

Interpretation

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- Inquiries: Patricia D'Allura, Assistant to the Editor,
INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.
11367-0904,

On Ancients and Moderns

JOSEPH CROPSEY

The University of Chicago

To speak of ancients and moderns is inevitably to invoke history: there was an ancient epoch and there is a modern epoch. Time has passed, by which we are more than likely to mean that *a* time has passed. To speak of ancients and moderns without further clarification is also to leave in doubt whether the question concerns the ways of life of ancient people and modern people (what it was like to belong to the generality of mankind “then” as distinguished from now) or whether the determining question is what appears to be a simply scholarly one: ancient thought set beside modern thought. Finally, it has been true for centuries that merely to say the words “ancients and moderns” is to summon the image of a quarrel. One’s first tendency is to regard the existence of the quarrel as self-evident. Upon slight reflection one tends to dismiss the “quarrel” as an obvious anachronism and thus a self-evident impossibility: how can there be a quarrel between parties only one of whom is alive to participate in the contest? It would be more precise to speak simply of the rejection of the ancients by the moderns. Upon further reflection it appears that there is indeed a way in which the quarrel might exist and be of utmost seriousness, namely, if the moderns rejected the understandings of the ancients on subjects that the ancients knew to be problematic and which they themselves had already debated. In such a case, the moderns would appear as late entrants in a debate or quarrel the issues in which had been defined by the ancients. In any event, it would be unwise to prejudge the extent of the moderns’ rejection of (quarrel with, if necessary) the ancient wisdoms. I believe that the juxtaposition of ancients and moderns will reveal, not surprisingly, such a considerable agreement regarding the identity of the highest questions that the observer of the spectacle will be convinced that there is such a thing as philosophy—not only philosophies or “western” philosophy or periodized philosophies but the apparently timeless contemplation of the timeless. This inference of an enormous homogeneity will have to be extracted from a complex heterogeneity, typified but far from exhausted by the disjunction implicit in the distinction Socratic-preSocratic. If the quarrel between ancients and moderns can be in some way composed by appeal to “philosophy,” can the disjunction between the thought of Socrates and his predecessors be immune to the same considerations of com-

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position? I will try to show that it is not, without in any way depreciating the great differences between the understandings of the modern philosophers and the ancient, nor between those of the preSocratics and of the preeminent classics. Further, I will attempt to relate those differences in thought to the differences in the conditions of life, as well as we can envision them, between the multitude of denizens of antiquity and modernity.

It must be obvious that the foregoing is a grievously incomplete statement of how the account stands between antiquity and modernity. Certainly there is an antiquity that is not Greek, as we would remember if we stopped to remind ourselves of what exactly the moderns passed under review when they examined their moral and intellectual patrimony and “rejected antiquity.” Fully one-half of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* is exegetical or ostensibly exegetical. Descartes addressed the doctors of the Sorbonne on questions belonging to their province of theology. Spinoza could not enter on moral and political philosophy without traversing the same difficult territory. Locke was noticed with concern by clerical contemporaries. Rousseau proposed a civil religion that had to diverge from the scriptural. The list could be extended. We must conclude that our understanding of modernity could be corrupted from the outset by a massive misunderstanding of the “antiquity” that modernity rejected; and the distortion of “antiquity” as if it comprehended only its rational or only its revealed element would be precisely the misunderstanding that could produce that corruption.

We are now in a position to set out our schema of inquiry. The Platonic/Socratic philosophy is regarded as marking an epoch, presenting the image of profane antiquity as consisting of a darkling primordial episode and an enlightening reformation. The advent of scriptural dispensations presents a more complicated version of the same general paradigm: there was a benighted primordial conception of the divine, displaced by the enlightening reformation that revealed the absolute unity of the god that cannot be represented in any visible form. To this illumination was added a testimony that includes the teaching, “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God,” a thought that resonates astoundingly with the declarations of ancient pagans of the age before Socrates. I will argue that the manifold that we so imprecisely call “antiquity,” when our intention is to juxtapose antiquity and modernity, had as its common purpose to explain the whole, meaning by “explain” to find the First within it and to learn the genus of the First: whether it is irreducible corporeal substance or the intelligible that in some accessible or inaccessible way inhabits the whole as its innermost truth or being. And further, I will argue for the presence in the minds of the thinkers in every age, of the everlasting wonder about how the human being lives in a cosmos whose innermost truth is the truth that man’s utmost efforts, unaided or assisted, bring to light: do we dwell in a world that is to us as our father’s house, or is the whole an immeasurable ocean of riches and afflictions that are assigned to us

by the blind and deaf one who gives and takes away according to our aptitude rather than our righteousness?

We begin our tour of antiquity with a glance at the archaic men whose preoccupation with the First expressed itself in theogony and cosmogony. It is of less concern to us that some of them located the First in night and others in air or some other particular irreducible than that they personified that First by giving it a name and by deeming it divine. Should that ancient act on the part of the poets and the shadowy Orphics move us to speculate whether it belongs to humanity to regard the First as defining what deserves to be called god? But the First is also the irreducible, what cannot be described by reference to anything else that is "more primary." That irreducible may be the "Highest," that from which all things flow; but irreducible itself evokes also the Lowest, the out-of-which all things are composed. In contemplating the minds of those archaic men, we have the singular opportunity to observe human beings at the work of making their god or gods, which is only to say manifesting their understanding of what it is that deserves the name of god, or deploying their imagination, that faculty for reconstructing experience, to the same end. The quest for the absolutely primary is apparently the theoetetic deed, the quest for what deserves to be god, a quest that seems inseparable from the essence of the human condition. It will surely be found among the doings of such moderns as Descartes and Spinoza, to take two preeminent examples. What is by no means certain is that all those who are in pursuit of the primary know or think themselves to be in quest of what deserves to be called god. Perhaps the divine is primary; but is the primary divine? We receive an early intimation of a difference between antiquity and modernity when we notice that our contemporaries have been schooled to detach the search for the first from a search for the highest. If the preSocratics did nothing else for us, they would have put us in their debt for compelling us to wonder whether the endeavor to penetrate our natural surrounding directs us necessarily to seek a "divine" that includes an excess beyond the "primary" or whether the "primary," whatever it proves to be, can have nothing added to it and is "divine," if the term must be used, simply and precisely because there is nothing that can be added to it: not willing, not hearing, not speaking, and above all not caring.

Homer and Hesiod and the other remote ancients indeed sought to explain to themselves their natural environment, inquiring into its Primal, whether Night or Chaos (perhaps meaning "chasmic," as in the division of the waters above from the waters beneath) or something else, with which we need not be concerned any further than to note that they put their minds to the First of all. It is obvious that they thought not only of the absolute Before but also of the absolute Thereafter. We are told about the teaching of the archaic figure, Musaeus, to the effect that the just will revel forever in drunken gluttony while the wicked will be condemned to perpetual fruitless toil or worse. From all this we

know a great deal about the wisdom of preSocratic antiquity. It encompassed the First, the divine, the irreducible, the just, and the life of the soul in a dimension of the whole that is not part of our natural experience: they found it either impossible or inadvisable to explain their natural experience wholly within their experience. Their intellectual effort might be characterized as a seeking for a truth, that is to say an intelligible, the necessity of whose existence became plausible to them within a world of experience whose character it is to point "beyond" to experience that could not be had within this world of nature. In brief, they "knew" of transempirical truth, and they "knew," by way of their "knowledge" of the immortal soul, that the human being lived in a universe in which cognizance was taken of the difference between good and evil as practiced on earth. When we say that they "knew" of these things, we are speaking somewhat incautiously, for we do not know how far the sayers of these things believed them and how far they uttered them for merely practical reasons. Soon we will be in a position to make a plausible judgment on this question, at least with respect to some of Socrates' predecessors. To all of this should be added the insight attributed to the Orphic ancients that the whole is pervaded by Necessity and Inevitability (*ananke, adrasteia*), which is at the very least consistent with the notion, indispensable to any possible understanding, that the whole is a scene of ineluctable cause and effect.

As we continue to try to define "Antiquity" for ourselves, we pass from the dim region of the archaic poets into the area populated by the writers known to us through the fragments and reports of their work preserved by commentators and doxographers. We encounter Anaximander immediately. His contributions to cartography do not concern us, but his physics does intensely. He is reported (Diels-Kranz 12A1, after Diogenes Laertius II1) to have discovered that the most underlying or irreducible is not any of the hitherto named elements such as air and water but rather something called the Infinite, Indefinite, or Undefined (*apeiron*), that which is presumably "more primary" than anything to which a form or a distinctness from anything else could be attributed. There is the primal substance, there is eternal motion, and there is a most pregnant doctrine of coming into being and passing away. According to Anaximander (Diels-Kranz 12A9 after Simplicius, with special reference to the status of elements), each thing that comes into being does so through the destruction of something else, and for this annihilation each new thing must eventually pay with its own dissolution in order to make way for another entity burdened by its birth with a debt that it can repay only with its death. Like all things, we arise from the dust to which we must return. This is what comes to sight as the justice of the cosmic order. Anaximander could serve as a type of the natural philosopher in that his paradigm of justice encompasses a scheme of punishment that is complete within the limits of the natural world alone, requiring no reference to a state of the immortal soul in a world hereafter. His conception, as it is known to us, is asymmetrical, taking cognizance of offense and punish-

ment but not of goodness and reward. In any case, Anaximander makes it clear that a doctrine of universal flux not only can but may easily be infused with a moral concept, such as that justice means equal and exact “paying back,” and especially the paying back of being for being, life for life, in a natural setting of endless becoming, preservation and destruction. This, the law of retaliation, might even be called the law of nature. For future reference, we may note here the rejection by Socrates, early in the *Republic*, of the proposed definition of justice as “paying back.” Would it be fanciful to invoke another ancient rejection of the law of retaliation, the one that sought to replace “an eye for an eye” with “turn the other cheek,” as we struggle to define the “antiquity” that “modernity” confronted? Whatever may be problematic about it as a definition of justice, Anaximander’s Rule has the merit of identifying an unchanging that is deeper than the transient palpable and that embodies universal right.

Among the predecessors of Socrates, the preParmenidean Eleatic Xenophanes is one who commands a certain attention. Now looked at askance as a theologian, and suspected as a poet, he denounced the manufacture of gods in the image of man, recoiled from the baseness of deities so coarsely generated, and insisted that god is one, for all is one and one is god. In his *Metaphysics* (986b21),¹ Aristotle says of Xenophanes that he made nothing clear (*outhen diesaphenisen*). Possessing so little of Xenophanes’ writing, we are inclined to try to understand rather than to judge of the justice of Aristotle’s severe criticism: on its face, it seems to mean that Xenophanes simply presented his insights as wisdoms, unsupported by demonstrations, as a poet or myth-maker would. Trusting Aristotle in this, we nevertheless retain Xenophanes in our regard for his vision of a one divine that is altogether different from and higher than everything in the empirical manifold. Clearly present to his mind is the notion that will find expression in all the subsequent ages, that is part of Platonic Socratism, and that for all we know was anticipated by his own predecessors, namely, that the popular religion is a form of blasphemy. Heraclitus will give reason to think that the popular religion *must* be a form of blasphemy.

Heraclitus, like many of his age, saw all things as in flux and saw the flux equally as itself supervened by what was not in flux, namely be what he called *logos*: “Harkening not to me but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree that all things are one” (Diels-Kranz Fragment 50. *Ouk emou alla tou logou akousantas homologein sophon estin hen panta einai*, after Hippolytus). The one that is all things is called god by Heraclitus: “God is day night winter summer war peace . . .” (Diels-Kranz Fragment 67) in an apparent annihilation of contradiction that is known to have aroused Aristotle and that we might be inclined to see as a viewing of all things under the species of eternity. Heraclitus had the reputation in antiquity of being a rebarbative eccentric—a caustic, riddling recluse whose misanthropic rejection of mankind was a legend in his own time. What is there about his understanding that could have led to such a violent disenchantment with and withdrawal from the social and political existence of man?

The most general answer is that he had learned to mistrust and presumably then to despise the judgment of men, who were on the whole incapable of seeing into the truth of all things; for “the nature of things is wont to conceal itself” (Diels-Kranz Fragment 123 *physis kryptesthai philei*, after Themistius) and mankind is disposed to ignore the universal in favor of the particular and each to judge according to his own dim lights. One of the most striking sentences reported of him runs, “To” (or perhaps better, “In”) god, all things are beautiful, good, and just but men take some to be unjust and some just” (Diels-Kranz Fragment 102, after Porphyry). Heraclitus may not have been the first to be struck by the curious fact that the *logos* of the whole is absolutely pervasive yet mankind, immersed in and existing by that truth, is largely impervious to it. As he perceived the *logos* of god the all-comprehending, he presented an image so forbidding and so paradoxical that it is not to be wondered at that the mankind he hoped to enlighten spurned him and thus earned his reciprocated rejection. For he taught that war is universal and justice is conflict, and that all things come about by conflict and necessity (Diels-Kranz Fragment 80 after Origen/Celsius), thus harking back to Anaximander’s doctrine that each owes its being to the death of something else, and justice is achieved through the ceaseless exchange of death for life. Heraclitus’s world is without the consolation of a knowing god: “Neither any gods nor men made this cosmos, for it was always and always will be—everliving fire kindling in measure and quenching in measure” (Diels-Kranz Fragment 30 after Clement). Heraclitus’s vision was of a whole that is first in being and divine by virtue of its utter totality. All things within it came to be and remain in existence by and through a tension, call it conflict or “war,” that produced a world rather than a chaos because a power supervened over the contradictions and made them fruitful. That power was called *Logos*. It should equally well be called measure or proportion, *Metra*. The two Greek words are rendered kin through their common reference to reckoning. The innermost truth of the whole is to be sought and found in the equilibrium of pressures that imposes limits on the capacity of each striving thing to overpower the resistance to its expansion. Within the whole, all things are commensurate, thus *metra* and *logos* can ordain a cosmos. In this understanding Empedocles too will concur, envisioning a *logos* that is the proportion that reconciles inescapable Love and Strife, the two that are as basic to the world as the four elements. The preSocratic thinkers were of course not naive reductionists who left no room in the cosmos for dual or other manifolds that cannot be transcended.

We see dimly how Heraclitus stands in relation to Socrates: Heraclitus recognized well that there is philosophy and there is the ordinary understanding of men, and because the generality would not and could not be led up to the light, he renounced their society and their way of life and speech, bitterly and intemperately. He was the immoderate priest of measure, who saw no limit to the hegemony of commensurability in the cosmos and who at the same time abused

the political or ordinary condition of man because the sacred *logos* was neglected within it. He does not seem to have considered that the recalcitrant ignorance of men, which is at the root of his esotericism (only to them that have shall be given), is an aspect of the *logos* of his one god. What political conclusion he drew from all this is faintly indicated to us in his dictum, "The people must fight for the law (*nomos*) as for the city wall" (Diels-Kranz Fragment 44 after Diogenes Laertius II ix 2). He sounds like one of the early discoverers of the wisdom of Hobbes, those men who did not trust the intervention of nature to provide the pattern of a good human life but who regarded the bulkhead of law or convention as the defensive wall that man must draw about himself in a world in which the natural rule is the simple exchange of life for life. Heraclitus may be thought to have seen the respectable face of conventionalism.

As for Socrates, we see him standing by without expressing objections while Timaeus unfolded a universal scheme in which proportion does indeed constitute the Good, but in a cosmos at whose heart lie entities like *pi* and the inescapable square roots of two and three, the spectral reminders of the irrational in the core of the whole. Socrates' withdrawal from the political mankind that withdrew from him was itself measured: ironical, and without the disenchantment that cannot arise except as the epilogue to an illusion. His vast concessions to the indispensability of political contrivances, institutions that not only do not flow from nature but violate it, are brought forth with pious reverence for *physis*, much as Aristotle would do in proclaiming the city to be a natural growth while acknowledging that the actual cities are more or less monstrous deviants. Socrates appears to have found a way to hold the balance between the conflicting elements of partial truth and thus to have given the world its first example of high philosophy. Who is to say how accurately the difference between Heraclitus and Socrates is measured by so petty a quantity as their respective reputations for freakish eccentricity, which is the popular judgment on an eminence's moderation? In any event, one may decently guess that Heraclitus deserves a place of honor among the preSocratics who stirred the issues that became Socrates' concern.

We should take some notice of Pythagoras, not so much because of his renowned confidence in the mathematical reason of the whole as because of his vision of the relation between the wise and the unenlightened and between philosophy and kingship, subjects whose bearing on the status of Socratism is obvious. Pythagoras, known to us only by report, was the hegemon of a full-fledged cult complete with ranks of initiation into the mysteries, with rules of strictest secrecy, and with tenets that, when perceived in their epigrammatic nakedness, astound with their crankiness. For example: "Stir not the fire with iron;" "Putting on your shoes, start with the right foot; washing your feet, with the left;" "Never step over a cross-bar;" "Do not sit on a quart measure;" "Spit upon the trimmings of your hair and finger nails;"² and many others. There is

much room here for the exercise of apologetic hermeneutics, of which some is on the record, but the impression of cultivated mystification is hard to avoid. Were these singular oddments a pabulum for novices or were they intended to be digested by the initiate? We do not know; but we do know that Pythagoras was not only the sachem of a cult but also a mathematician of some sort and a ruler, said to be a successful one, of a city, namely, Croton. The clue to his importance is to be found, I believe, in his character as mathematician. Though famous for his eponymous proposition, the profoundest preoccupation of his following was arithmetical rather than geometrical. Through Aristotle's many references to him and his school it may readily be seen that Pythagoras had a vision of the whole as having an absolutely intelligible core: to the empirical world there corresponds a numerical structure of truth so deep and so pervasive that the very concept of "perfect," conceived arithmetically,³ must be understood as applicable equally to morality and physics, to the human and the non-human world alike. In this perspective, it matters little that the Pythagorean dicta smack of superstition at its darkest. In their errant way, the Pythagoreans "knew" that the contraries that Heraclitus also held to compose the world are overridden by the unifying truth of number.

How are we to reconcile the notorious secrecy and cultishness of the Pythagorean movement, its confidence in the single mathematical truth of the human and non-human world, and the propensity to rule in the city? The plausible answer is that Pythagoras aspired to bring the implicit order of the whole into concrete manifestation on the plane of politics, but with an apparent intention to restrict the decisive knowledge to an elite that he could control, either to monopolize the arcana of power or to protect the truth from the perils of exposure. The critique of the Pythagorean project is sufficiently indicated in two passages of Aristotle's⁴. Aristotle writes, "Pythagoras first attempted to discuss virtue (*arete*) but not in the right way; for by reducing the virtues to numbers he made his study of them inappropriate; for justice is not a square number." And "The Pythagoreans had before this treated of a few things, whose definitions they connected with numbers—e.g. the opportune, the just, or marriage. But it was reasonable in him [presumably Socrates] that he inquired into the 'what is'." From these remarks, if not from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we can gather that Aristotle considered justice to be beyond a formulaic definition, such as could be the material of a handbook for governors. Further, considering only the unsympathetic allusion to the reduction of marriage to arithmetic, it is easy to see the basis for such a satire on Pythagorean science as is implicit in the fiasco of the "nuptial number" that Plato offers for the improvement of mankind. If we continue to search for the image of antiquity as that image is filled in by the disjunction preSocratic-Socratic, a suggestion comes to mind in this shape: Heraclitus abjured the political society of his congeners and Pythagoras embraced it, each in confidence that he had seen into the truth of the whole. Socrates stood between them, having found a way to live within and without

the city and having discovered a mode of parlance that was reticent without being perversely enigmatic or redolent of shibboleth. With no illusions about bringing the heavenly order down to earth, he never abandoned the earthly order on the ground that it refused the transcendent. Can we prevent ourselves from being reminded of another ancient, Moses, whose task it was to go up and then to descend bearing to earth the heavenly legislation for ordering the best regime?

Parmenides was another of the preSocratic legislating sages of Greece. It will always be matter for wonder that the men of that bent who meddled with the politics and consorted with the governors of cities—Solon, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle themselves—lived out their lives, while Socrates perished at the hands of the city from whose affairs he took pains to remain distant—except that his fellow-citizens were shrewd enough to sense the expansive rule that lay latent in his meagerly attended conversations, and also perceptive enough to intuit as contempt what he put forward as a cautious preference for a private life.

Parmenides expressed himself in poetry that is notoriously hard to interpret, thus making himself available to those few who go by the path of truth and being rather than to those others who traverse the way of non-being and opinion, as he has it, or becoming and mere perception. He taught the unicity of the whole out of time, one indivisible and motionless Being that is the truth within the swirl of mere experience. He is conducted to his wisdom by the daughters of the sun who lead him into light and who intercede with Justice herself (*dike*) for his admission to the place that is entered through the gates of night and day (Diels-Kranz I.228 Fragment 1). It appears that Parmenides received his great illumination as an instruction from the “daughters of the sun,” by which we may understand those luminaries of the firmament who have introduced men to the *logos* of the universe in every age. It is Justice who guards the access to truth, a notion that would remain dark to us if not for the clarification implicit in Parmenides’ verse to the effect that Justice would not so relax her rule as to permit anything of Being to become or to vanish (Diels-Kranz I.234 Fragment 8). No doubt cognizant of Anaximander’s Rule of Universal Exchange in a whole wherein flux would otherwise threaten to impose lawlessness, Parmenides takes his stand and shows Justice as drawing the line at any exchange between Being and Becoming. Nothing can come from nothing, nor can there be any true annihilation within the whole whose absolute unity struck Parmenides so forcefully. If we ask how Parmenides’ insight differed from Anaximander’s, for example, it is Plato who provides a strong intimation in the dialogue named for Parmenides. There, by contriving the confrontation between Socrates and Parmenides, the subject being the status of the Ideas, Plato lets it be seen that Parmenides held the doctrine of the unity of the whole in its most extreme form: only One is, the only Being that there is is the Being of One, and that truth is the sovereign Truth of the whole. Anaximander is struck

by the scheme of “justice” that guarantees the perpetuity of the whole by imposing within it the law of strict and equal compensation of existence for existence. Parmenides is struck by the scheme of “justice” that forbids any commerce between Being and the meaningless, unintelligible non-being. Anaximander’s doctrine is driven by physics, Parmenides’ by metaphysics. Plato’s *Parmenides* reveals that the Socratic doctrine of the Ideas, which is the Socratic orthodoxy on the subject of the One that inhabits the Many, is less radical than the Unity theory of Parmenides in the obvious sense that for Socrates there are many Ones, though exactly how many such there are is unclear to Socrates, at least in his youth. Can they all be reduced to a grand exhaustive One, and if so, what would be its name? Plato’s *Timaeus* concludes with a climactic definition of Good that reveals Good to be a composite held together by proportion. If proportion is prior to good, but proportion is compelled forever to live side by side with the irrational *pi* in the inner recess of the whole, then the unity of the primordial principle of the whole is an equivocation: proportion and the incommensurable are held together in a world-producing conjunction that must be governed by proportion, or the power that makes the world would fail; but “proportion” is the name given to what reconciles itself with its opposite. We hear echoes of Heraclitus and Empedocles; but are we hearing them in the voice of Socrates? Not literally, for it is Timaeus the astronomer who leads the cosmogonic discourse to its polemic-irenical conclusion. If we are to draw on Plato’s *Timaeus* for help in assessing the relation between Socrates and any others, then we must recall that the *Timaeus* begins with a Socratic discourse about politics (a summary of parts of the *Republic*) that includes the thought that the city is performing its most characteristic deed when it is at war. It would appear that the polemic premise of the Socratic mandate that sets the dialogue in motion agrees broadly with the equivocal composition between proportion and its contrary with which the dialogue ends. While saying this, it must be kept in mind once more that any concurrence of Socrates in the arguments of Timaeus is only tacit: he never so much as murmurs a reservation. We may conclude, therefore, that Socrates held to a less radical doctrine of One and Many than that of Parmenides and more emphatic than that of the school that taught that All is War. Again, Socrates appears as a man of the middle. It would be unjust and unwise to leave this aspect of the issue that separates Socrates and Parmenides with this silent awarding of the palm to Socrates as the more moderate thinker because something more serious even than moderation itself might be at stake. Parmenides was in pursuit of the absolute all-uniting One that is beyond time, that must be and that the mind cannot distinguish from unsurpassable Being, different from every thing that exists in mere thinghood or partiality. Parmenides was in pursuit of the First and Highest, which is that which is fit to be called god. Why should he not be honored above the man who cannot transcend Proportion—unless Proportion is a name for the absolute unsurpassable intelligible serenity, the timeless *logos* by virtue of which there is a

Whole, that noetic immovable that is First and Highest and is fit to be called god. Why doubt the gravity of the dialogue between Parmenides and Socrates?

Can one deduce from all of this anything about the human or political meaning of Parmenides' thought? Perhaps this: Parmenides left no doubt that he saw mankind as divided between those who follow the path of truth and those who go the way of opinion—a view in no way remarkable or original. There is indeed a cosmic order and justice; but how does it make its way into human life? If Parmenides' participation is to be taken as a serious act and not a mere expression of ambition (as to which we cannot be certain), then we may suppose that he considered the rule of a philosopher, one such as himself, to be at least effective in if not simply indispensable to enlightening the darkened place that is the ordinary habitation of mankind. Parmenides differs from Socrates in the obvious way that Socrates did not rule or seek to rule. But Socrates admitted that a good man could wish to rule if only to avoid being ruled by men who are worse than himself, as those who ruled him in Athens must surely have seemed to him. Why may we not assign this reason for Parmenides' assumption of power? And why may we not equally assume that Socrates abstained from rule because it was beyond his grasp? Our speculations along these lines are bound to be inconclusive. Would our attempt to distinguish the conceptions of justice held by the two men be less so? Parmenides apparently subscribed to the received definition of justice as *quid pro quo*, with the far-reaching and deeply meditated restriction that there can be no exchange between Being and not-being. Socrates, rejecting this definition in so many words, proclaimed justice to be keeping or keeping to one's own or to oneself. But this, as the basis of division of labor, points inescapably to exchange at the same time that it points to the philosopher's appropriating to himself sole and unlimited power, a possession and a burden for which only he is fit. Is the opposition between Parmenides and Socrates a metaphysical one without practical consequences, except on the plane of biographical accident? Socrates claimed to have abandoned the study of the non-human things and to have given most of his life's attention to the study of mankind and its condition. Parmenides, for all that we know of him directly, appears to have done the reverse. Yet it is Parmenides who ruled a city and Socrates who recoiled from politics. Are we forced back on so slender a support as the conjecture that Socrates would have accepted nothing less than the absolute power of his supposititious philosopher-king, knowing that its occasion is as probable as is the success of a "nuptial number" or any other scheme of dogmatic rationalism; while Parmenides was willing to accept such rule as his subjects would proffer and at their pleasure, thus evincing a pragmatism that betokens anything but intransigent rationalist dogmatism. If we could satisfy ourselves that Socrates, the more single-mindedly he devoted himself to the study of the human things, the more he was confirmed in the conviction that unreason is as embedded in them as it is alongside the rationality of the Whole, we would *know* that his alleged simplistic rationalism, and hence

optimism, is a vulgarization of his thought. So long as this issue remains in unclarity, the line between Socrates and this most weighty of his predecessors will remain to that extent ill-defined, as will the radical originality of Socrates; but what stands out clearly enough is that the question of the rule of philosophy directs us to the deepest questions regarding the place of man in the Whole—the character of the Whole as a home for man and, therewith and necessarily, the existence, meaning and character of god or gods.

A word should be said about what might appear as the marginal consideration of how Socrates and his predecessors expressed themselves. Parmenides, as an eminent example, wrote poetry. Poetry at its best and most serious, that is to say as it is in and for itself, can claim to be the inner truth of what it touches: the articulation of sheer and immediate insight unimpeded by the drag of ratiocination and thus having access to the inmost recesses at the threshold of which reason encounters plausibilities as often as necessities and thus is frustrated by doubts and alternatives. In its tortuous locution poetry imitates, and so doing pays its respects to the sanctity of, the veil that obscures the innermost, at the same time draping intuition in the raiment of beauty. The Socratic criticism of poetry on political grounds fades into banality before the radical criticism of it that is implicit in Socrates' abstention from poetry as a means of philosophic utterance. In his deed, Socrates demonstrated the gulf that separated him from Parmenides: Socrates asked while Parmenides told. By his interrogation, Socrates did not merely play the part of the stimulator of other men's minds, or of the corrector of their errors in the most forceful way. He also, perhaps primarily, was denying that it is by immediate intuition that mankind enters the secret places of the Whole and that it is by assertoric declaration in a baritone idiom which elevates itself above daily speech that mankind announces Truth to itself. Socrates the asker of questions was the one who claimed for himself the wisdom of knowing what and that he did not know. In finding the middle ground between surrender to the enormousness of the province of curiosity and the confidence that that province can be measured conclusively by an intuitive eye, Socrates may have invented philosophy.⁵ For future reference, it may be said that he never abandoned doubt.

From this rapid overview of Socrates' patrimony, two names may not be omitted: Protagoras and Gorgias. Protagoras is famous for the sentence, "Of all things man is the measure—of the things that are that they are and of the things that are not that they are not." If he had said only that man is the measure of all things, he could be taken to have meant that there is no justice or virtue or even pleasure except as men define those things. While he could possibly have been a radical conventionalist regarding justice and the like, it is very much more likely that Protagoras had it in mind that to discriminate between what is and what is not, or to investigate and determine being and becoming, is a human task, the responsibility of human wisdom. When coupled with his denial that he knows about the being and character of gods or that perhaps anyone can know

about them, he confirms that knowledge of whatever can claim to be primordial, perhaps Being itself, is simply human knowledge. His pantheon would resemble Olympus in no way if the First and Highest were Being itself. How he stands in relation to Socrates is perhaps best indicated by the way in which Plato begins and ends the dialogue that bears Protagoras' name. The two disagree at first in that Protagoras asserts and Socrates denies that virtue is teachable, while they disagree at last because they have exchanged positions. As it appears, if one of them is right, the other must be wrong. Why? In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Protagoras is made responsible for the view that knowledge is perception, and thus by implication that all is flux. If human knowledge is necessarily reducible to perception, then there can be no true knowledge of Being without recourse to some knowledge that transcends, or enables man to transcend, the flux that is what is known by *aisthesis*, perception. Only if Protagoras can know of that transcendent can he claim to be the measure of the being of the things that are; and then, perhaps in the view of Socrates, his disclaimer of knowledge of god would be a self-misunderstanding—unless it were an irony. Which it is is very hard to say.

Of Gorgias relatively much survives, but for our purpose little needs to be noticed. He had an inordinate confidence in the power of speech. One might call him the rhetorical parallel to Hippodamas, who also had an unmeasured faith in the suitability of schematic "reason" to practical politics. Gorgias' confidence in the power of speech extended to the belief that he, or perhaps man "in principle," could prove the most outrageous proposition, such as that nothing exists. This extreme doctrine, which attracts at first with its implication that persuasion is more powerful than coercion, proves obnoxious to the criticism that everything it adds to reasoning it takes away from Reason: it brazenly boasts of man's power to make the lesser argument the greater. Not because its claim outreaches its power but because the claim itself threatens any confidence in wisdom as well as in justice, the pretension of Gorgias and his fellows was unacceptable to Socrates. That in the end he was tarred with the brush dipped in pitch of the rhetoricians' preparation only testifies to the prudence that lay beneath Socrates' rejection of any claim that speech has unlimited power. As the intemperate "rationalists" implicated him and philosophy in their visible atheism, so the overreaching rhetoricians implicated him and philosophy in their arrogant sophistry. In his civic downfall can be read much of the ground of Socrates' posture in relation to his predecessors.

We come at last to the sophist Antiphon. One extended quotation from his surviving work will suffice to make the necessary point:

Justice, then, is not to transgress that which is the law of the city in which one is a citizen. A man can therefore best conduct himself in harmony with justice, if when in the company of witnesses he upholds the laws, and when alone without witnesses he upholds the edicts of nature. For the edicts of the laws are imposed

artificially, but those of nature are compulsory. And the edicts of the laws are arrived at by consent, not by natural growth, whereas those of nature are not a matter of consent. So, if the man who transgresses the legal code evades those who have agreed to these edicts, he avoids both disgrace and penalty; otherwise not. But if a man violates against possibility any of the laws which are implanted in nature, even if he evades all men's detection, the ill is no less, and even if all see, it is no greater. For he is not hurt on account of an opinion, but because of truth. The examination of these things is in general for this reason, that the majority of just acts according to law are prescribed contrary to nature.⁶

The wisdom of Antiphon may be completed for our purpose with his observation: "But life belongs to nature, and death too, and life for them is derived from advantages, and death from disadvantages. And the advantages laid down by the law are chains upon nature, but those laid down by nature are free." What Antiphon has made perfectly clear to any who would come after him is that the appeal to nature as the supreme moral authority is heavy with danger in one way as the appeal to convention is in another. Antiphon corrects the wisdom of Anaximander, who saw in nature the unforgiving morality of a life for a life. Antiphon transforms this insight with the discovery that the life lived according to nature is the life of freedom, civil existence is a form of bondage, and the law of the city is no more authoritative than mere opinion, that much disparaged alternative to knowledge, which in the present case consists of matter that could be fatal to orderly life. Antiphon bequeathed to his successors this unwelcome antithesis: life lived freely according to the crystal truth of nature (as it would be lived by the blood-stained ancestor of Gyges) as against life lived in constraint under the rule of prohibitions and prescriptions that emanate from mere men, but men whose natural instinct teaches them, if nothing else does, that wisdom and truth lie in obeying the natural call to advantage. If the natural truth of advantage is sovereign in nature and in civil society alike (because justice is only the advantage of the stronger), is not the project for peaceful and noble human life doomed by the power of the natural Whole in which our existence is inescapably enclosed? Would our last best hope consist in a self-induced confidence that speech conquers almost all, and can make an enclave of decency for us in a universe which reveals its truth at night—unspeakable darkness to which light is the exception and daytime a passing relief? This may in fact be our human situation. Then we would await the speaker who would detoxify nature, declaring its superiority to every artifact in power to bestow good on man, while at the same time displaying conventional civil society at its purest and describing it as grounded in nature: the political philosophy of the best regime. Were such a project to be described as turning the neutrality of nature against itself for the purposes of mankind, the description would appear to fit the schemes of Descartes and Hobbes, as well as those of the artificers of the Olympians who took notice of man. But if political philoso-

phy could be said to be the reconciliation of man to his cosmos on terms that ennoble his life to the extent possible, on premises that do not transcend reason alone, then Socrates can be said to have concocted political philosophy out of the abundance of his inheritance from those we call preSocratics, and to have done so in a way that distinguished him from his modern successors by his having kept man's nobility always in sight as his star and compass.

It is well to make explicit what Socrates did not do. He did not discover the disjunction of one and many, of a phenomenal flux and an intelligible immobile, of a whole cosmos and its inner *logos*, of body and soul, of rational and irrational, of a few and a many, of opinion and knowledge, of nature and convention, of guarded and unguarded speech. Others before him saw that the Whole could not be reduced to some simple that was free from duality. He did not discover the goodness of a private life, nor the teaching of an immortality and of a reward and punishment hereafter; nor did he discover the scandal of the vulgar pantheon or of an unworthy supernaturalism, or the question whether the whole is ruled by some principle of good and if so what that principle or justice might be. He was not the first to scrutinize the poets with a critical eye.

What then did he do? How did he enlighten his age? I believe that in creating political philosophy, according to the suggestion put forth above, Socrates proved to be the man who provided the most moderate and at the same time the most elevating resolution of the question, How is man situated in the Whole. His disjunction of the philosopher and the *polis* in his act is accompanied by his conjunction of the philosopher and the *polis* in his speech. Do his act and his speech cancel each other by contradiction or do they combine to teach a lesson? I believe that in their combination they embody the substance of the first of the profane Enlightenments of the western world. By an Enlightenment I mean a radical ingathering, scrutiny, revision and reorganization of the moral and intellectual patrimony, with the specific intention of bringing mankind closer to a life dominated by the truth of man's positive relation to reason. The act and the speech of Socrates teach that highest reason, wisdom, or philosophy is ruling yet nowhere rules. There is a worm of unreason that inhabits the core of the overpoweringly rational whole, as we might have surmised by giving due weight to the invasion of the body of mathematics itself by the intractable *pi*. Proportion itself, or commensurability, has its limits; and whatever this may portend for the fate of the cosmic whole, its bearing on the perfect adjustment to each other in political society of the varieties of human soul is clear for all to see who do not blind themselves.

How does the Socratic Enlightenment address itself to the demoralization latent in the dissemination of such doctrine? The practical task of Socrates is defined by the two aspects of his insight: the reason of the Whole and the unreason in the Whole. In the *Statesman*, Socrates is made by Plato to concur by implication of silence in the definition of statesmanship as an art of inspiring and restraining, according to the need of the ruled. In the *Theaetetus*, Soc-

rates performs an exercise repeated elsewhere, with a success dependent on the docibility of his interlocutor, by which he encourages his fellow-inquirer to take heart and never give up in the struggle to probe into the being of the things, an inspiration called forth by his having reduced his companion to paralyzed confusion and a reminder never to lose sight of what remains problematic or mysterious. Surely there are things that Socrates knew well that he knew; but one of them was what and that he did not know. His achievement may therefore be called an Enlightenment of restrained practical expectations, driven forward by an unquenchable purpose to keep his congeners mindful of the best and the highest of which they are capable. With a view to later developments, the Socratic achievement might be called also an Enlightenment of residual doubt.

It is remarkable that the Socrates we know is much more an anthropologist and a psychologist than a theologian. When he discloses, at the end of his life, that he had long since given up as unpromising the study of the nonhuman for inquiry into the human world, he appears either to have surrendered to a discouragement that deflected his philosophizing ever after or for whatever other reason to have decided to abstain from inquiry into the beings aloft. Again with a view to later developments, we may observe that the Socratic Enlightenment had a human orientation but could afford to leave largely obscure the degree to which it was circumventing the received conception of deity. In its zetetic mode, the Socratic Enlightenment stood out against the assertoric imposition of immediate insight, and against the poetic revelation of gods that were at the same time embarrassingly natural in their impulses and marvelously unconstrained by the limitations of nature in gratifying them.

We remind ourselves easily at this point that there was a sacred as well as a profane antiquity to which the modern Enlightenment addressed itself, and that there was in that area an evolution that might well be described as an enlightenment, indeed as the absolute illumination of mankind through Revelation. The only way to characterize the scriptural Enlightenment briefly is to describe it as the immediate revelation of the self-identified First and Highest as the absolute One, the utmost principle of the universe, communicant with man but utterly inconceivable by him, absolutely righteous, solely hegemonic, legislative for mankind and thus careful that the goodness of the whole be actively present in the existence of men, invulnerable to the constraint of His natural creation, and retaining forever a measure of His inscrutability, thus guaranteeing that the universe will always be a mystery. Although a mystery, it may not lawfully be an object of investigation but only of inquiry into the further clauses of the law. The scriptural Enlightenment relieved mankind of the degraded belief that the First and Highest is accessible to the eye and thus can be rendered in any image, though it remained accessible to the ear, thus accommodating the righteous *logos* of the whole to the taming of mankind. The scriptural Enlighten-

ment presented the paradigm of the perfect order that would be installed among men if they had not been made, for reasons to remain dubitable, subject to corruption. In ways very different from those trodden by Socrates, the oldest scriptural Enlightenment measured out the wisdom of a whole at whose center lay a perfection whose reason must remain forever veiled to the human mind and whose goodness must remain forever an inimitable aspiration. The subsequent scriptural Enlightenment vastly enlarged the promise of an approximation of the human condition to the cosmic, closing the distance between heaven and earth by showing the birth and death of God, and displaying his return to life as the good to be available to the simplest of men. In the end, the intimacy of the divine and cosmic with the human and terrestrial will be sealed by the millennial rule of men by divinity on earth. In the meantime, the ultimate triumph of the humblest is vouchsafed through their subservience to the commandment of love, enforced with the fullest insistence of divinity exactly because only the power that exceeds nature can make the demand that (fallen) nature refuses. The Christian Enlightenment is in its own way the great outcry against nature, that devastating disappointment to a humanity that craves a more nurturing domestication in the universe.

When we speak of antiquity and modernity, and of the reaction of modernity to and against antiquity, we should have in mind so far as possible what the giants of the modern Enlightenment themselves contemplated when they opened a retrospective eye. It is not impossible for us to reconstruct that vision. When Machiavelli looked back, he saw a profane antiquity that expected much of nature and a sacred antiquity that accepted little from it. By this I mean that he misunderstood the crucial pagans as projectors of so-called imaginary republics that were intended as paradigms of concrete civil societies, whereas in fact it was a work of the Socratic Enlightenment to stand between those who proclaimed a simply perfect cosmic natural order that can be translated into the human condition and those who saw the natural order as fully illustrated by the jungle. On the other hand, Machiavelli understood well the theology that perceived the glory of God as resting on the disparagement of God's natural creation: not only must man be molded athwart and elevated above his nature but, in the same spirit, nature as a whole cannot be understood as defining the possible. The highest excellence is a defiance of nature, as the highest truth is displayed in miraculous contradiction of natural causation. If a Renaissance of antiquity was the cradle of modernity, then it should be said that the Renaissance conflated the Christian antiquity that it knew and the profane antiquity that it had not studied diligently, perhaps because it easily accepted the Christian appropriation of pagan philosophy to be its servant. Modernity was generated out of a profound insight and an extensive misconception.

Hobbes will maintain and Spinoza will confirm that there can be nothing in Scripture that is contrary to reason if Scripture is an emanation from a worthy

god. Thus there grew up an immense rational exegesis to which Descartes and Locke also contributed. That exegesis had the broad purpose to eliminate the contradiction of nature by revelation, in effect to reassert the worthiness of the natural Whole to be considered as infused with the *logos* of what deserves to be called god. If Descartes himself, in the *Meditations*, had not used the expression First and Highest, apparently to mean by it the innermost truth of the whole, we might be reluctant to introduce it into the account of modernity's own quest for what I have called that which deserves to be called god. In the case of Hobbes, it is made clear that the true improvement of the human condition depends on transmitting to the plane of mankind's everyday existence the decisive knowledge concerning nature. That knowledge might be put summarily as follows: man's well-being does indeed require an overcoming of nature, not by means that are above but by means that are within nature. Since the time of the Hebrews, men had been encouraged if not constrained to look for the ultimate causes of things outside of nature. Thus they made for themselves a world in which the demonstration to one another of their most cherished beliefs failed, they were returned to the archaic mode of discourse, which was assertoric, and the verification of verities was inevitably left to fire and the sword—all in a world in which the dictate of nature itself only too manifestly favored war over peace. Until the true status of man within nature was sufficiently understood by sovereign and subject alike, there would be no peace, no enlargement of the mind and thus no increase of comfort to the body. In Hobbes's particular view, the chief obstacle to the advancement of reason was grounded more in the sacred than in the profane antiquity, although he had to blame Aristotle for encouraging the Scholastics to multiply substances where there were only accidents. Hobbes complained further of Aristotle that he promoted popular government by preaching down tyranny and preaching up a natural standard of right for every mischief-maker to appeal to against the always threatened bulwark of sovereignty that holds nature at bay. Perhaps there is justice in the odium in which Hobbes, an architect of emancipation, is held by partisans of freedom, as retribution for his portrayal of Aristotle as a resource for demagogues. With more justice, Hobbes took his place among the modern writers who denounced the Aristotelean and Scholastic enlargement of nature beyond positive bounds to include the famous formal and final causes, Aristotle himself going to the absurd extreme of declaring the natural sociality of man, in the face of the most obtrusive evidence. Exploding these causes was to strike a blow against that exaggeration of nature's philanthropy that moderns insisted on finding in profane antiquity. The blow glanced to wound also the theologians and other believers who could find in every gift of nature a testimony to the solicitude of nature's author. It must be said that the simplicism of the interpretation put by the modern Enlightenment on the pagan antiquity becomes as visible in Hobbes's conception of Aristotle as trusting nature to civilize man as it did in Machiavelli's sarcasms directed against old projectors of visionary republics.

The seminal contributions of Descartes to the birth of modernity and the modern Enlightenment may be seen as flowing from a single philosophic aspiration, which was to achieve certainty of knowledge for the good of man. The achievement of certainty is a locution whose negative equivalent is the removal of doubt. Descartes conceived that doubting everything was the precondition for doubting nothing. His demonstration of the existence of God and of the deathless soul was of course rooted in doubt, however decently dissembled. As his labor draws to its close on the Sixth Day of his *Meditations*, it is evident that he has indeed proved the existence of the First and Highest: the truth and *logos* of the Whole, revealed in mathematics. Descartes can say with an undivided mind that In the beginning was the *logos* and the *logos* was with God and the *logos* was God, and, so saying, he can understand himself to be the prophet of the true religion whose communicants are proof against the blasphemies of idolatry and every form of superstition. The liberation of man from disease, toil, confusion, and the tyrannies of zeal is the promise that lies within the book of the unfolding of nature. No one could have believed more wholeheartedly than Descartes that if mankind knows the truth, it will make them free. Since Descartes gave it as his judgment that intelligence is perfectly distributed, for everyone is satisfied with his share, it may be taken for granted that Descartes had only limited confidence in any project for enlightenment in the sense of a penetration of every mind by the truths of highest philosophy.

The philosophers of the modern Enlightenment saw their predecessors of the ancient profane Enlightenment as trusting inordinately in a nature they did not have the means to understand; and their predecessors of the ancient sacred Enlightenment as trusting inordinately in a supernature that no human being might ever understand. The modern Enlightenment can claim to have found the method for removing doubt about the natural whole by redrawing its boundaries to exclude the dubitable; but it did not, nor does it think it did, thereby render the whole of our universal setting exhaustible by science: modernity repeats in its own mode the wisdom of Socrates, which was to know that he did not know.

When Kant insisted on purifying virtue beyond every consideration of consequent good, he estranged our goodness from our nature as radically as did the theologians of man's fall, although as a self-understood prophet of the true religion that is open to reason alone. So doing, he gave us yet another reason to wonder whether the full history of modernity must not contain a discussion of the question, How much of the modern Enlightenment in an unwitting rediscovery of timeless possibilities, much as we earlier found ourselves moved to ask how much of the Socratic Enlightenment was an ingathering of the pre-Socratic wisdom. In one respect, however, we may be confident in the originality of the modern Enlightenment's orientation: it was possessed by a spasm of optimism for the fate of man for which there is no profane precedent. The more that it tightened man's hold on nature, the more it loosened the hold of nature on man, with the promise not of a millennial but of an imminent victory over the natural satan. The historical plasticity of the human nature formulated

by Rousseau found its way easily into the Socialism that promised freedom from want, from coercion, from false belief, from unreason whether institutional or domestic, public or private. In view of how the modern Enlightenment matured, it is worth recalling that modernity opened with the disparagement of visionary republics. Machiavelli's call to man to take control of his fate was heeded so enthusiastically that it became the inspiration for a vision that reveals itself now as phantasmagoria.

What then to make of Hegel's formulation of a dialectic in which the decisive contradictions are perfectly "overcome" or mediated? Is the new dialectic at once the transcendence of the Socratic Enlightenment and also an apparent correction of the modern Enlightenment's resignation to an irremovable Dubitable? It may be left an open question whether Hegel's radicalization of the modern Enlightenment's rationalism is the perfection of that Enlightenment or whether, by grounding that consummation in the biography of human consciousness, it historicized the human repository of Being itself. If the latter, then Hegel would deserve to be thought of as an early if not the first post-Enlightenment modernist, if not the first "post-modernist."

Can anything be said about the way of life of the innumerable millions who have lived within or alongside those ancient and modern struggles to understand or come to terms with the whole that enclosed them? The ancient Hebrews must have lived in fear of God, the harshness of exile testifying to the disfavor of a father from whom they could only hope some resumption of his blessing when he sent them his anointed to rule them again in a godly way. Christians were confirmed in that hope because God had fulfilled part of his promise before their eyes; for the rest, they must bear their lot in patience, imitating Christ by suffering the world according to the example shown to them by Christ on the cross. The pagan multitudes lived we know not how. Was it in the shadow of Olympians, beings who somehow were the forces of nature but also flourished as anthropoids, thus bridging the gap between man and the natural All? Perhaps we are limited to the speculation that their lives were bounded by their poetry, their laws, and their labor. About them we may ask the grand question that, when answered, tells much about life in any human epoch: What was the characteristic mystery that beset them? What in their daily existence passed their understanding? Their laws were clear to them and their labor was only too self-revealing. What was there to puzzle them but nature itself—stupendous seismic calamity, the rotation of heaven, the birth of animals. For all the enlightenment of the sages of Greece, and for that matter of Egypt and elsewhere, the wonderment of ancient men must have turned on the mysteries of their natural environment. This is no longer true. In the age dominated by the modern Enlightenment, the mysteries that are closest to us, that literally surround us, are not those of nature but of art. So profoundly mysterious to us are they that their mysteriousness to us is concealed from us. In

order to work and in order to have respite from work, we are compelled to manipulate what we cannot understand. How many among us literally know what we are doing when we activate any of the countless tools and conveniences that dominate our existence? Very few. It is a paradox of the Enlightenment that it planted us in impenetrable quotidian darkness of artifact while relieving us of the sense that nature was the true mystery. If this was the price that had to be paid for the political liberation that is one of the jewels in the crown of modernity, it may well have been worth paying.

We are entitled to wonder whether it belongs to the human condition that something be mysterious to mankind, and the difference between one epoch and another lies in the identity of the mystery. But in asking this, we find ourselves involuntarily thrown back upon the wisdom of the Socratic Enlightenment: we human beings are led to know ourselves, with and without reference to our historical setting, by recognizing what it is that we do not know.

NOTES

1. See G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge University Press, 1980).

2. Iamblichus in Diels-Kranz, following Kirk and Raven, op cit.

3. Ten, the perfect number, is the sum of the first four integers, which, qua point, line, triangle, and pyramid respectively, are primary entities. Four is itself of divine weight. It seems strange that a mathematician who knew, although he certainly did not originate, the "Pythagorean theorem" should have retained his numerological optimism in the face of the irrational numbers that the theorem brings to mind.

4. *Magna Moralia* 1182a11 (Diels-Kranz I.452) and *Metaphysics* 1078b21 (Diels-Kranz ibid.) usefully brought together by Kirk and Raven, op cit.

5. Zeno did not discover dialectic, as is sometimes alleged; he practiced, and perhaps discovered, demonstrative or eristic questioning.

6. This and the following passage are taken from Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1957) p. 147.