἀρετή is incarnated afresh and her lineaments change with each incarnation. For Homer it is courage and steadfastness in war, or the bodily health and strength,¹ which save men from starvation and ill-treatment. It may decline to a lower ideal; 'for most men', says Theognis, 'the one ἀρετή is money; there is no profit, they think, in anything else, neither in knowledge, nor in ²appetite, if he does not go quite

¹ Od.xvi'u. 133.

² Theognis 699 f.

so far, says that ἀρετή and fame wait on wealth,¹ (This view, if less frankly expressed in our theory of life, is not absent from its practice.) Pindar, living with the well-to-do and writing poems on the athletic successes of his friends, sees ἀρετή in perfect physical fitness and in the colour, brilliance, and hospitality of an aristocratic society, and transfigures, as none have done before or since, the race-course and the running-track and the life of the rich into poetry and almost into a moral ideal. These views are a decline from Homer. But meanwhile there come from Asiatic Greece, from Ephesus and Miletus, two other interpretations. 'The supreme ἀρετή is thought (τὸ φρονεῖν) and wisdom consists in saying what is true and acting according to Nature, listening to Her.'² 'All ἀρετή is summed up in justice.'³ Perhaps these words do not impress us. They are so simple that it is easy to ignore the immense spiritual progress which they reveal. Hellenism never got beyond, though its later writers amplified and illustrated, the statement that the excellence, the greatness, of man lies in thought and injustice.

Another trait of a life ruled by the idea of is disinterestedness. Admit excellence as an ideal, and it cannot but be desired for itself. The athlete

¹ Hesiod, *Erga*, 313.

² Heraclitus (490 B.C.), fr. 11 a. ³ Phocylides (540 B.C.), fr. 17.

is rewarded by the perfection of his bodily powers, not by prizes or applause; the poet or scientist by his own supreme achievements, apart from fame or money. Enough for the thinker to see the world as it is, for the artist to enjoy it for itself. So with every faculty; its perfect exercise is its own reward.

How good is man's life, the mere living I How fit to employ
All the soul and the mind and the senses for ever in joy !

One may hold that the Greeks conceived the idea of ἀρετή because they were disinterested by temperament, and therefore naturally inclined to study each activity of life for itself and to seek for its perfection. Or we may think that the notion of ἀρετή produced the disinterestedness, because 'virtue' is obviously desirable, apart from its results. At any rate disinterestedness is one of the great Greek characteristics, appearing very early in the history of the people and in hard and primitive times. It seems queer to use such a word of the Homeric heroes. Yet what epithet better describes the temper in which, in obedience to their ideal of 'virtue', Hector leaves Andromache or Achilles goes to fight Hector, knowing that Hector's death must be followed by his own? The quality is obvious in the impersonality of the best Greek literature and art—no literature or art are so impersonal, so untroubled by egoism—as if the writers were only concerned to see things as they are, and the sculptors had left Nature to clothe herself in

stone. That striking phrase of Heracleitus describes the practice of Pheidias and Sophocles as well as of the philosophers—they acted according to Nature and listened to Her.¹

The best evidence of Greek disinterestedness is their poetry, science, and thought. But it shows itself oddly in a minor and characteristic trait. It is curious to reflect that men of letters in Greece made nothing by their writings. We are unaccustomed to the idea of the chief poets, dramatists, historians of an age going entirely without pecuniary reward. If the life of literature and learning were totally unremunerated to-day, how many would live it? We should lose something and be spared more. In Greece it was unpaid. The discoveries of Ionian thought, the great achievements of fifth- and sixth-century philosophy were made by men who lived on their private means. No doubt Pindar and Simonides were paid for Odes written to order. But Aeschylus received nothing for the Trilogy,

¹ Horace noted this trait and, contrasting it with the attitude of the Roman (brought up on a sound commercial education), attributes the poetic achievements of Greece to their disinterestedness in the pursuit of art.

To Greece, fair Greece, *ambitious but of praise,*
The Muse gave ready wit and rounded phrase.
Our Youth, proficient in a nobler art,
Divide a shilling to the hundredth part . . .

A. P. 323 f. (tr. partly Francis, partly Conington). Horace betrays the Roman in his idea that the Greeks cared only for *laus* {*praeter laudem nullius avaris*). What they really cared for was poetry itself.

Sophocles and Euripides nothing for the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the *Medea*. The great exception to unpaid intellectual work in early Greece¹ is the sophist; and the fact that the sophist received money for teaching is one count in Plato's indictment of him. Yet few modern schoolmasters would behave like Protagoras. When a man', he says, 'has been my pupil, if he likes, he pays my price, but there is no compulsion; and if he does not like, he has only to go into a temple and take an oath of the value of the instruction, and he pays no more than he declares to be its value/. But this modest attitude to fees does not prevent Plato from defining sophistry 'as a hunt after young men of wealth', and reckoning the sophist with wine-sellers and provision dealers as a hireling belonging to 'the acquisitive and appropriative species'.³ It is an unjust and perverse judgement. Yet there is something noble in this instinctive dislike of treating the food of the spirit as if it was mere meat and drink, in this feeling that knowledge and wisdom are worth so much more than money, that they would be contaminated by material payment.

Again, a life based on the conception of must be rich and many-sided. There is nothing

¹ The orators made money by writing law-court speeches for litigants.

² Plato, *Prof.* 328. The modern counterpart of the 'Sophist'—not a very close one—is a peripatetic lecturer.

³ *Sophtst.* 222 f.

restricted in the Greek conception of human excellence. From the first it was free of the narrowness which has been a besetting danger to Christianity, and which has left its mark in different ways in different ages—in the contempt of Tertullian for literature and learning, in the extravagancies of the ascetics, in the broken statues of English Cathedrals, in the life of Victorian Nonconformity. There is nothing of this in Greece. Everything has its 'virtue', and each 'virtue' in its sphere is admirable and desirable. There is room for the athlete and the intellectual, for the politician and the artist—even for flying round the world and breaking motor records. But none of these are enough in themselves. Hellenism is not content with anything less than a human ~~Theoria~~ ^{Thesis}

'virtue' of an athlete, a painter, a statesman ; and it might seem enough for a man to achieve any of these, to be a world champion, a great artist, a Prime Minister. But, besides these 'virtues', there must be a 'virtue' of man as man, an ideal of human nature quite apart from any special gifts or occupations, and obviously, higher than any of these. The 'virtue' of a man as man is different from his 'virtue' as athlete, or doctor, or soldier, or statesman. Specialism—however exalted or successful—is not enough. So from the first it is realized that a man is something more than any part of himself, more than his profession or occupa-

tion; and there is no danger of people supposing that his excellence lies in his feet or in his muscles, or of their regarding athletic success or professional capacity or any technical gift as a supreme or complete ideal. Burns based on the fact of human nature a sentiment which commended itself to a democratic age and a nation of individualists. But 'a man's a man for a' that needs to be supplemented by the equally legitimate, and far pro founder and more salutary doctrine, 'a man should be a man for a' that'. Successes in politics, scholarship, business, or sport, do not make the perfect life or the complete human being.

Whom then did the Greeks regard as the perfect man? Different ages would have given different answers, according to the changing views of human virtue. The ideal of fifth-century Athens was a man versatile and intensely active both in public duty and in his private occupation, combining practical pursuits with intellectual interests and artistic enjoyment,¹ public-spirited, respecting both the law of the land and the unwritten moral code, living in a state which is prosperous, rich in noble buildings and in festivals and recreations, which oppresses neither poor nor rich, but gives all full opportunity to make the best of themselves. This is a

¹ He is thinking not of the art-collecting millionaire, but of 'love of beauty on small means'. Thucydides, ii. 40. The above passage is based on the ideal expounded in the Funeral Speech.

portrait of Periclean Athens, as Thucydides saw it; already we have a rich conception of human nature and of the state. In the fourth century the philosophers developed the subject with method and logic. Aristotle has enumerated the qualities which, in his opinion, compose the perfect character, and his list reveals the generous and ample ideal of life to which the conception of ἀρετή leads. There are the intellectual virtues, Wisdom (σοφία), Intelligence (σύνεσις), and that Practical Wisdom (φρόνησις) which is the 'virtue' of a ruler—of Prime Ministers and Presidents, of Congressmen and Members of Parliament. There are the moral virtues; not only the cardinal virtues of Courage, Temperance, and Justice, which Plato recognized, but Truthfulness, Liberality, Good Temper (πρᾶξις), Amiability (φιλία), Right Ambition, and two untranslatable qualities—Magnificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια) and Greatness of Soul (μεγαλοψυχία). To these we must add the social virtue of an urbane wit, lying midway between buffoonery and boorish dullness. Such are the qualities which make the complete man. If we knew nothing else of Greek

¹ 'Magnificence' is doing big things on a big scale. The builder of King's College Chapel at Cambridge had it, and the critic who taxed 'the Royal Saint with vain expense' was ignorant of its meaning. So apparently were the founders of most of the new English (but not of the American) universities. Μεγαλοψυχία means having worth, being conscious of it, and acting accordingly. There is something of it in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*; but in England and America this virtue tends to excite ridicule.

civilization, this list would be sufficient to reveal the breadth and richness of its existence.

Indeed, the wealth of these conceptions might be an *embarras de richesses* and their many-sidedness have led to dissipation of energy and loss of direction. Life can be too rich as well as too poor. But the last thing with which the Greeks could be content was intellectual chaos—however attractive the atoms of which it was composed—and they attempted to harmonize the various claims, which his different faculties and gifts make on man. Here the credit belongs to the intellectual clear-headedness of the Greek, to his desire for system and order, and his instinctive dislike of any kind of confusion. Without their intellectual power the Greeks would have done little; it made possible their science, their philosophy, their poetry and art. But it helped them nowhere more than in their view of life. As in science it drove them to make a cosmos, an ordered system, of the universe, so in morals it saved them from the spiritual confusion to which the very richness of their life would have led. Here, too, they are an example to an age, which has indeed its ordered view of the universe but is content to live in spiritual chaos.

That was not the case with the Greeks. The philosophers devised a calculus and ranked the ~~aspects~~ of man in a hierarchy of values, which

assigned its place to each but excluded none. Here is Plato's scale:

" There are two kinds of good things, the human and the heavenly; the former are dependent on the latter; if a state receives the greater, it acquires the lesser also, and if not, it loses both. First among lesser goods is health, second beauty, third strength in racing and in all other bodily movements, and fourth wealth—not blind but keen-sighted, guided by wisdom. Among the heavenly goods the first and foremost is wisdom, second a reasonable habit of mind (*σωφροσύνη*) allied with insight, third, and resulting from the combination of these qualities with courage, is justice, and fourth courage. All these rank naturally before the lesser goods, and in this order the lawgiver must rank them.'¹

Fundamentally Aristotle accepts this scale of values, but his calculus is more elaborate and his hierarchy more complete, for he has made the distinction, which escaped Plato, between moral and intellectual 'virtues'. The highest human 'virtue', he says, cannot be in the body, in that physical nature and life which man shares with all living beings. It must be something peculiar to man. And it must be the 'virtue' of the best part of his nature. Therefore it must not be associated with the irrational element in him, with his desires and passions. Nor is it his character. ' The moral virtues, as being inseparably united with the emotions, must be concerned with the composite part of our nature; and the virtues of the composite part of our nature **are**

¹ *Laws*, 631.

purely human.'¹ Therefore these moral 'virtues', though higher in the scale than the 'virtue' of the body, are not the supreme ἀρετή. That must be something neither physical nor emotional nor even moral. It is to be found in the Reason 'which seems to exercise rule and authority by natural right and to have a conception of things noble and divine, because it is either itself divine or is relatively the most divine part of our being'. 'If then the reason is divine in comparison with the rest of human nature, the life which accords with reason will be divine in comparison with human life in general____It would seem too that the reason is the true self of a man—if a man's true self is the highest or best thing in him.'²

The Anglo-Saxon will be shocked by this idea that the supreme excellence for man is the ἀρετή of the reason, and therefore that the highest existence is that of the theologian, the philosopher, the poet and artist, the man of science. Yet whatever we may think of this view of life we cannot deny that it is noble, that it is tenable, and that its definiteness contrasts favourably with the intellectual chaos of our own day. It is easier to reject than to refute.

The Greek view of life based on the conception of ἀρετή grew slowly and under various influences.

¹ Nic. *Ethics*, I 13,1 6, 11 f. § x. 8, § 3. ² Ibid. x. 7, J§ 1, 8.

The foundations were laid in ages of war and disorder, when those survived who had courage never to submit or yield. In the social misery and lawlessness of the succeeding centuries the ideal of justice was born. Aristocracy contributed its splendid and picturesque virtues. In Ionia wealth, leisure, and contact with foreign peoples stimulated intellectual curiosity, and the enterprise which had brought the Greek colonists across the Aegean carried them into the stranger seas of thought. The composite and slowly fashioned ideal that resulted may be called humanism. It is the belief that man is more important than his environment or his possessions; and that his fundamental business is not to understand nature, though that is one of his problems, nor to earn a livelihood, though that is one of his duties, but so to lead his life as to make the best of human nature and above all of what is characteristic of, peculiar to, and highest in human nature; or, as the Greeks put it, to achieve the ἀρετή of man.

Humanism is a close relation of the two principles on which—as far as they have any principle—Englishmen and Americans regulate their lives—Christianity and the code of a gentleman. Of the latter it is a reasonable and systematic statement. Our idea of 'behaving like a gentleman', of not doing things that 'are not done' or that 'no decent man would do' is humanism. The weakness of the

gentleman code is that it is indefinite, narrow, and fluctuating. It does not cover the whole of life ; and even in its own field it is inconsistent. It suffers, in fact, from the defects of any principle that has not been thought out. A gentleman may not tell a lie—except perhaps to a schoolmaster, a proctor, and an income-tax official. He will not get drunk—in the presence of women. He regards as debts of honour—the less creditable forms of debt. He probably would not necessarily consider as inconsistent with gentlemanly conduct those illicit sexual pleasures which Plato stigmatizes as ' animal and irrational' (θηριώδεις καὶ ἄλογοι). Humanism is this code made more systematic, explicit, consistent, serious, broadened to include the whole of conduct, accepted as a definite philosophy of life.

If humanism is something much more than the gentleman code, it is something much less than Christianity. Yet Christianity itself is humanistic when it asks the very question which Plato asked, ' what shall it profit a man ' to do certain things, still more when it uses the formula ' Son of Man '—a formula whose implications it has never fully developed. I do not believe that the philosophy of humanism can do for the character what Christianity rightly understood and firmly held, can do for it. But it is a definite, intelligible, and lofty view of life. Few people will question its validity or find it

* ~~θηριώδεις~~ is worse than ' animal ', not so bad as ' bestial '.

difficult to accept. It gives guidance in the problems of life and a standard by which to judge them; it can be held by itself or used as a basis of Christian belief. It is consistent with this belief; it reinforces it. But it is not involved with theological creeds or elaborate dogma. It is natural, not revealed, morality. It was not announced on Sinai or declared by prophets as the divine will; it does not depend on rewards or punishments after death,¹ or even on a future life—though Plato and Aristotle both believed in a divinely ordered universe and Plato at least believed in the immortality of the soul. It is a product of the human intellect and imagination, studying the capacities and character of man, analysing his nature and so determining his ἀρετή. In Greece we see the natural line of human development, unassisted by direct divine revelation, undeflected by religious or political terrorism, unimpeded by grinding poverty, unseduced by excessive wealth, and the Greeks at their best come nearer than any other people to the perfection of unaided humanity, of the natural man. *Homines maxime homines*. That is the pattern which they show us. Man master of his possessions, creations, and instruments, not their slave ; and an ideal for man which develops and makes supreme in him his

¹ Nic, *Ethics* 1115325. Aristotle says that the supreme field for courage is in facing death: 'for death is an end, and when man is dead, it appears that neither good nor ill affects him any more.'

highest capacities. ' By human " virtue " we mean excellence of soul, not excellence of body and by happiness we mean an activity of the soul.'¹ Never, in spite of its knowledge and wealth, did the world need the humanist tradition more.

¹ Aristotle, *Ethics*, i. 13. 6.

IV

HUMANISM IN POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

HAVING seen the meaning of Greek humanism as a theory and ideal for the individual life, we may pass to note the attitude which it involves to two prominent activities of the modern world—politics and our economic system. In both it places Man firmly in the centre of the stage. It holds that political-problems are human problems, and that the state exists in order that its members may lead the good life for man. At bottom no doubt this is our creed. But at an election no one would suppose so. It disappears behind the phrases which the aspiration or need of the moment inscribes on the banners of political parties. Few candidates for Parliament or Congress, if asked what was the aim of British or American policy, would reply 'the good life'. In the past century they would have answered according to their political complexion, Progress, Reform, Liberty, Democracy, Efficiency, Empire: to-day it might be Trade Revival, or Peace, or Socialism. Of course these secondary ideals have their place in practical politics and focus attention on the pathway of the moment. Yet how steadying and salutary for electors and candidates to be recalled to a sense of their true destination! The reader of Plato and

Aristotle is never allowed to forget that the object of politics is a human good. 'The state originates for the sake of life : it continues in existence for the sake of the good life.' 'Political societies exist for the sake of noble actions and not merely of a common life.' 'The chief task of politics is to produce a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and capable of noble actions.'

Greek thought is well acquainted with other ideals; with the *Machtstaat* organized for war on the ground 'that all states are in a permanent condition of life-long war against each other'; with the imperialistic, plutocratic state seeking 'to make itself as big and rich as possible, owning gold and silver mines and ruling as many subjects as possible in its land and sea Empire*. But these are not Plato's political ideals. 'Some of these aims', he says, referring to the latter state, 'are practicable, others are not. But the principle which our laws have in view is to make the citizens as happy and harmonious as possible.' How intensely Plato believes that 'the principles of true politics are those of morality, enlarged', is shown by his surprising and drastic denunciation of the most famous statesmen of his country, Themistocles, Cimon, and Pericles. He condemns them on the ground that they used their powers to make the state powerful and not to make

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, i. 2, § 8, iii. 9, § 14 ; *Ethics*, i. 9, § 8.

² *Laws*, 625, 742 f.

its citizens good, ' filling it with docks and fortifications and revenue but leaving no room for justice and *sophrosyne* '. So again he disparages the victory at Salamis because he considered (on very odd grounds) that it had a bad effect on national morals, and 'the object we are keeping in view in our present investigations is the moral worth of a social system; we do not agree with the crowd that the most precious thing in life is bare preservation in existence; we hold that it is better to become thoroughly good and to remain so as long as existence lasts.' If we imagine an Englishman regretting the victory of Trafalgar and condemning Chatham, Pitt, and Disraeli on the ground that they contributed to the greatness, but not the goodness, of England, we have a modern analogy to these sentiments. Never has the doctrine that the state exists to provide moral good been more uncompromisingly stated. To achieve this human good Plato is ready to go very far.

'I say that there must be neither silver nor gold in our state, nor much moneymaking by means of usury and mechanical occupations. . . ., but only the wealth which agriculture affords and produces, and even here only so much as does not compel men to neglect, in making money, the ends for which money exists—the soul and the body, which without education and physical training cannot be worth anything. So I have said more than once that concern for wealth must take the lowest place in our esteem. Of the

¹ *Gorgias*, 517, 518 j *Laws*, 707.

three objects which are of universal interest to mankind, interest in wealth, in its right forms, holds the third and lowest place; midway comes the care of the body, and first the soul. ... So the legislator should repeatedly define to himself, "What is my purpose? Am I achieving it or am I missing my mark?"¹

Plato may be too drastic in the application of his principles. It is easier to arrange human affairs in a study than in Parliament or a Foreign Office. But European and American politics would be better if legislators oftener asked themselves these questions and recalled an ideal which few of them would disown, but which is apt to disappear in the pursuit of secondary ends.

One merit of Greek humanism is to have remembered that the goal of politics is human good: another, to have seen that it can only be reached by human means. This, though it may seem a truism, is not the modern attitude. The vastness and unmanageability of the modern state, the influence of science, the analogies of technology, tempt us to seek our ends through some piece of political machinery. One day it is Liberty or Democracy: the next it is a Dictator or a Plan. International peace is to be secured by a Hague Tribunal or a League of Nations; prosperity to be re-established by Tariffs, or Protection, or Currency Reform. In the

¹ Plato, *Laws*, 743 f.

last generation Democracy was the master-key, in our own it is Economics. Men are to be saved, in spite of themselves, by an institution, by a technique, by deft manipulation. The last ten years have shaken this belief. The history of the League of Nations has illustrated the truth of Plato's warning : ' Do you imagine that political constitutions spring from a tree or a rock and not from the dispositions of the citizens which turn the scale and draw all else in their direction ?'¹ We should have been spared much disappointment since 1918 and been nearer to our goal, if we had remembered that institutions are wrested to the uses and moulded to the nature of those who work them, and that men are saved by their virtues not by their political machinery.

This, too, is the teaching of a passage where Protagoras gives a diagnosis of political health and disease.² In a fable on civilization he distinguishes two stages in human advance out of a mere animal existence. The first was the discovery of fire, which leads to technology (*ἐντεχνος σοφία*) and is the basis of material civilization, giving men ' ample means of livelihood' (*εὐτροφία τοῦ βίου*). The next stage was the creation of cities and the attempt to form political societies, Me; i, Protagoras thinks, by their intelligence created, first, material civilization, and then political machinery. That

¹ *Republic*, 544.

² Plato, *Protagoras*, 311 f.

might have seemed all they needed. But it proved insufficient. ' When they collected in communities, mankind were unjust to each other, because they had not mastered the political art. So the communities broke up and men were like to perish. Then Zeus, afraid that the human race would be entirely destroyed, sent Hermes bringing to men Dike and Aids, to be the regulating principles of states and the ties which unite men in friendly relations.' Protagoras sees the importance of *ἐντεχνος σοφία* and of political institutions, but he does not think these enough to save society. That cannot be done unless men possess Dike and Aids. The first word, Dike or 'Justice', presents no difficulty; we have no English equivalent for the second. There is something in it of ⁱ 'conscience', something of a 'sense of honour', something of reverence, something of what the schoolboy means by 'decent.' It is an instinctive feeling that prevents a man from doing certain things. Justice and Aids: these, according to Protagoras, are the principles of order and union in political relations, and in their absence society, in spite of all its *ἐντεχνος σοφία*, is fated to collapse. Protagoras' (or Plato's) view that these are the essential political virtues is interesting. But the important thing is his teaching that society must collapse unless men have a quantum of certain moral qualities, and that neither technology nor political machinery can be a substitute for them.

It has been said that the problem of politics is, given a world of knaves, to educe a common honesty. If so, to Plato's view, the problem is insoluble. States can only reflect the character of their citizens. The world can be no better than its inhabitants, and it may be worse.

Plato is thinking of politics in their widest sense. Aristotle with characteristic common sense condemns communistic schemes for social reform on the same ground. 'Such legislation', he says, 'has a specious appearance of benevolence. An audience accepts it with delight, supposing, especially when abuses existing under the present political system are denounced as due to private property, that under communism every one will miraculously become every one else's friend. But the real cause of these evils is not the absence of communism, but the wickedness of human nature.' Society, Aristotle thinks, must be reformed by changing men's hearts rather than their institutions. 'The state is a plurality which must be united into a community by education.'

The same doctrine—that the world can only be improved by improving men—is the theme of the greatest of all secular prose works. The book which we call Plato's *Republic* has two titles—'On the State' and 'About Justice'. (What other political treatise has ever been written to which such a sub-

¹ *Politics*, ii. 5, § 11 f.

title could be appended ?) For its first book and a half, no one could guess the real subject of Plato. They contain an attempt to define justice, and a discussion whether morality has any real worth apart from its practical uses. Politics are not mentioned, till Socrates remarks that justice may be an attribute of the state, and may perhaps be more easily identified and defined in that larger field than in the private relations of man with man. So we find ourselves unexpectedly launched on political theory. But even here Plato has no political expedients to advise. Not a word about parliaments, or finance, or the electorate. Plato's only concern is with the character and education of those who are to rule the state. The *Republic* is a treatise on politics which ignores almost everything except the character of the governing class, the education best calculated to form that character, and the private life necessary to preserve it. His remedy for his age is a dictatorship, or something like one; and here we seem to be on familiar and modern ground. But the Platonic Dictatorship is very different from that demanded by Fascists or Communists. It is not the substitution of one political machine for another, but that of one type of character for another. The great revolution which Plato desires is that philosophers should rule. He knows, of course, how shocking such a doctrine sounds, and he hastens to explain that he does not mean 'the professed

followers of philosophy'. Indeed, we should do better to forget the word, and think not of philosophers but of the type which Plato has in mind, of men with inexhaustible intellectual interest 'cet appetit de connaitre qui est comme une jeunesse inalterable de pensee', a passion for truth and a sense of permanent values. (If we are tempted to derive Bolshevism and Fascism from Plato, we must remember the differences as well as the similarities.) Unless those who direct and shape the policy of nations possess these qualities, 'there will be no deliverance for states or for the human race',¹

Nor is it easy to possess them. In the Platonic state no one can 'enter politics' till his character has been tested in war and by hard physical training, and till his intelligence has been disciplined and his ideals purified by a vigorous intellectual education, especially in science, mathematics, and philosophy. Then when this *elite* 'have passed safely through all temptations, and have won every distinction in every branch whether of action or of science, they must be forthwith introduced to their final task, and must be constrained to lift up the eye of the soul, and fix it upon that which gives light to all things ; and having surveyed Goodness Itself, they must take it as a pattern, to be copied in that work of regulating their country and their fellow citizens and themselves, which is to occupy each in

¹ *Republic*, 473, 485 f

turn during the rest of life'.¹ The world, Plato thinks, will never have peace unless its statesmen have a training like this. If we disagree with him, it cannot be on the ground that his plan has been tried and proved unsuccessful.

Though Plato holds that the political problem is fundamentally a human problem, he did not suppose states to be capable of existing without laws. The *Laws*, whose minute regulations are sometimes regarded as an evidence of senile conservatism, show Plato's awareness that states cannot live by ideals alone. Yet in the commonwealth there depicted, a jungle of regulations, a paradise of bureaucracy, he has not forgotten that the citizen's character is the deciding factor in politics. Human nature provides the opportunity for the statesman. 'Of all human possessions, the soul has most natural capacity to shun evil, and to hunt for and seize the supreme good, and having seized it to make it a lifelong companion.' Human weakness is responsible for the political disaster.

'Even a man who has attained clear perception of this principle (that public well-being should be considered before private good) as a theoretical truth, if subsequently placed in the position of an irresponsible autocrat, will never prove loyal to his conviction. . . His frail human nature will always tempt such a man to self-aggrandizement, and self-seeking ...; in this self-caused blindness it will end by sinking him and his community with him in the depths of ruin.'²

¹ Ibid. 540. ² *Laws*, 728, 875.

Thus by irresistible logic Plato was led to the momentous discovery—and of all the Greek contributions to the world none is greater—that the key to political problems is education.¹ The problem of politics, and of life, is to play Beethoven, having nothing but a mouth-organ to play with. The solution is to improve the instrument. But if the world can only be saved by an improvement in human character, education is the one hope. As Plato says in one of those great educational maxims which are written for all time:

' In all growing things alike—plants, animals gentle or savage, and men—the first shoot if it starts well has a great power to achieve the "virtue" (*ἀρετή*) proper to its own nature. We call man a gentle animal; and, if nature has been kind to him and his education has been right, he is the most gentle and god-like of creatures. But if his education is inadequate or bad, he becomes the most savage of all the products of the earth.'²

Hence in Plato's *Laws* the Minister of Education is ' far the most important of the highest officers in the state'.³ Hence more than one-fifth of the *Republic* is occupied with education and Aristotle's *Politics* ends with a discussion of it. ' No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention

¹ Including, as Plato saw, the right religious education. *Republic*, 377 f.

² *Laws*, 766. Note that Plato, while stressing nurture, does not ignore the importance of nature.

³ *Ibid.*

above all to the education of youth. . . . Always, the better the character, the better the government.'¹ That, too, is why for both Plato and Aristotle education is essentially a training of character, and why they were saved from any confusion about its aims. Nowhere is the clarity of the Greek mind better seen than in their conception of education. It contrasts with our fumbling uncertainty about the place in education of science, or the classics, or commercial arithmetic, or handwork, or athletics, or vocational training. The Greeks knew that technical education was necessary.² But they also saw that by itself it did not make an educated man, that the true aim of education was to produce human ἀρετή, and its test was whether it did so. How admirable is the following definition !

^c We must not be indefinite in our view of education. At present in our criticism or praise of a man's upbringing, we describe one of ourselves as educated and another as uneducated with reference sometimes to retail trade or the shipping business. . . . But this is not the view of education of which we are speaking. We mean by education, that training in "virtue" (ἀρετή) from youth up which makes a man passionately desire to be a perfect citizen, knowing how to rule and to obey with justice. This, I think, is the training for which alone we should reserve the name education, regarding the training which aims at wealth or some bodily strength or any other accomplishment apart from reason

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, viii. 1, § 1. 2.

² 'Children', says Aristotle, 'should be taught those useful things which are really necessary' (ibid. 2, § 3).

HUMANISM IN POLITICS

and justice as mechanical (*βάρβαρος*) and illiberal and entirely undeserving of the name. Let us then not dispute over a word, but agree to our present conclusion, that properly educated people in general become good, and that we must in no way disparage education, which is the first and fairest of blessings to the best of men.¹

Such are the political goals and methods to which humanism points and we can guess what criticisms Plato and Aristotle might make on us in that field. They would also have something to say of another great interest of modern life. If politics is one problem of our age, trade and industry are another. Our world may be destroyed by war; but it is quite as likely to be choked by machines and commerce. The state is threatened by the first of these dangers, the individual by the second. What would be the attitude of Greek humanism to mechanization and commercialism? The question may seem purely speculative, for the Greeks had no machines, and though they were active and enterprising in commerce, and though they were not without applied science, no analogy can be drawn in these spheres between the ancient and the modern world. But, if they did not live in an age of mechanism and big business, there is no doubt what Plato and Aristotle would have thought of both. The views which they express are the logical conclusion of humanism; and both of them, the practical philosopher no less

¹ Plato, *Laws*, 643 f.

than the mystical idealist, would have described the activities which form the greater part of our civilization and occupy the lives of the majority of men in England and America, by the word *βέλαντος*. The epithet is not complimentary. It may be translated 'mechanical', as the tribunes use the word to the street crowd in *Julius Caesar*; but the Greek has a deeper tinge of contempt. It is used of people who spend money with vulgar ostentation, of accomplishments inconsistent with a perception of the true purpose of life,¹ and it is constantly coupled with the word *ἀνελεύθερος*, 'illiberal', 'unworthy of a free man' (or, as we should say, 'unworthy of a gentleman'). Greek philosophy would apply it to the life of both the ordinary artisan and the industrial and commercial magnate. In Plato's ideal state the money-makers of the community form the third class, below the thinkers who govern and the soldiers who defend it.² Aristotle's 'best state' does not give the artisan a vote. And artisan might be interpreted in a sense that surprises us. 'No gentlemanly (*εὐγενής*) Greek youth', says Plutarch, 'after seeing the statues of Zeus at Olympia or Hera at Argos, would wish to be their sculptors, Phidias and Polycletus.'³ In some states these theories were actually applied.

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, iv. 2, § 20; viii. 2, § 4.

² Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176. The 'arts' cover what we mean by commerce and industry.

³ Plutarch, *Vita Periclis*, 2.

Sparta excluded the industrial, commercial, and farming classes from citizenship. In Thebes no retail trader or artisan was eligible for office till ten years after he had retired from business.¹

It is well to face this view in its most austere and uncompromising form, before we remember that, apart from military peoples like Sparta, no Greek state put it into practice; and it is desirable to understand the reasons which underlay an apparently pedantic, unpractical, and snobbish theory. There are, of course, historical causes for it. Sparta (of which Plato says that it was 'a camp not a city') thought only in terms of the production of good soldiers and rejected any occupation unfavourable to the military temper. Elsewhere the instinct of aristocrats like Plato and of soldiers like Xenophon was to look down on the trader and artisan. This feeling was naturally the stronger in Greece, where mechanical trades were largely in the hands of slaves, and commerce was carried on by aliens. It will be more intelligible in the southern states of North America and in countries like South Africa where the white races, in the midst of a large native population, are in somewhat the same position as was the native-born Athenian among slaves and metics. But neither political necessity nor prejudice explain the

¹ See the admirable discussions in Newman's edition of the *Politics*, vol. i, p. 98 f., which I have used in what follows.

² *Laws*, 666.

attitude of the philosophers to the trader and the artisan. We may now consider the reasons why they tolerate them as a necessary evil, but exclude them from political power, dismissing our instinctive dislike of the conclusions and seeing how far the arguments are convincing.

Let Plato and Aristotle speak for themselves. 'Any occupation which makes the body or soul or mind of the free man less fit for the practice or exercise of ἀρετή is "mechanical"; hence we call those arts "mechanical" which tend to deform the body, and similarly, all paid employments for they absorb and degrade the mind.' 'To be always seeking utility does not become free and exalted souls.' 'No man can practise ἀρετή who is living the life of a mechanic or labourer.' 'The citizens must not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such a life is ignoble and inimical to ἀρετή. Neither must they be farmers, since leisure is necessary for its development.' 'In such an organization' (Plato is speaking of a state in which the citizen cannot sell his land) 'there will not be much opportunity for making money, for no one will either have the opportunity or right to make it in any illiberal occupation, whose mechanical character (βαναυσία) and the discredit attached to it, revolts the temperament of a free man." There is no mistaking these

¹ *Politics*, viii. 2, § 4f.; 3, § 12? iii. 5, § 5; vii. 9, § 3. *Laws*, 741.

views or the arguments for them. To Plato and Aristotle the object of life is to achieve the ideal of human nature, and to develop it harmoniously to the full perfection of which it is capable. Anything which is inconsistent with this perfection or prevents this development is to be avoided. Therefore those occupations are bad which deform or distort the body, or which do not give opportunity for the pursuit of *ἀρετή*, or which concentrate the mind on money or utility instead. Further, Plato and Aristotle hold that the highest thing in man is the reason, and that human perfection must therefore lie in the activity of the reason, in the 'theoretic' or contemplative life. But trade and industry and mechanical labour leave no leisure for this life and draw the mind in quite another direction. Therefore to engage in them is to turn the back on the human ideal, to abandon the quest for which man was born. We may not like these conclusions, but we cannot ignore the force of the arguments that support them. They hit our civilization hard. But they hit it in its weakest spot. Few people can visit a factory or walk through the City at noon entirely satisfied that this is the right life for human beings to lead. If Greek philosophy and Christianity were right in thinking that man is a spiritual being, are a Stock Exchange, a foundry, or a shop the ideal theatres for his activities ?

It is unfortunate that all the words which Plato and

Aristotle use to describe their ideal have an unattractive ring to our ears. Contemplation suggests inactivity, theoretic is almost a term of reproach, reason has an arid and controversial sound, as if it implied disputes about faith and intellect, and was inseparably connected with the Rationalist Press. But to a Greek these words had very different meanings. The life of reason, the ' theoretic ' life, is that led at its highest by Dante, Milton, Spinoza, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Newton, Darwin, and, on a lower level, by lesser poets, artists, men of science, and thinkers in every age; an intense activity of the intellect and imagination, continually in the pursuit or presence of the beauty, wonder, and mystery of the universe. Its ardour and fascination can be divined from the words of those who have led this life. Marlowe knew them:

**Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest.**

So did Faraday:

' I have been arranging certain experiments in reference to the notion that Gravity itself may be practically and directly related by experiment to the other powers of matter, and this morning proceeded to make them. It was almost with a feeling of awe that I went to work, for if the hope should prove well founded, how great and mighty and

sublime in its hitherto unchangeable character is the force I am trying to deal with, and how large may be the new domain of knowledge that may be opened up to the mind of man.'

If Marlowe and Faraday are too far removed from the world of ordinary men, the words, in which a young Athenian in the *Phaedrus* describes the fascination of literary studies, are in their simplicity almost more convincing: 'What is worth living for but these pleasures ' ?¹ It is not really surprising that such pursuits should seem the highest of which human nature is capable, and that Plato and Aristotle should rule out any occupation inconsistent with them.

What answer can be made to an indictment if not of our civilization, at any rate of a large part of it, to a view, which would disfranchise most of the electorate in England and America and would half empty the benches of Congress and the House of Commons ? We may say that it ignores the truth expressed in Menander's line :

A slave free-hearted is from slavery free,
and implied in the epitaph on a Greek slave,

O Zosima, your soul was ever free,
And now your body too has liberty;²

that *ἀρετή* depends on a man's temperament and character, not on his occupation, and that if his spirit is not 'mechanical' it does not matter that

¹ 258.

² Menander, fr. 279: *ἐλευθέρος Ζωσίμου, Ζωίλος οὐκ ἔστω*. *Anth. Pal.*, vii. 553-

his trade is. Or again we may admit that Aristotle's conclusion does indeed follow from his premisses, and that, if the highest thing in man is the reason, and if the ideal for man is the perfect development and unhampered exercise of the reason, the life of an artisan or shopkeeper or a business man is incompatible with this. But we may hold that Aristotle's interpretation of human *ἀρετή*, his view of the good for man, was wrong, that he was mistaken when he subordinated the moral virtues to the intellectual, that the former are at least on a level with the latter, and that the factory or the office give actually more opportunity for their development and practice than the study. Finally we may hold that anyhow Aristotle's conception is both unpractical and selfish ; that without commerce and industry civilization collapses ; and that the philosopher has no right to stigmatize as ignoble the work of the trader and the artisan which make his own existence possible. (The last of these arguments, like all *argumenta ad hominem*, is the most attractive and the least sound.)

But in practice Plato and Aristotle are not as impracticable as they seem. Having apparently expelled business and industry, they leave—Plato especially—a door open through which these occupations indispensable to society, yet apparently inconsistent with the highest good for man, may make their way back. At the close of the passage in

which Aristotle condemns as 'mechanical' 'those occupations which make the body, soul or mind less fit for the practice of ἀρετή', he adds: ' The object which a man sets before him makes a great difference; if he does or learns anything for his own sake or for the sake of his friends or with a view to ' virtue' (ἀρετή), the action will not be illiberal.' ' His meaning is made clear in a passage of Plato which ought to be inscribed in every factory, office, and place of business. Plato begins by remarking on the unfavourable light in which commercial life is regarded. But, he says, it is not trade or commerce that are to blame, but those who carry them on. In themselves these occupations are really the relief of human necessity, providing food, clothes, housing, & c , for a world that needs them. The natural thing is for us to love and honour the shopkeeper and the business man as we honour a mother or a nurse. They exist to do for the adult community what these do for the children of a family. The misfortune is that their occupations are practised by people who have forgotten the real purpose of commerce, and regard it merely as a means of making money—and, in general, of making too much. But if the best men and women managed hotels and shops and factories, we should realize the true nature of the business life and Honour it accordingly. On these conditions, almost

¹ *Politics*, viii. 2, § 6.

without realizing what he has done, Plato makes room for industry and commerce in the perfect state. Practised properly, that is, disinterestedly and for their own sake, they become a field for the exercise of human ἀρετή.¹

So Plato himself answers the attacks which he and Aristotle make on industry and commerce. These occupations, no less than the life of the artist, thinker, and scientist, are not only necessary to society but permit and may generate 'virtue'. They do so, however, on one condition—that they are pursued for themselves, and seek not money or any lesser and external good, but the objects which called them into being. The aim of a journalist may either be to enlarge the circulation of a paper or to give his readers a true and intelligent picture of the world ; of a lawyer either to extend his practice or to help justice to be done; of a business man either to grow rich or to play his part as a ' nurse' of the community. These alternatives are not exclusive. But where the former predominates, the amount of ἀρετή generated will be small, and journalists, lawyers, and industrialists will be πῶναι rather than men.

Thus the challenge of Greek humanism remains, in a twofold form. On the one hand the Greeks

¹ *Laws*, 918. Cp. Ruskin's definition of the merchant's as an ' intellectual profession', existing to provide for the nation. *Unto This Last*, p. 31 f.

show what kind of life is possible for men without technology and what is lost by its absence. They could not drive a motor-car at 300 miles an hour, or fly from Athens to England in a day. Their existence was not seriously impoverished by this inability. They could not broadcast the Aeschylean Trilogy; but they could write it. They possessed most, if not all, of the things which make human existence splendid and memorable. Even in the medical field, where the gifts of science have been of almost unequivocal value, their backwardness was less of a drawback than one would have supposed. Their expectation of life seems to have been long, and they kept their faculties to an advanced age. Has any modern poet written a work as great as the *Philoctetes* at the age of 87? Its author was probably even older when he wrote the *Oedipus at Co/onus*. Isocrates, who lived to be 98, was 90 when he wrote the *Pki/ippus*; and his vast *Panathenaic Speech*, composed later still, is even more amazing as an achievement of style. Plato was still working on the *Cristas* and the *Laws* at the age of 80. It is well that, not minimizing our debt to applied science, we should remember what men can achieve without it.

And if the spectacle of Greek life is a challenge to us, so is its theory, as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle. In times when we are tempted to think that the problem of the world is the problem of

salesmanship, it is salutary to consider this dream of a civilization, whose object was not power or money but a human ideal, in which men before anything else desired to be men, and salesmanship, if it was a necessity of the moment, was not the end of life. Greek civilization is a constant reminder that there is such a thing as human *ἀρετή*, and it drives us to consider what that *ἀρετή* should be and how in our mechanized, commercialized, industrialized existence it can be achieved.

V

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE AGE OF PLATO ; AN ANALOGY

IN one sense Hellenism is timeless. It is part of the permanent stuff of humanity and belongs to all its generations. Nothing is likely to antiquate the conception of ἀρετή, the humanist gospel, the scientific temper, with which my third chapter dealt. Μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεός, οὐδέ γηράσκει.¹ But while Hellenism as a whole has a universal appeal, certain epochs of its history appeal with special force to certain ages. This chapter treats of a period in its development which has a special relation to our own times and problems.

It is sometimes apparently forgotten that there are many different stages in that long history of Greek culture which opens before 1000 B.C. and closes with the fall of Constantinople. We are apt to speak as if the Greeks' began with Homer and ended with Aristotle and were almost as homogeneous as the Victorians—a single country with landscapes that varied, rather than a continent where we travel from one geological formation to another through ever-changing scenery. Not all

¹ Sophocles, O. T. 87a (speaking of the eternal and unwritten laws):
' Great is the Divinity in them and grows not old.'

parts of this continent have an equal interest for every age. A particular period will mean more to us than to our fathers or to our children, not because it is greater and more important, but because it has spiritual affinities with us. Sophocles, the admired of the Victorians, was more intelligible to them than to us and is apt to miss appreciation and even justice from this generation. A few years ago Euripides, whom the Victorians under-estimated and misunderstood, was the popular favourite; sensitive, critical, unconstructive, slightly querulous, an artist turned moralist, a moralist without a creed, he belonged to the age and type of Galsworthy. To-day he is ceasing to be the *cri du jour* and resuming his place as one of the great dramatists of the world. We are rather contemporaries of the fourth century B.C. and nearing the age of Menander and Epicurus, of the Cynics and Stoics. It is not the Greeks who have changed, but we. Fixed stars in a serene heaven, they never set below the horizon of human view; but only as the motion of our world brings us into a position corresponding to theirs, can we see them as they are; and even then the view is imperfect. Understanding is not the result of knowledge, though without knowledge it stumbles, but of the sympathetic insight born of a parallel experience. We recognize in others only ourselves. We are at home only in epochs which resemble our own. These ages, with which we have spiritual affinities and which

have anticipated our problems, have a special interest and instructiveness for us. They are our *Doppelgänger*. We recognize our face in theirs. This chapter deals with such an age, in which Greece lived through some of the gravest of the difficulties which beset us. Its experience may foreshadow the development of these difficulties and suggest a way to meet them.

It is impossible to contemplate the modern world without anxiety. No doubt, even in our financial difficulties, we are far richer than our fathers. Science is advancing and, if we allow it, will yearly increase our health and comforts. Public taste is more developed, intelligence is more applied to all branches of life, than fifty years ago. No one, reflecting on the years from 1914 to 1918, could say that we were decadent. Where then is cause for anxiety? It lies in that field of religion, morals, spiritual life, the vital secret alike of all civilizations and of all individual existences, which science may foster and develop but cannot create or even keep alive. It is not that people are less religious, or less spiritual, or less moral than they were fifty years ago. But to a large extent, and among wide sections of the population, the roots of religion and morals have been cut. And when a plant's roots are cut, though it may continue to live and even apparently to flourish for some time, its days are numbered. The most serious weakness of our age is that it does not know

its own mind and its greatest need a clear philosophy of life.

We are in the midst of a crisis which is, or threatens to be, the collapse of a culture, a civilization. It is a spiritual revolution such as the world has experienced three times in its history—in the closing years of the fifth century before Christ, in the fourth century after Him, and at the Renaissance. The theories which sustained the life of peoples and individuals through the Middle Ages and lasted to the close of the eighteenth century have been shattered or shaken. I will not attempt to define the spirit which ruled the world for many centuries after the fall of the Graeco-Roman civilization. But it would be true to say that it was marked by a sense of certainty. How characteristic of the age are the chapters on angels in the *Summa* of Saint Thomas Aquinas ! He devotes the best part of 200 pages to the subject and there is hardly anything about an angel that he is not prepared to tell us. He knows when they were made and how and where; how numerous they are; what they are composed of; whether they have bodies; how they eat and how they beget children; how they move; how they know each other; whether they can divine the future and **sec** into our secret thoughts; whether they have free will, are angry, feel desire and love. This child of the Middle Ages knows far more about angels than any of us know about ourselves. A man born five

hundred years ago knew his relation to his ruler, the king governing by divine right; he knew his position in society, with its ranks and orders, its guilds, corporations, and crafts, with its two great categories—the spiritual and temporal; he knew the nature of the universe and his place and destiny in it. But while certainty was the note of the world before Luther, uncertainty is increasingly the note of to-day.

Of course such a generalization can be criticized. It is true of the intelligentsia rather than of the masses. But the intelligentsia direct, if they cannot altogether control, the unwieldy movements of the masses, and uncertainty is unmistakable in them. It can be seen in contemporary literature. Observe the heroes and heroines of the popular play or novel, drifting from one seedy and casual love adventure to another, like the meaningless amours of monkeys in a Zoological Garden. Perhaps the Puritans expelled sex, or wished to expel it, too ruthlessly from literature and life. But there is no more unmistakable sign of a world uncertain of itself, vacant of conclusive aim and purpose, than the predominance of sexual interest. When men have no settled purpose they are the sport of the strongest and most insistent current, and few currents are more strong and insistent than those of sex. If the boat is drifting, they are apt to take it in charge. In the **more serious modern novel**, where sex is kept in it!

place, the fundamental agnosticism of the age appears no less, though in a different way. Take a novel by Galsworthy, and ask what rules the life of its heroes, the best people in it, and on what principles their virtues are based. It will be difficult to find an answer. They are kindly, courageous, and unselfish by instinct, by habit, by tradition, because they feel that way. But if they were asked, in the language of the Bible, to give a reason for 'the faith which is in them', or in that of Socrates λόγον διδόναι, their reply might be morally edifying, but it would not be intellectually coherent. The Christianity which they have discarded still braces their character and affects their life. They were brought up in its atmosphere. Their mothers and nurses held it up with an implicit faith; their fathers at least respected it. The associated virtues which its intellectual system enforced and guaranteed, were instilled into them at an age when impressions are permanent. But they have lost grip on the intellectual basis, and habits without an intellectual basis do not, in a critical age, outlast a generation. The mortar has decayed from the building. How long will the building stand?

Suppose our civilization really to be passing through such a crisis. And suppose that this had already happened before in human history, would we not, for our guidance, study that earlier and parallel crisis? If we could find a people who had

been through it and had come out safe on the other side, would not their story be a guide to us ? If so Greece—and Greece alone—offers us such guidance. Exactly the same thing happened at Athens in the age of Plato for reasons substantially the same. There is a curiously close parallel between the phenomena, the underlying forces and even the personalities of the two epochs. The phenomena are the same. That age, like our own, had to face an apparent collapse of its culture, a seeming destruction of its traditional beliefs, and to find its feet afresh. That is very much our position. The cause of the phenomena is the same. In Greece, as among ourselves, morals and the popular view of life had been built up on the basis of a traditional religion. Morality was ordained and buttressed by God, who rewarded the good and punished the bad. In Greece, as with us, conduct was shaped and controlled by religion. So for some hundreds of years society persisted, not without cruelty, injustice, and greed, but assured in its heart that cruelty, injustice, and greed were wrong, and gradually reducing their sway. Then arose, for the first time in the history of Europe, the force that has made modern civilization and plays a greater part in it than any other—the habit of critical and scientific thought. First it occupied itself with natural phenomena, deciding that the many-coloured world could be reduced to a single element, explaining it alternatively as a

concourse of atoms or a manifestation of mind, announcing that the heavenly bodies were not gods but material bodies like the earth, and that diseases were not miraculous but the result of the operation of natural laws. Thales, Anaximander, Democritus, Anaxagoras played in the ancient world the part played in our own by Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, Bacon—they inaugurated a new conception of astronomy, physics, the world of nature. But from these innocent, academic, non-contentious subjects the critical spirit spread to the more dangerous fields of human action and human society. It inquired into the bases of morals, of political institutions, of religion, and under its acid test these began to shake and dissolve. It looked askance at the religious stories of the day. As Voltaire or Toland in the eighteenth century, as Huxley or Haeckel in the nineteenth, criticized the historical documents of Christianity, so Xenophanes remarked that Homer and Hesiod ascribed to the gods all things that are a shame and a disgrace to men, and Plato 'demanded a critical expurgation of the religious legends of Greece.¹ In the middle of this intellectual upheaval, as with us, came a great war. It shook still further the cement which held the building together. Twice Thucydides recurs to the effects of the war and of its accompanying convulsions on men's conduct and moral ideals, and his diagnosis

¹ Xenophanes Fr. 11 and x, 1. 45 ; Plato, *Republic*, 377 f.

is classical. Thus he traces the results of the plague which ravaged Athens, killed far more than the enemy, and permanently reduced its population.

' Seeing how the rich died in a moment and those who had nothing immediately inherited their property—they reflected that life and riches were alike transitory, and they resolved to enjoy themselves while they could, and to think only of pleasure. Who would be willing to sacrifice himself to the law of honour when he knew not whether he would ever live to be held in honour? The pleasure of the moment and any sort of thing which conduced to it took the place both of honour and of expediency. No fear of Gods or law of man deterred a criminal. Those who saw all perishing alike, thought that the worship or neglect of the gods made no difference. For offences against human law no punishment was to be feared; no one would live long enough to be called to account. Already a far heavier sentence had been passed and was hanging over a man's head; before that fell, why should he not take a little pleasure V¹

The English and Americans are not as easy to throw off their balance as were the more emotional people of Athens, yet we too know the effects produced in the war on morals by the uncertainty of life, and on religious belief by its carnage.

But, at least with the educated, the intellectual solvent was more drastic and worked over a longer period. The critics of the traditional morals opposed ~~quære~~, to ~~' viciis~~, and asked what rights or justification the latter had. It is impossible to cut more deeply than that. Once you make

¹ ii. 53 j iii. 82, § 2 (tt. Crawley).

an opposition between φύσις and νόμος, between what is natural and what is conventional, you call in question custom, law, traditional belief, accepted moral standards, and all the established order of human life. You ask what justification they can show in fact, in Nature, whether they are not mere figments and impostures. To do that is to lay the axe to the roots of society. It is a line of argument with which to-day we are perfectly familiar. Now, as then, the weapon against current moral and religious beliefs is the contrast between natural and conventional. Men, it is urged, in their rise from savagery have built up an elaborate framework of customs which they call morality and to which they attribute an absolute value. But most of it is purely conventional, and we must go behind it to reality, to the laws and methods of Nature herself. So argued the fifth-century thinkers. So, in effect, argue their modern successors. The only difference is that the ancient critics were far more ruthless and radical. Shaw, Galsworthy, and Wells are content to throw stones at Victorian ideals. Their Greek analogues, Callicles and Thrasymachus, declare that the whole of popular morality is a human fiction without any base in Nature, which knows nothing of justice and mercy, but only the right of the stronger. It was the many, they said, conscious of their weakness, that invented these virtues in order to protect themselves against the few, strong

in body, intellect, and character, to whom by natural law the kingdoms of the world belong. We hear the voice of Nietzsche, more than 2,000 years before his birth—the Many Too Many entangling and Fettering the Superman with the fine-spun web of a slave morality.

It is not only in this that we hear the voice of our own time. The following two sayings date from the second half of the fifth century B.C. 'I do not know whether God exists or does not exist, nor what is his nature: there are many obstacles to such knowledge—the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life.' 'Man is the measure of all things.' Huxley invented the word 'agnostic'; but agnosticism was born before the birth of Christ. How profound and far-reaching is that last sentence of Protagoras ! The final criterion is not religion, not traditional morals, not the state or its laws, but the individual man. The accents are those of the twentieth century at its most sceptical. These are the sayings of a philosopher. A phrase even more revolutionary is put by a very conservative and orthodox writer on the lips of a woman in a play written about the same date. . It is best to live at random, as one can.² These words of Jocasta are the very voice of to-day, turning in its agnosticism, its despair of finding a cogent philosophy, away from theory to practice. **εἰκὴ κρᾶτιστον ζῆν, ὅπως δύναιτό**

¹ Protagoras, fr. 4 and 1. ² Sophocles, *O.T.* 979.

TIS. Live and get on as best you can from day to day. This is what educated people were saying in Athens in the time of Plato.

The following extracts from the *Laws* show the views of the fourth-century materialists on the origin of the universe and of human beings and their institutions. Nothing could be more drastic than the way in which they dismiss, as artificial creations without justification in Nature, not only God, morality, and law, but also music, painting, poetry, and all human achievement with the sole exception of the applied sciences. Their 'portentous theory' which, Plato says, 'is widely held to be the last word of wisdom' maintained that fire, earth, air, and water, which 'owe their being not to God, but to Nature and Chance, are the agents, and the absolutely soulless agents, in the production of the earth, sun, moon, and stars. These elements drifted together casually, each in virtue of their several tendencies, and gave birth to the whole heavens and all their contents, and, in due course, to all animals and plants, not by the agency of mind or any god, but by Nature and Chance. Art, the subsequent late-born product of these causes, herself as perishable as her creators, has since given birth to certain toys with little real substance in them, such as the creations of painting, music, and other fellow crafts. The only arts which really produce anything of genuine worth are those which lend their aid to Nature, like

medicine, agriculture, and gymnastic. The art of politics has a little in common with Nature, but is mainly a business of Art, Legislation likewise is altogether an affair not of Nature, but of Art, and what it posits has no reality. The gods have no existence in Nature; they are the creation of Art and of Convention; hence different countries have different gods. As for right, there is absolutely no such thing as a real and natural right; mankind are eternally disputing about rights and altering them, and every change, once made, is from that moment valid. All these views (says Plato) come from men who impress the young as wise—prose-writers and poets, who profess that indefeasible right means whatever a man can carry with the high hand. Hence our epidemics of youthful irreligion; hence the factions created by those who seek on such grounds to attract men to the "really and naturally right life", that is, the life of real domination over others, not of conventional service to them',¹ These words were written in the fourth century B.C. They might have been written to-day, except that few modern materialists would be so trenchant and frank.

Such were the theories which Plato had to meet. The controversies are modern enough: modern too are the theorists themselves. What a portrait

¹ *Laws*, 889, 890 (chiefly in Prof. A. E. Taylor's translation, abbreviated).

gallery the Platonic Dialogues afford; Callicles, the politician and man of action with his reasoned rejection and calm contempt of morality ; Polus and Thrasymachus, different personalities but alike theorists and talkers, *outrés* and audacious in speculation, arrogant in controversy, and no doubt in private life harmless and respectable bourgeois; Polemarchus, equipped with up-to-date catchwords and unaware in how deep waters he is floundering; and, most admirable of all, Plato's elder brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus, Mr. Grey and Mr. Fearless, who expound so admirably the view—which they do not wish to hold but find difficult to avoid—that right and wrong are conventional terms devoid of any foundation in Nature. They belong to a type which Plato has described in words that fit the clever undergraduate of every epoch—' young men of good natural parts who flit over every view which they hear and can draw conclusions from them about the character which a man should possess and the path which he should follow in order to live the best possible life'.¹ Their quiet frankness is really more striking and significant than the strident extravagance of Thrasymachus and the worldly cynicism of Callicles. They are polite, urbane, charming, well-educated—thorough gentlemen as we should say—and how ruthless! Like the youth of to-day they are not cynical, but they are determined

¹ *Republic*, 365.

not to be put off with phrases or dialectic or the well-meant commonplaces of convention.¹ Their views show the kind of thing the younger generation was saying when Socrates was alive. A modern Socrates might find some of the younger generation talking in the same strain.

Very characteristic of his age—and of ours—is an individual who appears in four dialogues of Plato, but is revealed to us independently and more fully by his writings. He was a politician, but much besides ; the author of studies of the constitutions of Athens, Sparta, and Thessaly, of a work on the Nature of Love, of Aphorisms and Conversations and Rhetorical Preludes: a poet too, who wrote tragedy and elegiac verse. If history had told us nothing about him it would have been difficult to reconstruct his character from his writings. In one he praises the simplicity and temperance of Spartan life, and speaks of ⁱHealth, dearest of goddesses to men, and Self-control, that dwells with Religion'. He—or one of the characters in his plays—rejects

¹ Cp. their admirable criticisms of Socrates, which express feelings not confined to Glaucon and Adeimantus, and illustrate incidentally Plato's gift of putting the case against himself. 'It is true, Socrates, that no one can dispute these conclusions. But still, every time that such theories are propounded by you, your hearers feel certain misgivings. . . . As unskilful draught-players are finally hemmed into a corner by the skilful, till they cannot make a move, so your hearers feel themselves at last hemmed in and reduced to silence by your novel form of draughts, played with words instead of counters. But they are not at all the more convinced that the conclusion to which you have driven them is the true one/ *Republic*, 487 (tr. Davies and Vaughan).

the ideals of birth, money, demagogic power, in favour of 'fair fame', and declares: 'Better not to live than to live ill.' A modern conservative might share his dislike of the demagogue and echo his words: 'There is more security in good character than in laws. Character no politician¹ can ever upset: but politicians often can confound and ruin the laws by sophisms.' These sentiments suggest a respectable, somewhat austere, bourgeois. But by the side of them appear decadent aphorisms such as, 'In men the female type is the most beautiful, in women the male', or desperate ones like, 'Nothing is certain except that birth leads to death and that life cannot escape ruin

The spirit of the age is revealed even more clearly in his analysis of the development of human society from days when 'human life was disordered, bestial and subservient to force, when virtue had no reward and wickedness no punishment'. He suggests that men made laws in order to establish the rule of justice, that these were evaded, and then that 'some shrewd and wise men invented the fear of God, so that there might be something of which men were afraid, even in their secret deeds and words and thoughts..., a Being who would hear all that men said and be able to see all their actions, and even detect their unspoken plans for sin'.² The phrases and theories belong to the fifth century B.C.,

¹ Perhaps 'politician' in the bad sense of the word is the nearest equivalent to .

² Fr. 6, 15, 24, 22, 48, 49, 25.

but this cold dissection of the deepest things that men have lived by and cared for is in the manner of to-day, and in the writer we have a familiar type of intellectual, whose ruthless analysis and self-confident tone conceal a mind unharmonized and inconsistent—a floating island, solid to the eye but at the mercy of wind and current. His name was Critias, the son of Callaeschrus, and the dualism which infects his writings appears also in his life. History knows him as one of the Thirty Tyrants who, despairing of democracy and seeing no hope for Athens save through its destruction, like the Renaissance despots or the Bolsheviks and Nazis of a later day, allowed no scruple or pity to deter them from any means necessary to their end. He was, Xenophon says, 'the most deceitful, violent and bloody' of them.¹ Yet his cousin Plato knew a different Critias and places on his lips that superb picture of an ideal society, which Ruskin called 'the last words of the chief wisdom of the heathen'.²

We may recognize some of our contemporaries in Glaucon and Adeimantus and even in Critias. Perhaps we shall recognize others in the dark portrait of what Plato calls the 'democratic man'—the typical character of the time, as Plato thought, the spirit of the age as it embodied itself in a clever,

¹ *Mem.* i. 2. 12. The history of ancient Greece, as of modern Europe, shows that intellectuals and idealists can acquiesce in—and practise—savage tyranny.

² C.W.O. §84.

well-educated man without any great strength of moral fibre. He is the son of a capitalist, brought up in a home where the negative Puritan virtues, which are necessary to successful money-making, still linger on, where the restraints and decencies of life are observed, not from principle, but partly from custom and partly because they pay. The boy grows up and sees through this pseudo-morality, these bourgeois conventions, and discards them. His parents' self-restraint he regards as mere cowardice. He is going to be emancipated. Such a man may fall under the power of a single dominant passion. More probably there will be an equilibrium of appetites established in him, and he will drift, Plato suggests, now into sensual enjoyment, now into literary pleasures, now into politics, now into business, now into athletics. But the ruling principle of his life will be to have no principle, to follow the impulse of the moment.¹ His mind is a moral and intellectual chaos. He is want of principle embodied. Is there nothing of the 'democratic man' in a press which sells daily several million copies of papers that pass from a mannequin parade to the views of Einstein, from Empire Free Trade to the divorce of a film star, from an Education Bill to the betting odds, making no visible distinction between their respective importance ?

¹ *Republic*, 558 f., csp. 561.

We find then in the Greek world of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. what is to be found nowhere else in history, a parallel to our own spiritual state. The contemporaries of Plato suffered from the disease which is attacking ourselves—a break-up of traditional morality and religion, which was temporary, but must have seemed permanent. They suffered from its consequences—a world unable to find its feet, Callicles and Cleon worshipping power and wealth, 'the democratic man' a prey to each passing inclination and desire, Adeimantus and Glaucon puzzled, desiring to believe in 'justice', but finding it difficult. Yet this Greek world saved itself and its civilization for another 700 years. A man arose who grappled with the problem and gave his age a creed by which it could live. Thanks in the first instance to Plato, the break-down was only temporary and Greece found her feet again. He is the parent of the great moral philosophies of Hellenism, its vast influence on the spiritual lives of men. Is it not worth while for us, situated in essentials like Plato, to study closely the medicine which he devised for his age? He was talking to men whose intellectual position fundamentally resembles ours. Nor is there any other epoch in history where men were so modern. In our perplexities it would be useless to interrogate the age of Dante or Luther or Bacon or Voltaire or Darwin. We have got so far beyond them. But Glaucon and Adeiman-

tus are sufficiently like ourselves to be instructive. The ground had been cut from under their feet, as it has been cut from under ours. The things which they had been brought up to believe seemed untrue and they did not know what to put in their place. They could see no basis for morals, and no use for religion except as an anodyne.

Two things are specially instructive in Plato's treatment of the problem. In the first place he raises it in a simple yet complete form. The acute logical Greek mind followed the argument to its conclusion instead of stopping half-way as modern critics are apt to do. Plato saw that the position of morality as a whole was involved. The doubts which Glaucon and his brother put to Socrates are not about a single sphere of it, such as sexual morals, but about all that we mean by goodness. In that they were right. Raise one ghost in this field and you raise legion. The real question is not: Can you justify the traditional view of property or of sexual morals, but, is there justification in Nature for justice, truth, honesty, charity, mercy, pity, self-restraint, or any other category of humanity or virtue? Or are they all fictions of religious or social authority? The question which Plato had to answer was essentially the question of to-day. Only it was put not in a haphazard, inadequate form, but with ruthless and logical completeness. The beginning of the second book of the *Republic* shows how fully Plato

faced it. ' Suppose', says Adeimantus, 'that a man has the choice between two alternatives—the first alternative is to be bad, to defraud and ill-treat men, thereby to acquire wealth, honour, and power, and yet to escape detection and get a reputation for goodness, to be assured through life of happiness and prosperity, and to be able to purchase exemption from any risk of punishment in the next world by gifts for religious purposes out of his superfluous wealth: the second alternative is to be good, but to be misjudged and misconceived, to get the reputation of wickedness and its punishment, to be scourged and crucified with no hope of redress in a future life'.¹ Offered the choice between these alternatives any one, says Adeimantus, would choose the first. Indeed it would be a very embarrassing choice. But if we hesitate for a moment as to our decision, we do not really believe in goodness. We admit that virtue has no absolute value.

That is the first point which is instructive in Plato's treatment of the problem. He raises it in a simple, complete, and decisive way. There is none of the evasiveness of the apologist, no attempt to run away from the difficulties or to pretend that they do not exist. Plato puts without flinching the conclusions of the materialists in their most extreme form and does justice to their case.

¹ *Republic*, 361 f.

The second point worth noticing is his insistence on the need for a clear-cut philosophy, a definite view of life. In that he is very Greek and very un-English. Hellenism in England is for the most part acting on a temperament alien to it, a temperament that dislikes theories, refuses to be driven by logic into uncomfortable or repugnant conclusions, and resembles one of those primitive forms of life which without any apparent mental process adapt themselves instinctively to their environment. Its value to the Anglo-Saxon lies partly in its definiteness of intellectual view, its determination to know where one stands. Its aim is *λόγον διδόναι* 'to explain things': its method, to follow the argument where it leads, *οἱτιν ἐν ὁ λόγος, ὡςπερ πνεῦμα, φέρη*. It is a needed corrective to the national habit of groping our way, relying not on the intelligence but on more or less sensitive antennae. The English type is embodied in Shakespeare and in him is raised to the plane of genius: we admire the generosity, the sanity, the practical instinct, which give a unity, a definite quality to his outlook, but we look in him vainly for what we find in the Greeks or in Dante or in Goethe—clear thought about life, a theory of it, a religion.

The English type is also embodied in the public school. The late Baron von Hugel tells a story of a foreigner, visiting some large English schools, who asked what view of life, what 'general scheme they

aimed at producing in the mind of their boys', and complained that he was answered in substance by all: 'We do not rear prigs here.' This brutal disclaimer is of course only partly true. In a sense the English Public School, more than any educational institution in the world, does implant in its pupils a rule of life. But it is a rule rather than a theory; a habit rather than a philosophy—the result of life in a society governed by customs and conventions, which mould the character unconsciously to their own type. It is Sparta or Rome rather than Athens. No thinking person will condemn such a system. There are epochs in which it may be extremely successful. But there is one epoch to which it is inadequate. It does not meet the needs of an age when the bacillus of criticism is endemic. It is not suited to an age of thought, when beliefs are shifting and traditions are in a flux and the wind blows from many quarters and society has ceased to provide a fixed framework of established and unquestioned ideals to support men in hours of doubt and weakness. Such is our age and in such an age something more than merely habitual virtue is needed. Under the massive cement of habit there must lie, unseen, but holding the building together, the rigid framework of a definite intellectual principle, a theory of life which reinforces the whole. 'Belief, wrote Dr. Glover, 'is the real centre of life, and in spite of all Matthew Arnold said about

conduct, it is belief that is nine-tenths of life and shapes conduct.'

That is a lesson which Plato is never tired of emphasizing. He has no belief in living by instinct or emotion or habit, or in 'the blood, the flesh, being wiser than the intellect'.¹ For him 'the best protector is reason blended with "music", whose indwelling presence through life is the only safeguard of ἀρετή'.² Unsupported by principle, by a reasoned view of life, virtue is insecure. One is rather startled when in the *Republic* myth where the souls choose their new lives on earth, no one comes more fatally to grief than the man whose previous existence had been irreproachable but whose virtue was founded on habit not on principle. Plato goes out of his way expressly to condemn the type. 'Ἐν τεταγμένῃ πολιτείᾳ βεβιωκότα ἔθει ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας ἀρετῆς μετεληφότα'³ are words which might have been written to describe the nice Public School boy. 'He had lived in a well-ordered state and so had acquired a habit of good-conduct without any intellectual basis for it.' Such characters may prosper in a well-ordered state like a public school; but in our own age, as in Plato's, they run great risks when they leave that well-ordered state for the confusion outside

¹ *Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 94.

² *Republic*, 549. 'Music* (μουσική) including literature, music, and art develops the imagination. Reason (λόγος) is the rational element which is trained by the study of mathematics, science, and philosophy.

³ *Ibid.* 619.

it, We should do well to remember Plato's warning against virtues which are only good habits.

But what was the philosophy which gave Plato a firm foundation for conduct? He accepts the fundamental position of the critics. He agrees that a conventional morality, not founded on Nature, is untenable, that we must force our way through to reality and base our system of conduct on Nature. Our task therefore is to ascertain what man by Nature is; to take him, as we might take any natural or artificial object, and determine his qualities, capacities, and uses; we can then see What life is appropriate to his nature. That life will be his natural life, the life which he ought to lead. The question then is, What is human nature? What satisfies it? If it really will find satisfaction in the pleasures of the flesh or the ruthless power of a tyrant, we should choose that life and pursue these pleasures. But Plato's conception of human nature is different. To the critics who urged that morality is νόμος οὐ φύσει, a creation of convention, not of Nature, Plato replies that on the contrary goodness is φύσει οὐ νόμος—natural not conventional. 'Virtue is the fulfilment of our human function.' He [describes human nature by a simile. On the outside men look like human beings, but under their skin three creatures are concealed: a monster with many heads, some wild, some tame—the desires and

passions; a lion—the spirited quality which will fight for food; for a country, for an ideal; and a human being—the rational element.¹ Some people feed the many-headed monster and the lion, and starve the man, leaving him at the mercy of the other two, which bite and struggle and devour each other. But Plato urges us to make the man supreme and see that, helped by the lion, he controls the many-headed beast, nursing and developing its tame heads and checking the wild ones. That, Plato thinks, is the only road to happiness. Following it men become their real selves and therefore find happiness and peace ; any other road, however attractive and easy, takes them away from the true goal of human nature, and brings them in the end to dissatisfaction and unrest. Or—as he himself puts it much more simply and effectively—'Goodness is, so to speak, the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, while evil is its disease, deformity and weakness.'² That is his reply to the dilemma of Glaucon and Adeimantus. His words cannot be meditated too much: they contain the whole doctrine of natural morals.

Perhaps the greatest service of Plato to morals is that he forced his hearers to face the question, What really satisfies man ? and all subsequent

¹ *Republic*, 388.

^a *Republic*, 444 ἀρετὴ μὲν ὅρα ὡς ἰσχυρὸν ὑγιεινὸν τὸ τίς ἐν εἴῃ καὶ πόλλος καὶ εὐφραδία ψυχῆς, κακία δὲ νόσος τε καὶ αἰσχος καὶ ἀποθνήσκειν.

Greek ethical thought might be resolved into a series of answers to it. First Plato, then Aristotle, then Diogenes and the Cynics, then Epicurus, then the Stoics, attempted to define the life which it was natural for man to lead. The age of criticism passed into an age of construction whose creations only fell with the fall of the Roman Empire, and whose underlying philosophy may be called humanism—the doctrine that man's task is to ignore the vanities and passing desires which distract and seduce him, and to seek with an undivided aim what satisfies the fundamental needs of human nature. That philosophy of humanism, first propounded by Plato, is interpreted in varying ways by his successors. But in the essential points all agree. None of them are deceived by the ideals of wealth or power, or fame. All of them are ruled by a directing purpose which saves them from the moral nihilism of the 'democratic man'. All of them accept Plato's distinction between a higher and a lower in human nature. All of them find their goal in a spiritual state. A philosophy with these traits is the sort of philosophy we need.

Greece offers us much more even than it offered to our fathers. It is not only that our generation can understand Hellenism better than any preceding age because our civilization, like Greek civilization, rests on an intellectual basis, but that we are faced with a crisis such as Socrates and Plato- and

their successors faced and surmounted. We, too, know the confusion of a generation which has seen its traditional morality shaken by criticism, and which drifts without purpose or clear aim, at the mercy of the changing currents of fancy or desire. We, too, need that clear voice which made itself heard in the spiritual confusion of the fourth century B.C., neither deifying nor denying material things but assigning them their right position, placing above the ideals of pleasure, wealth, power, technical skill, and scientific knowledge the directing ideal of humanism. The world will always need Hellenism because of Greek literature and art. To-day it needs it for a deeper reason—as a philosophy that can help to give its civilization what it most needs, a soul.

VI

CHRISTIANITY AND HELLENISM

THE essential life of the modern world, its chief creating and animating forces, come from two countries, Palestine and Greece (for convenience I shall group Christianity and Judaism together and not attempt to analyse their differences). Suppose these countries had never been, take away their contributions, and what we mean by Europe would not exist. He who knows Palestine and Greece, knows the germ of four-fifths or more of Western civilization, and has seen its animating and sustaining forces in their simplest and purest form. This chapter attempts to indicate the chief contribution made to our civilization, in points where Hellenism is deficient, by that Judaic-Christian view of life for which no single name exists, but which Matthew Arnold called Hebraism.

There are obvious difficulties in the attempt. The subject is vast. Further, impartial treatment is difficult. 'The eyes of critics, whether in commending or carping, are both on one side, like a turbot's.' There are Hellenists for whom Christianity is exhausted by the figures of a fundamentalist Presbyterian, an Erastian Anglican and a 'supple Jesuit.' There are Christians who stress the weaker and darker sides of the classical world. But the

question is too complicated for such ready reckoning. A philosophy must no doubt be judged by its works ; but we must be sure that they are *its* works. It may be justly blamed, if, carried out to logical conclusions, it leads to bad consequences. But it cannot be justly blamed for the acts of those who misunderstand or misapply it, nor, except in a very limited degree, for its failure to heal and purify the world—any more than medicine is to be blamed because of the imperfections of doctors. Otherwise, every human faith and institution stands condemned before it comes into court. Religion is not to be denounced, because of its quacks, charlatans, and bad practitioners, or because in spite of its existence the world is still sick. Above all, we shall be unfair to any spiritual movement, unless we judge it at its best and are at least as conscious of what it has achieved as of what it has failed to achieve. So in this chapter I shall have in mind the successes and not the failures of Hebraism and of Hellenism, and I shall assume that the one is not to be judged by the Homeric Pantheon,¹ the Corcyrean massacres, the So of Corinth, and the *Graeculus* of Juvenal, nor the other by the Inquisition, the corruptions of the Papacy and the compromises of the Church with the world. Finally—the gravest difficulty of all—

¹ Christian critics often contrast the Olympian deities with Christianity. The real analogy to the Olympians is the Jehovah of the Book of Judges. The analogy to the God of the Prophets or of the New Testament is the *God* of Plato and of the philosophic schools.

to treat Hebraism undogmatically, as the plan of these lectures demands, may seem to extract in advance the kernel from the shell and leave only a husk. What is Judaism without the revelation from Sinai, or Christianity without the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Atonement ? It is something infinitely less than its full self. Yet it is something; and something of which no one will deny the existence, whatever value he attaches to it.

Earlier chapters of this book may have suggested that, if Hellenism is so admirable a view of life, Christianity must have been an unhappy interruption of human progress. Indeed some thinkers have argued that it would have been better for humanity if Greek thought had been left to leaven and purify the pagan world, and if the persecution of Marcus Aurelius had exterminated the Christians and their creed. In that case Stoicism, they believe, would have directed the minds of the ruling classes ; under its influence a republic would have replaced the Empire, slavery have been gradually eliminated, and Europe in the ninth century have found itself morally a little in advance of the stage which it actually reached in the nineteenth.¹

To this ingenious theory there is the practical objection that history took a different course, and

¹ Whittaker, *Apollonius of Tyana*, p. 49, following Renouvier, Uckrome.

that the culture of the rich, intelligent, and puissant Graeco-Roman society proved in fact weaker than the creed which educated Romans regarded as a *prava superstitio* and which in many of its manifestations was inferior to the culture that it destroyed. Christianity obviously had a survival value, and possessed something which the world needed and which Hellenism lacked. But it is true that, superficially at least, modern civilization owes far more to Greece than to Palestine. If Greece had never existed, our world would have been impossible. If Palestine had never existed, if we descended in a straight line from Greece and Rome, if no Jewish or Christian influence had ever touched us, Europe, at least on the surface, might have been not very different from what it is to-day. Cicero, nearly two thousand years ago, described Greece as the mother of civilization—'Athens, the source whence civilization, knowledge, religion, agriculture, justice, and law have sprung and spread into all lands',¹ His phrase, a striking testimony from a Roman, remains true to-day. Greece has given something to our art and much to our architecture. To her we owe all our literary forms, from drama to history, from oratory to the epigram, from the novel to the essay; the origins of our philosophy, of our law and of many of our political institutions and ideas; the

¹ *Pro Flacco*, 62 'Athenienses, unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, iura, leges ortae atque in omnes terras distributae.'

first steps of many of our sciences; and, what is more important, the scientific spirit which has made a rational knowledge of the world possible. There the Greeks are unique. It is an extraordinary fact that, if Greece had never existed, so far as we can see, modern science would never have come into being. In other words, without Greece the modern world would not have existed. One finds in Egypt, Assyria, China, India, some knowledge of astronomy, surveying, medicine. But nowhere except in Greece is there that attitude without which real science is impossible—the passion to know and understand, to find a rational explanation of everything, from the material universe to literary style, from disease to grammar. From that passion for knowledge which Europe learnt from Greece, comes our modern civilization that has transformed the West and has gone out from the West to transform the East. And it is the most characteristic features of the modern world which derive from Greece. This is not a great religious age. The things on which we pride ourselves, of which we have a right to be proud, are our science and all that it has done for us.

My point is that modern Europe is mainly the creation of Greece. Let me put it from another aspect. Open the Bible on any page. In how different a world from our own we find ourselves ! There are of course resemblances. The prophets

are full of what we call 'the social problem', of the relations of rich and poor, of those 'that would swallow up the needy and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn, making the ephah small and the shekel great; that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes and sell the refuse of the wheat ?" The same thing is going on to-day. Human nature has not changed. But this is not specifically modern. There is no age in human history when men have not made the ephah small and the shekel great and bought the poor for silver. But though in the Bible we find much that is applicable to our own day, we do not find there people with the same mental outlook as our own. In Greece we find people who think as we do. Take some stray sentences from Greek thinkers: 'Nothing happens without a cause, but everything for a reason and by necessity.' 'Thought and the freedom which it gives are the end of life.' 'The feeling of wonder marks the true philosopher : it is the only source of philosophy.' These phrases are from Aristotle, Anaxagoras, and Democritus. They might just as well have been uttered by a modern intellectual. Socrates, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle would have been perfectly at home in a university common-room or at a meeting of the British Association. The outward forms of our civilization would

¹ Amos viii. 4 f.

have been strange to them ; its atmosphere, its outlook,, its spirit would have been largely their own. But to Amos, even to, Isaiah or Jeremiah, even to Paul or John, both outward form and inward spirit would have been equally unfamiliar. This is not to say that Socrates or Aristotle are greater than Isaiah, or that we have more to learn from them. I am only pointing out that modern civilization is in a line of direct descent from the former and not from the latter, and that the modern world, though something very like it might have existed apart from the influence of Palestine, is unthinkable without Greece.

The debts which we owe to Greece in literature, art, and science are obvious. We sometimes forget that we owe them things which perhaps come still nearer to our life—moral and political ideals which even to-day it is hard to better. In both one has a wide field from which to draw, and in which selection is difficult. But nothing illustrates better our actual indebtedness to Greece than what was the first, and is still the best, description of the democratic ideal.

' Our constitution is named a democracy, because it is not in the hands of the few but of the many. But our laws secure equal justice for all in their private disputes, and our public opinion welcomes and honours talent in every branch of achievement, not for any sectional reason but on grounds of excellence alone. (Pericles believes in democracy, not in a dictatorship of the proletariat. The poor are to have justice; so are the rich.) As we give free play to all in our

public life, so we carry the same spirit into our daily relations with one another. We have no black looks or angry words for our neighbour if he enjoys himself in his own way. Open and friendly in our private intercourse, in our public acts we keep strictly within the control of law. We acknowledge the restraint of reverence; we are obedient to those in authority, and to the laws, more especially to those which offer protection to the oppressed and those unwritten ordinances whose transgression brings admitted shame.¹

This ideal may not commend itself to the champions of authoritarianism in Russia, Italy, and Germany; but it is democracy as England and America understand it.

I have tried to point out that Greece has given us science and literature, an art, and an architecture, a vision of true democracy, a high moral ideal,² all except religion. But no. Religion is there too, both in its forms and its spirit. Plato's state provides for official religious services on every day in the year.³ And even in the Bible passages like the following cannot be surpassed.

·Evil, Theodorus, can never pass away; for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good. It has no place in heaven, so of necessity it haunts the mortal nature and this earthly sphere. Therefore we ought to escape from earth to heaven as quickly as we can⁵ and to escape is to become like God, as far as is possible; and to become like him is to become holy, just and wise. . . . God is never in

¹ Thucydides ii. 37, § 2 f. ² See c. 2 and 3.

³ Laws, 828.

any way unrighteous—he is perfect righteousness—and those of us who are most righteous are most like him.¹

Apparently not much is left for Palestine, if our material civilization, our intellectual development, much of our art, our literature, our political ideals, our moral philosophy, are Greek in origin; if even in religion Greece offers us a theism so exalted and pure. What remains? Very little, it would appear. Yet such a view would be a profound mistake. Palestine gave to the world a different view of God and of man.

This is not to depreciate the religious ideals which Greece offers or to minimize their greatness. Its philosophers purified the crude and unorganized traditional polytheism into a rational belief in God, and created the natural theology which Christianity used as the substructure of its theological scheme. Yet it is not of religion that one thinks first when one thinks of Hellenism. Hellenism is not primarily a great religious civilization. Religion is not the soul and life bipod of Greece as it is of Palestine. Partly it is that Palestine believed in direct divine revelation and that Greek philosophy did not: that for the latter God wasⁱ The Idea of the Good ·

or 'The First Mover' or 'The Ruling Principle', while for the former he was a person, vividly personal, whose will was directly communicated to lawgivers and prophets and whose nature was revealed

¹ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176.

by His Son taking the form of man and leading a human life on earth. Such belief gave a definiteness and sense of certainty about the Divine, its nature and its purposes which Hellenism never possessed, and which Augustine describes with characteristic psychological insight.

·It is one thing from some wooded height to behold the land of peace, yet find no road thereto, and struggle vainly towards it through pathless wilds, beset by the ambushments of runagates, with their prince, the lion and the dragon : it is another thing to march thitherwards along the high road, built by the care of the heavenly Emperor.¹

In their approach to the problem of life the two civilizations start at opposite ends. Greece starts at the human end. In building up an ethical system Plato begins with human psychology, Aristotle starts with the conceptions of the good prevalent among men. They work from the seen to the unseen. Palestine begins at the opposite end and works from God down to man. Superficially the results appear the same. Though the Greeks start with man they reach God. The chief Greek philosophies are theistic. Even Epicurus admits the existence of gods, though he denies them any part in the government of the world, Plato's ethics begin in psychology but end in religion. But for Plato theism is a deduction from his view of the world, not the prime reality with which he begins.

¹ *Confessions*, vii. 21, § 3 (tr. Bigg).

The Bible has a different attitude. Whereas God is a conclusion to the Greek, to the Hebrew he is the main premise. Hence a difference of emphasis. The real subject of Greek literature is man. God is there, a remote and mysterious presence in the background, but the stage is filled and the audience's eyes are held by a frailer and more familiar figure. *πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει*, begins the famous chorus of Sophocles, which I have already quoted. 'There are many wonderful things, and nothing more wonderful than man.'¹ Certainly the achievements of Hellenic man justify that abrupt outburst which begins with the trick of a Greek girl and passes into the praise and prophecy of human civilization. Man has done so much; the earth is his servant, the winds and the sea obey him. He will do so much more. *ἐπ' οὐδέν ἄπορος ἔρχεται*, 'for every emergency he has a resource'. The one power he cannot subdue is death. The subject of the Bible on the other hand is not man but God, and every page bears witness to what is uppermost in its writers' minds. Sophocles thinks of the earth, and sees at once the plough breaking up its surface for human use; of the sea, and lo ! a Greek boat making its way in windy weather through the turmoil of breaking waves.

Over the waters wan
His storm-vested bark he steers

While the fierce billows break . . .
 And the Earth-mother, first of gods,
 The ageless, the indomitable,
 With his ploughing to and fro
 He wearieth, year by year.¹

The Hebrew also thinks of earth and sea; but at once a figure overshadows them, 'In His hand are all the corners of the earth and the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His and He made it and His hands prepared the dry land.' Everything brings that figure before the Jew's eyes. He sees the heavens and they declare the glory of God; *the* clouds drift overhead—they are the dust of His feet. The intrigues of Egypt and Assyria are not the statecraft of empires, but the means of His judgements; the hostile armies at the gates of Jerusalem are His instruments of punishment.

Palestine then conceived God as a person, formed a clear idea of his character and purposes, and, inevitably, placed religion in the centre of life as the greatest of all interests. This had a speculative and a practical result. Speculatively, it drove the invisible world into the foreground. It filled men with the sense that behind the shows of life there existed an ultimate reality, which must hold the key to their destiny and the clue to right conduct. It insisted that the things which are seen are temporal and that the things which are not seen are eternal. That is the

¹ Ibid. 335 (tr. Whitelaw).

truth which Palestine grasped more tenaciously and testified more insistently than Greece. In a sense she grasps and testifies nothing else. At its worst this conviction led to a narrowness and bigotry from which Hellenism is free; but it redeemed men from any easy, self-contented superficiality in their view of life. Puritanism might close the theatre and pen the human mind into a dreary pietism. But it saved it from the *Sketch* and the *Bystander*. And at its greatest, Hebraism has a sublimity adequate to the mystery in the heart of things and hardly to be found elsewhere. There is justice in Jowett's remark on reading the medieval hymn, *Dies irae*: 'A voice out of the depths of the Middle Ages; we catch from them deeper feelings than we are capable of.'¹ There is justice in Carlyle's complaint that Socrates was 'too much at ease in Zion.' Being 'too much at ease in Zion' is a defect, in a far more aggravated form, of our age, which lives in the visible and external world more entirely than any of its predecessors, has time for little else, and has so far mastered it as to forget that the known is still as nothing in comparison with the unknown and that for all our discoveries and material triumphs Zion remains infinitely mysterious. Palestine prevents men from being too much at ease in Zion, or forgetting that it exists.

The Hebraic conception of God as a person, whose character and will is clearly known, has an

¹ *Life*, ii. 303.

effect not only on men's view of life but on their conduct of it. It leads not only to moral earnestness—there is no want of that in Plato or the Stoics—but to a passion for moral reform, and an ardent determination to achieve it, which are not Greek. Matthew Arnold was right in saying that Hebraism aims at practice rather than theory, at doing rather than knowing, and that its chief ideas were conduct and obedience to law. This is so; but he ignored the reason for it, as a thinker was bound to do who defined God as 'a stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness'. The centre of Judaism was not as Arnold thought, a passion for abstract righteousness, in which the Bible shows no interest. Righteousness attracted the Jew not for its own sake, but as the will of a personal God. The Judaism of Arnold is Judaism with God omitted; and that is not Judaism at all. Apart from God the Jew neither knew faith nor recognized sin. Just because he believed that the will of God was declared and certain, he felt driven to bring it to pass on earth. When that will was known, it seemed intolerable that it should be disobeyed. Isaiah and Paul were not preaching a law man-made and therefore fallible, but the commands of the Maker of the Universe. 'The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy ?'¹ This is the belief that gave a definiteness, conviction, and urgency to

¹ Amos iii. 8.

their message, which no abstract argument could have given, and that made them propagandists as well as preachers. 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.'¹ The extravagance of the metaphor reveals an intensity peculiar to Hebraism.

It is not that the Greeks lacked great moralists. In Socrates they have one of the famous martyrs of mankind. The two greatest handbooks of morals and two of the greatest moral systems are Greek, But a passionate restlessness for moral reform is not Greek. It is not fair to say that their virtue is passive rather than active; yet even about Socrates there is a touch of quietism. He does not agonize for his beliefs like the prophets or the apostles. Plato's vision and desire are broken at moments by questionings, whether men are worth troubling about. 'Human affairs do not deserve to be taken too seriously and yet we must be serious about them; and that is an unhappy state of things.' 'I was going to say that legislation is never the work of men, but that chance and every variety of accident determine our laws. Constitutions are upset and laws overthrown by the violent hand of war or the straits of acute poverty. Revolutions are often forced on by diseases or epidemics or a long and repeated occurrence of bad seasons. With all this before one's eyes, one might feel impelled to say that human history is a matter of chance.' Such

¹ Pi, lxix. 9. ·*Laws*, §03, 709.

doubts never troubled Isaiah or St. Paul; and the clearer the vision, the firmer the hand. The Greeks created the conception of natural morals as of natural religion, and made of both all that men could make. But they never knew the unquestionable imperative of a direct Divine command. A moral law is binding; but it has not the urgency of an authoritative personal will. It is easier to disobey a principle than the Ruler of the universe. That perhaps is why the Greeks have no word for sin and why their attitude to wrongdoing was disapproval, not, as with Jew and Christian, horror. Wrongdoing to the Greek was a *dyapTia*, a miss, an error, a false note struck in the harmony of the universe. But a miss or an error can be corrected, and the false notes are silent when their waves of air ebb away. The prophets felt differently. Jehovah is absolute goodness. A wrong act is a permanent insult to him. God will not forget it, because he cannot. It cannot be undone, because it is. Once done, it remains always to eternity. It cannot be recalled; and no human effort can wash it out or make reparation. , The idea of sin is unpopular today. But clearly evil will vanish more quickly from a world to which wrong-doing is an offence against God than from one which regards it as missing the mark.

This is not the place to discuss which of the views, Greek or Hebrew, is right. We will simply **note**

the antithesis between these two small peoples, so utterly unlike, yet, taken together, the sources of nearly all the worth of western civilization. They approach the problem of life from different ends. Greece starts with man, with the seen. Palestine starts with the unseen, with God. Each method has its merits and dangers. Greece achieves a richness of human life, a full development of human gifts and faculties, such as we do not find in Palestine. Starting with unaided human nature, it makes of it the best that can be made, developing its faculties and instincts, till the bare rugged trunk of primitive man blossoms in the many-coloured flowers of art, literature, science and thought, and we have a human being that justifies and illustrates Hamlet's exclamation, 'What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals I'

Most men would prefer to have been Greeks of the age of Pericles, rather than Jews in the prosperous days of their monarchy or under the Hasmoneans. Certainly we would find Hellas a world more like our own. We may think that it is all which human nature demands or is entitled to. Or we may think it incomplete without Palestine, with its intense and continual sense of an unseen Reality behind the

shows of things, and with its perception of that Reality as a personal God, Creator, King, Father, and Judge, who, through men as his instruments, brings to pass on earth and in time a righteous will.

Palestine also gave the world a different view of man as well as of God. On the surface this might seem unneeded. There are few achievements open to humanity which Greece does not allow for, encourage, and inspire. It has room for the athlete, the soldier, the politician no less than the philosopher, the artist, the man of science. *Quidquidagunt homines*, all the activities of man, are written in the pages of Hellenism, and nothing that is human is alien from it. Each faculty and occupation has its ἀρετή, and all ἀρεταί are in their due place and proportion good. Yet Hellenism has its gaps.

The man it admires is the complete man, perfectly fulfilling human nature, using all its faculties, achieving all its ἀρεταί, exercising the highest powers of the soul. 'The good for man', Aristotle says, 'is a spiritual activity, following ἀρετή and if there is more than one ἀρετή, following the best and most complete.'¹ This ideal satisfies both the intelligence and the imagination. But if it is to be realized, several conditions must be fulfilled. 'We must add', Aristotle continues, 'in a complete life. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does

¹ *Nic. Ethics*, I 7, § 15.

one day: and one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.' Nor is this all. Evidently it needs external goods as well; for it is impossible or not easy to do what is noble unless furnished with external means. There are many things that can only be done through the instrumentality of friends or wealth or political power; and there are some things, such as good birth, good looks and good children (eOracyfa), the lack of which take the lustre from happiness.¹ Aristotle then proceeds to say that a man who is extremely ugly or low-born or childless 'is not likely to be very happy'; still less one who has bad children or bad friends, or who has lost good ones. This list of accessories is formidable, and it is depressing to reflect how few human beings, on such a view of things, can be fully happy. Ill health, early death, childlessness, unsatisfactory children, low birth, poverty or any one of these debar men, not only from being happy in our sense of the word, but from achieving that good which is the aim of life. The earthly paradise is reserved for the fortunate and well-to-do. The vast majority of men can never enter it.

But that is not all. Happiness lies in the perfection of the highest part of man. Therefore it depends not on wealth, nor on beauty or any physical endowment, but on the excellence of the reason. It is, in

¹ Ibid. 18, § 15 f.

Aristotle's words 'a spiritual activity following the best and most complete *ἀρετή*'. But the best *ἀρετή* is that of the rational part of man. The reason, to Aristotle, is the noblest thing in him. Here is another bar to the winning of happiness, a further impediment to the attainment of the good for man. If it cannot be achieved without high intelligence the greater part of mankind are excluded from the highest good.

It may be said that the 'reason' is much more than what we mean by the intellect. That of course is true. It may also be said that too much stress has here been laid on the views of Aristotle. But Aristotle's insistence that the 'reason' is the noblest thing in man is characteristic of Greek thought and the logical development of it. The doctrine appears in its early stages and controls it throughout.¹ Plato is only repeating what Heraclitus and Anaxagoras had said already when he urges that Reason (*Νοῦς*) is, or should be, supreme. To Socrates goodness depends on knowledge. The Stoics hold that the essential Nature of man lies in his Reason, and that goodness consists in obeying the Reason. Even practical philosophers like the Cynics are at bottom intellectualists. 'Wisdom', said Antisthenes, 'is the surest castle. It is neither betrayed nor demolished. We must fortify ourselves in the impregnable reasonings of the individual mind.' It is not surprising that the mind, taking that word in its widest

¹ See p. 58.

sense, should seem the noblest, as it is the characteristic, possession of man. But if it is so, there are large classes of men who are born incapable of 'happiness'. If the highest thing in human nature is the reason, still more if leisure and private means (to say nothing of the other accessories which Aristotle demands) are necessary to its development and exercise, the majority of men are excluded from achieving the end for which they are born. What meaning can Hellenism have for the ordinary worker in factory or farm? How many inhabitants of our big cities could understand its ideals, or, if they understood, could achieve them? Happiness is the privilege of a small *elite*, a tiny fraction of mankind.

In part this difficulty was met by the Stoics. Unlike Aristotle, they held that 'happiness' had nothing to do with material goods or external circumstances; that it was a condition of the soul, independent of all outside things. 'Good', they maintained, 'consists in the virtues, wisdom, righteousness, courage, temperance, & c, and evil in their opposites, unwisdom, unrighteousness, & c; life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, fame, good birth, and the opposites of these, death, illness, labour, ugliness, weakness, poverty, disrepute and low-birth, are neutral and immaterial.'¹ On this view the good for man is open to a far larger circle than Aristotle would allow. It is a purely spiritual thing, and

¹ Diog. Laert. vii. 112.

neither poverty, nor ill health, nor any material circumstance can prevent a man from possessing it. But another bar remains. Even the Stoics did not escape intellectualism. Wisdom heads the list of their virtues. The reason is the Ruling Principle (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) in man. *Sapiens*, 'the wise man', is the habitual description of the Stoic. It is by the use of the intelligence that man becomes master of his fate. This is no creed for the ignorant and humble

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

It was Christianity that made the masses something more than 'supers' on the stage of life,¹ by insisting that the highest virtue in man was love. Plato had subordinated power, money, and pleasure to the reason. But St. Paul took a step farther. To the quality which he calls love he subordinates the reason itself; the life of the mind, though it is neither disregarded nor disowned, becomes a secondary thing. 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing. . . , Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall

¹ Mcnander (fr. 165) uses this very metaphor to describe them. After speaking of the silent members in a chorus he adds ; ⁴ The poor fill a spite. Those who have livelihood live (χρόνον κομίζουσι, ζῶσι δ' οἱ ἄνθρωποι βίος).

fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.'¹ This is a new humanism, a new conception of the supreme ἀρετή. Further, this ἀρετή, love, is within the reach of every human being. The philosopher and artist may achieve it; but so may the illiterate and unintelligent. On the Christian view the best thing in life, the highest thing in man, can be possessed and enjoyed by the most obscure, insignificant, and humble of mankind. We are too accustomed to this idea to be surprised by it; but without the life of Christ it would have seemed fantastic. There is no sign of such a notion in Greek thought, which *more suo* follows Nature, 'listening to her'; and Nature is a confirmed aristocrat. The word democracy is not found in her vocabulary. The children she loves and favours are her finest offspring, the men and women born with a force of intelligence and personality that raises them above the common lot and gives the kingdoms of this world into their hands. Not indeed that she has much belief in the aristocracy of birth, or any belief in the aristocracy of wealth. Those aristocracies are not hers. They are, as the Greeks would have said, νόμος οὐ φύσει, the products of Convention, not of Nature. The philosophers discard both (and so far prepare the world for democracy). Plato, a member of one of the noblest Athenian families, dismisses belief in high

¹ x Corinthians xiii. 2, 8.

birth, almost too contemptuously, as due to 'an incapacity for arithmetic', an inability to count the number of one's ancestors and to realize that they include 'rich and poor, princes and slaves'. But, while indifferent to the aristocracy of birth, Plato and Aristotle accept the aristocracy of natural endowment, and hold that men rank according to their capacity to lead the life of the reason. That appeared to be the obvious teaching of nature, and, like true Greeks, they accepted it. To them, Shakespeare would have seemed, as a man, on a far higher level than Pembroke or Southampton, Handel than his royal patron, Faraday and Darwin than any aristocrat of their day. They would have thought it inconceivable that all alike, poet and thinker and patron, together with the meanest Warwickshire peasant, were on an equality in the greatest things and all capable of the highest ἀρετή. Most of the Beatitudes would have been meaningless to them. They do not belong to the doctrine of Nature, which Hellenism followed. And 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him'.²

Thus while Greece is the mother of political democracy, Christianity brought spiritual democracy into the world. It gave the masses a spiritual life of their own, in which they are on an equality with the rich and the wise. The word Hellenism suggests

¹ *Theaetetus*, 175.

²

1 Corinthians ii. 14.

Homer and the great dramatists, Pericles and Thucydides, Ionian thought; the Academy, the Lyceum, the Stoa, the Museum of Alexandria, are the true *foci* of the Greek achievement. The Christian churches have their equivalents to these; but the Poverelli or the Poor Clares are closer to its heart than Gregory or Calvin, and the Catacombs or the slums have been more characteristic centres of its real life than the Vatican or the Councils of the Church. This indicates a changed emphasis, a humanism other than that of Greece, a different view of man. In making Love the supreme ἀρετή of man Christianity substitutes a democratic spiritual ideal for one which was aristocratic. Thereby it both reached the many whom Hellenism had left in the cold, and enriched and completed the life which Hellenism had given to the few.

' There can be no doubt what elements in the (Christian) record have evoked a response from all that is best in human nature. The Mother, the Child, and the bare manger ; the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love and sympathy: the suffering, the agony, the tender words as life ebbed, the final despair : and the whole with the authority of supreme victory... . Can there be any doubt that the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act, of that which Plato divined in theory ?¹

If Professor Whitehead had written 'that which Plato failed to divine in theory', his statement would have been absolutely correct.

¹ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 214.

According to Christianity the highest life ever lived on earth was one of which suffering and love were outstanding marks. This led to a new view of the problem of suffering. The Greeks had felt acutely the tragedy of ill health, bereavement, and death; the worth and brilliance of their life made its transitoriness more bitter. 'The more a man possesses all " virtue " and the happier (~~εὐδαιμονότερος~~) he is, the more painful death will be to him: for life is most worth living for such a man, and he will lose the greatest blessings, and he knows it; and that is painful.'¹

The earlier age attempted no answer to the problem. It recognized the shadows of life with characteristic candour, yet without becoming bitter or cynical or unnerved, and without losing the capacity to live life to the full. The heroic literature is full of passages like the following. ' As are the generations of leaves, such are those of men. The wind scatters them on the ground, and the forest buds and puts forth more when the spring season comes. So of the generations of men one puts forth and another ceases.' ' Things of a day, what is a man ? what is he not ? Man is a dream of a shadow,'

' O sad vanity

Of human fortunes! Their best happiness

Faint as a pencilled shadow ' once unhappy—

Dashed with a wet sponge at a sweep clean out!'

¹ Aristotle, *Ethics*, iii 9. 4.

² Homer, *Iliad*, 6. 146 ; Pindar, *Pyth*, 8. 95; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1326 (tr. Headlam).

There is no comfort or compensation here; only endurance. 'A man knows it must be so, and submits.'¹ And something more than endurance. Sarpedon before the fight in which he falls says to his friend, 'If, once escaped from this battle, we were for ever to be ageless and immortal, I would not myself fight in the foremost ranks nor would I send thee into war where men win renown. But, as it is,—since ten thousand fates of death every-way beset us, and no mortal may escape or avoid them—let us go forward, whether we shall make other men glorious or they us.'² The logic seems queer. We might expect the epicurean conclusion, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'; or the prudential conclusion, 'As life is short, why risk it needlessly?' Instead we have a different reasoning, the reply of the Heroic Age to the challenge of life: 'Time is short for the achievement of *ἀρετή*; we must not waste what time we have. Just because we are not immortal, because we must die—let us go.' So too Pindar's hero reasons, faced with a task in which thirteen men had fallen before him: 'Since we must die, why should a man sit idly in the dark, nursing an obscure old age, without part in noble deeds? Not so; I will face this struggle.'³ This is the spirit of the heroic age. But it is a defiance rather than an answer. The problem and its bitterness remain.

¹ Dr. Johnson on death. *Life* (ed. Hill), ii. 106. ² *Iliad*, Xii. 322. ³ *Ol.* 18. 2.

The later philosophic schools attempted an answer. 'The good for man', the Stoics argued, 'is a spiritual good. It consists in willing and acting rightly. This power no one can take from us. It is untouched by suffering, ill health and earthly failure, and independent of death.' But if Stoicism can arm us against these evils, it breaks down in the face of bereavement. True, the Stoics had their shield even against the loss of friends and family. Epictetus counsels men to secure themselves by reflections such as these. 'It is silly to want your children and your wife and your friends to live for ever, for that means that you want what is not in your control to be in your control, what is not yours to be yours.' 'You must remind yourself that you love a mortal, and that nothing you love is your very own. It is given you for the moment, not for ever. . . . So whisper to yourself as you kiss your child, "To-morrow you will die": and to your friend, "To-morrow you or I shall go away, and we shall see one another no more".'¹ The words show how cold, if magnificent, is the iceberg of egoism on which the Stoic isolates himself in the company of virtue. He secures himself against bereavement, but only at the price of becoming inhuman.

Unlike Stoicism, Christianity did not profess that men could escape suffering. It refused all Epicureanism—since man cannot find his deepest by

¹ *Discourses* 3. 24. *Ench.* 13 (tr. Matheson).

fleeing from pain and suffering, and by seeking pleasure and pleasures, however dainty and refined. And it refused all Stoicism—since pain, suffering, evil are not fancies and prejudices, but real, very real; and since man's greatest action and disposition is not self-sufficingness or aloofness, but self-donation and love'. It insisted on the fact of suffering. According to it the highest life lived on earth was one which had a full share of physical and mental agony. 'It pointed to Jesus with the terror of death upon Him in Gethsemane; with a cry of desolation upon the Cross on Calvary.' And yet 'in spite of all such material for despair, the final note of Christianity is one of trust, of love, of transcendent joy'; and that, not on paper only, but in the actual lives of men and women. Christianity achieved this not by any theory of its own about suffering, 'but simply by exhibiting a Life and lives—the Life of the Crucified, and lives which continually re-live, in their endless various lesser degrees and ways, such a combination of gain in giving and of joy in suffering'. Its power came from the conception of a suffering God, which was 'to the Greeks foolishness'. It is possible to agree here with the Greeks, and to hold that truth entitles men to no better armour against suffering than the reasonings of Stoicism or the defiance of the Heroic Age. But

¹ I have taken the ideas and to a large extent the words of the following passage from von Hugel, *Essays and Addresses* (1st series), 109 f.

undoubtedly Christianity has done what Hellenism failed to do: it has made suffering appear as part of the texture of life and not merely as a destructive and purposeless rent in its fabric.

Greece found the world without science, without political thought, with crude religious beliefs, and with a life which at its worst was brutish, at its best utterly inadequate to the reach and capacity of human nature. When her work was done, the *idees mires* of modern civilization had been born. The scientific spirit had been created and set to work in every field of nature and of human activity. Science, philosophy, literature, art, politics were in being, and an ideal of human life and nature had been conceived, which, in its own kind, is still unsurpassed.

There are three possible views of the relation of Christianity to this achievement. At one extreme is the view taken by some Christian apologists in the bitterness of their struggle with paganism, that Christianity superseded and annulled Hellenism. This view is untenable. To go back on Greece would be to cut the main nerve of modern civilization, to attenuate and impoverish life, and to leave man shrunk from his full dimension, with some of his noblest capacities unused. Its results may be divined from the extravagances of ascetism and from 'the largely dreary and unlovely, narrow and unjust monotony' of certain forms of Puritanism.

At the other extreme is the view that the true line of world progress lies through Greece: that Christianity is a deviation from it, that the prospects which it opens up, though noble and beautiful, are only a mirage, and that we must return to a road, which though rough and toilsome is based on the solid rock, and, if followed faithfully and persistently, will lead not indeed to a heavenly city but to heights far beyond our present reach. If we accept this view, the lines in which Lucretius describes the work of a Greek scientist indicate the range of the human spirit and its limits.

*Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit et extra
Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
Atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,
Unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,
Quid nequeat.*¹

Between these two views lies a third—that Christianity is neither a cancellation of nor a declension from Hellenism but a development and completion of it; that it enlarged the Greek conception of man, defined more fully the idea of God, and emphasized more justly the place of religion in life. This has been the view of the Church. So, quite naturally, its Doctors adopted the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle to provide the basis of natural religion for their

¹ 'So his soul's living force gained the day; on he passed far beyond the flaming walls of the world and traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe whence he returns a victor to tell us what can, what cannot come into being,' i. 72 (on Epicurus) (tr. Munro).

theology of revelation. So Augustine, starting from the *Hortensius* of Cicero and the *Libri Platonici* went on from Plato to Christ, finding in Greek a road that took him far on his journey yet left him short of a permanent habitation for the human spirit.

