

## THE GENESIS OF THE GREEK POLIS

For the scholar of ancient history, the 'polis' is the most important and most worthy subject of study. By 'polis' we mean that well-known type of Greek city which with its territory constituted an autonomous state and, in this respect, was quite similar to the centres of the Italian Renaissance. Ancient Hellas was made up of a great number of such 'polis' cities. Each of them had its own freedom, its individual pride as an independent republic. But in the over-all picture we recognise in the institution of the polis the ground that nourished the dynamic and in a sense revolutionary spirit of the ancient Greeks. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, Cleisthenes and Themistocles, Pericles and Alcibiades, Protagoras and Democritus, Plato and Aristotle were the sons of polis cities. We may even assert that these men could be what they were only in the emancipated and inspired atmosphere of the polis. No other ancient culture could have given them birth. If we consider the Greek polis from the point of view of universal history we come to a rather astonishing conclusion: the polis differs from all other comparable cultural institutions in Asia, Egypt, and Europe by a very fundamental and special trait: Europe knew only a primitive, barbarian, rustic way of life. People were either roving nomads or tillers of the soil who lived in simple villages. The Celtic

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*oppida* and the Adriatic *castella* were both rustic in character. Urban specialisation, the kind of industriousness that goes with it, a dynamic and independent rise of culture—these were lacking everywhere.

In the Orient, on the other hand, we find at that same time an old, venerable and highly developed urban culture, based on a hierarchical order. These Oriental cultures, however, remained conservative in their religious ideas, and in so far as internal politics were concerned, they were not able to develop genuine democracies. Jerusalem alone shows a revolutionary and creative spirit akin to that of the polis, though tending in a different direction. To some (though a less) extent this is true also of the Phoenician cities. For the rest the cities of the Near East and of Egypt clung to their old traditions. In the Mediterranean, only Etruria and Carthage developed a somewhat dynamic form, but in many respects this development took place only under Greek influence. Rome, in the beginning, tended towards a more conservative and rustic type of life and did not show any of the characteristics of the Greek polis. It began to draw closer to the Greek model only in the times of the Scipios.

The Greek polis, then, with its dynamic and revolutionary spirit—by nature *novarum rerum cupidus*—as a type of political life stood very much alone in early antiquity. Only gradually did it spread all over the ancient world. This happened mainly in the Hellenistic and in the Roman periods. We should not like to assert, however, that the dynamic spirit of the polis was transmitted in the same way as its outward forms.

The peculiar ways of the Greek polis prompt us to look into the origins of this strange phenomenon. Until recently one would hardly have dared to raise this question at all, since indeed there was little hope for an answer. The material provided by recent excavations and a great deal of information furnished by sociologists, ethnologists, and related palaeological fields open up new approaches to the problem.

The following remarks are meant as an attempt in this direction. We are concerned mainly with two aspects of the problem: 1. How did it happen at all that the urban principle became the determining cultural factor in the Aegean? 2. Why did those Aegean cities take on that peculiar nature so characteristic of and indispensable to the Greek polis?

Recently<sup>1</sup> it has become possible to give a satisfactory account of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my demonstration in *La Nouvelle Clio*, I, 1950, pp. 567 *et seq.* Further investigations of this problem will appear i.a. in my treatment s.v. 'Præhistorische Kulturen in Griechenland' in the *Realencyklopædie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften* and in my new book about the oldest civilisations of Greece.

early beginnings of the Greek city. The polis did not rise by any means from local origins: There are no traces that would lead us from the Epipalaeolithic caves of the early hunters and food-gatherers to the first urban settlements. British and American excavations have proven beyond any doubt that the decisive step to agricultural, permanent, and city-like settlement was taken in Cilicia, northern Syria, and Upper Mesopotamia as early as the fifth and fourth millennia B.C.<sup>2</sup> As early as about 3500 B.C. the people of those countries had risen to a high level of city culture known as the 'Tell Halaf'. Here we have the cradle of the city culture of the whole Eastern Mediterranean. It was at the same time the homeland of ceramics, a refined art of weaving, miniature sculpture, and advanced architecture. Also the techniques of fortification had reached a high standard in those days with the Cilicians.<sup>3</sup>

This cultural movement spread from Cilicia—and perhaps also from the area about Malatia<sup>4</sup>—and reached Greece partly via Asia Minor, partly by sea, and created the so-called 'Sesclo culture'<sup>5</sup> in that region. Agriculture, permanent settlement, and stone construction, specialisation of the various crafts, among which weaving, ceramics, and the plastic arts were prevalent, were thus introduced in the Aegean from the East. The fertile plains of Thessaly show an astonishing density of population. Indeed, it seems that during the so-called 'Neolithic period' about twice as many villages existed in that region as today.<sup>6</sup> That some settlements had even developed into real small towns is demonstrated by Sesclo itself. Remarkably enough the most extensive settlement was found on the sites of Athens. It is true that the Neolithic remains, except for very few specimens, have fallen victim to later building periods, with the result that often only the shafts of wells of that time, containing some casual potsherds, testify to the former existence of houses. A map indicating the various locations where such remains have been found, shows that the regions south, north, and north-west of the Acropolis were inhabited. This makes for quite an extensive area, especially since the citadel itself was most likely a part of the settlement. In all probability Athens was one of the largest places in Greece even in Neolithic times, and it may be that the name of the city goddess Athena spread all over the Aegean at that time with the generic meaning

<sup>2</sup> For a basic investigation cf. Braidwood in *Archiv fuer Orientforschung*, XVI, 1952, pp. 137 et seq., and Garstang, *Prehistoric Mersin*, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Garstang, Fig. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Archiv fuer Orientforschung*, XVI, 1952, pp. 151 et seq.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. my treatment in *La Nouvelle Clio*, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Grundmann's map, *Athenische Mitteilungen*, LXII, 1937, plate 37.

of 'protectress of the city'. Another rather large Neolithic settlement was located at Cnossos on Crete, probably even larger than the well-known later Great Palace. On the other hand it is true that this island is indebted to the Near Eastern civilisations only for a part of its high cultural attainments. The other part is due to an influx of cultural elements from Egypt. On the whole we may say that the city culture, imported as it was from the Orient, had taken roots in the Aegean area as early as the first half of the third millennium. Further expansion of this urban civilisation to the Balkans and the valley of the Danube or to Italy did not take place.

A new wave of this city culture reached Greece about the beginning of the Early Bronze Period, or about 2600.<sup>7</sup> At about that time innumerable small towns were founded in the western part of Asia Minor. Some of them retained their importance even in later times, as, for instance, Troy and Gordion and the Anatolian predecessor of what later became Smyrna. Troy was distinguished by its superb fortifications and the beautiful palaces with their spacious courts surrounded by colonnades in the style of the Greek megaron.<sup>8</sup> This urban civilisation, together with the use of copper (or bronze) which became increasingly important, spread from Western Anatolia to the other countries of the Aegean. Poliochni on the island of Lemnos speaks eloquently of this movement. The place was surrounded by a city wall reinforced by strong towers: it had a paved main street, public wells, and gathering or market places. A large hall was found with stone steps to sit on, a tiled bathroom and a cistern.<sup>9</sup> The art of fortification spread from there to the Cyclades and to Aegina. Such Anatolian devices as the fishbone pattern in masonry, the use of the stone hinge, the storage rooms called *bothroi*, and perhaps also the type of megaron with apsidal end<sup>10</sup> have spread as far as the Greek mainland. An unusually extensive settlement was formed at Tiryns, where powerful princes seem to have had their residence as the circular constructions of that place indicate. The urban characteristics of the Anatolian settlement—one should almost

<sup>7</sup> Further detail will be given in my 'Præhistorische Kulturen'. My treatment in *Klio*, XXXII, 1939, pp. 251 *et seq.* has to be modified accordingly, since recent investigations have led me to the conclusion that at the beginning of the Early Bronze period (i.e., the beginning of the Early Helladic I) the Greeks were under Anatolian influence only through their metallurgy. Somewhat later such influence seems to have been exercised also through migrations from Asia minor into Greece (at the beginning of Early Helladic II).

<sup>8</sup> Blegan-Caskey-Rawson-Sperling, Troy I, 1950; cf. Fig. 417 with Fig. 451.

<sup>9</sup> So far we have only preliminary reports, e.g., in *Archaeologischer Anzeiger*, 1932, pp. 166 *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1933, pp. 245 *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1934, pp. 181 *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1935, pp. 234 *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1936, pp. 154 *et seq.*; *ibid.*, 1937, pp. 167 *et seq.*

<sup>10</sup> A more detailed account will be found in my treatment in 'Præhistorische Kulturen' and in my forthcoming book.

say, those characteristics of the small, provincial town—became even more pronounced on the islands and on the Greek mainland, much more so even than in the Neolithic period; and they grew constantly in importance with the now dominating trade and industrialisation.

Greece and Asia Minor now form a cultural unit. On the other hand, the urban civilisation has not advanced, even at this time, to the North and the West. Thus in Europe city culture is limited to Hellas and the Aegean islands.

This seems to take care of our first question concerning the origins of the Aegean city culture; for from then on the urban character of the settlements was preserved for all times, together with the old Aegean names in *-nthos* and *-ssos*.<sup>11</sup>

The Aegean area was thus more than 2000 years ahead of the rest of Europe in the development of a city culture. The importance of this fact will be obvious if we consider that only the urban forms of life have been able to overcome certain obstacles and thus could lead to more differentiated and higher forms of civilisation.

We now come to our second question: How did this form of city culture, indigenous in the Orient, acquire the characteristics peculiar to the Greek mentality?

This problem is much harder to tackle since a great variety of rather heterogeneous factors have come into play. Quite certainly the very topography of the country—so different from the continental Orient—played an important role. At the risk of repeating well-known facts we must again point to the consequences of the insular and peninsular conformation of the Aegean area of settlement. Its scattered components could not create a united empire. This fact divided Greece into small restricted territories and states. Greece, as it were, breathed from the sea-side, both economically and politically. It is a matter of fact that 'the air of the sea makes for freedom'. In the Orient we thus find, for the same reason, a more liberal and adventurous way of life among the Phoenicians or the Cyprians than among the peoples of the other large territories in the centre of Asia Minor, Egypt, or for that matter of the whole Near East, these countries being cut off from the sea.

The geographical situation is responsible not only for the particular

<sup>11</sup> In my opinion these names of places reached Greece from Cilicia and the Mesopotamian and Anatolian border region, partly along with the oldest cultural exchange, partly with the expansion during the Early Bronze period. More will be said on this point in my 'Prachistorische Kulturen'.

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open-mindedness of the Aegean populations, it has also provided them with a special receptivity for visual experience. The great variety of the scenery, the wealth of ever new beauty, forming the natural surrounding of these people, made them into 'eye-men' (visual types). This is not to say that such possibilities were missing elsewhere. But the accents seem to lie differently with the Greeks, and this is the reason why art had such a special meaning for them, why it was so much more an independent, autonomous thing, why the artist and his genius were so greatly honoured.

That the Aegean civilisation experienced a certain enlargement and enfranchisement due to geographic conditions can best be shown by a reference to Minoan art. It is true, on Crete as in the Orient we are faced with the great palaces of the rulers, rulers 'by the grace of God', or of princes with the sanctity of priests. And art was determined entirely by the tastes and directions of the court. Yet both in form and in contents there is a significant difference: in the Orient, art served above all the glorification of the ruler, as, e.g., in the oversize representations of the Egyptian Pharaohs. In that country the higher officials as well liked to be represented at the head of all their subordinates. In Minoan art we look in vain for such hierarchical tendencies. The rests of one single fresco painting seem to represent a ruler or prince, the so-called 'Prince with the feather crown'; but he is not seated on a throne nor is he arrayed in marked dignity. Rather, he is seen strolling in his garden among butterflies and flowers.<sup>12</sup> It does not happen either, in Cretan art, that a person is represented larger than others merely on account of his higher rank. On one fresco the audience at a dance in a sacred olive grove form just an ordinary assemblage of people, and only a number of fashionable ladies enjoy the privilege of special seats.<sup>13</sup> The harvest procession on a vase of steatite<sup>14</sup> takes its motif from the ways of the ordinary people, and when occasionally a group of gift-bearers or an officer with his soldiers<sup>15</sup> are represented, there is always much more of a lyrical, or simply human, than of a hierarchic-imperial inspiration. Minoan art, indeed, tends towards the idyllic scene or the *genre*. We guess at a friendly and natural relation between the ruler and his subjects, a horizontal relation, so to speak, in contrast to the more solemn, vertical one, from higher to lower, usual in

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<sup>12</sup> Bossert, *Altcretea*, 3rd ed.; but it remains quite uncertain whether the fragments collected at this place actually belong together at all.

<sup>13</sup> Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, III, plate 18.

<sup>14</sup> Bossert, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Bossert, *op. cit.*

Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. I think it is safe to say that the geographical nature of the respective countries is responsible for this state of things.

And yet it cannot be said by any means that in the case of the Minoan residences we are already dealing with the 'polis'. True, Cnossos was a big city. Evans has estimated its population at well over 80,000.<sup>16</sup> But it had a palace at its centre just as Mallia, Gurnia and others.<sup>17</sup> Polis and palace, however, are mutually exclusive, politically as well as in terms of the general intellectual climate.

I am thus inclined to think that we have missed another factor so far, a factor which is not linked with the local, the geographic conditions, and which did not come from the Orient (as did city culture itself), but which was imported by the invading Greeks.

The earliest Greeks moved into Hellas about 2000 B.C.<sup>18</sup> At that time, however, they occupied only the mainland, while simultaneously the indigenous Minoan palace culture, which had nothing to do with Greek culture, reached its fullest bloom on Crete. The invaders mixed with the older population on the mainland; they took over their city culture; they came under the influence of the geography of the Aegean; but they brought along with them an entirely new element, an element which was to be of the greatest importance for the development of the polis: the principle of the political community on the basis of personal association. In order to explain this we must go further back.

The invading Greeks belonged to the family of the so-called Indo-European peoples.<sup>19</sup> The particular traits of these peoples are not known to us in their original form; but we can draw certain inferences from the similarities among their numerous descendants. Above all, we are able to gather from such a comparison that while they also tilled the soil they were predominantly cattle breeders. It seems further that they were generally rather unsettled. The soil was used for pasture and for the most primitive kind of agriculture, using the hoe rather than the plough. When the soil was exhausted, they simply moved on, into the territory of the neighbours or over larger distances.

As a consequence of this unsettled way of life no concept of the state as bound to a fixed territory could arise among the Indo-European peoples.

<sup>16</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 563 *et seq.*

<sup>17</sup> Boullé, *Correspondence Hellenique*; cf. also Bossert, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. to this point my treatment in *Klio*, XXXII, 1939, pp. 261 *et seq.*; more detail in my forthcoming article 'Praehistorische Kulturen'.

<sup>19</sup> The German, Austrian, and Swiss scholars use the expression 'Indo-Germanic' with the same meaning, but for objective reasons the expression 'Indo-European' is to be preferred.

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Indeed, one gets the impression that there was no such thing at all as the 'state', but that instead they lived in personal 'associations'. These, of course, were not confined to the Indo-Europeans. This kind of association of individuals, these corporations, are found among all migrant peoples, as e.g., the Bedouins of the Near East—in this case conditioned by the economic necessities of their nomad life.<sup>20</sup> The essential point of all these groups is their system of joint living, of joint shepherding, of joint fighting. The members of such associations are usually related to one another by family ties. Foreigners may be incorporated while unworthy members may be expelled. The main thing, however, is that the association considers itself as a sovereign body and that its members are not 'subjects'. They are guided by only one thing: the *public opinion* of the whole association. The chieftain or the sheik or his like has to yield to this public opinion; he is but the bearer of the will of the whole, a *primus inter pares*.

All this is in direct opposition to what we find in the civilisations with a developed agriculture, civilisations which demand permanent settlement; which have experienced the fertility of the soil in all its sanctity and mystery; whence they form the concept of the territorial state. Here the protection of a king is requisite, with a centralised military system; here people are prepared to bow as 'subjects', if this will guarantee them the possession of their soil. And this is in fact the mentality of the soil-tilling cultures of the Orient. Similar conditions though perhaps somewhat laxer as we saw above, may have prevailed in the Aegean area before the Indo-European invasion.

And now a rather important point: True, the principle of *personal* association of the Oriental Bedouins is in contrast with the *territorial* principle of the agricultural imperial Orient. But as soon as the Bedouins settle down, change to agriculture, and form city communities, they almost entirely abandon the *personal* principle of their social order and adopt the territorial one. The Indo-European reaction was quite different. Even when they penetrated into agricultural regions and subjugated the indigenous populations while adopting their economic system, they retained the personal structure of their society, in some cases with astonishing tenacity. This explains why in Rome the *populus Romanus*, together with the *quirites*, is the carrier of the authority of the state. This explains the *civitas civium* in Italy, the Aurunci, the Volsci, etc. It explains, likewise, the prevalence of ethnic designations like 'Athenians', 'Corinthians', etc., in

<sup>20</sup> On my stay in the Orient from 1917 to 1919 I had an opportunity to observe directly how the principle of personal (tribal) association works among the Mesopotamian Bedouins.



Greece. By indicating the personal bearers of the state these names symbolise the state itself while 'Attica', 'Corinthia', etc., designate merely territories and never entered into the concept of the state. It should be noted, on the other hand, that the invaders took over not only the pattern of city settlement but in most cases even the very cities themselves, Corinth, Mycenae, Tiryns, Athens, among others. But they filled these places so much with their own conceptions of the state as a *personal association* that down to the latest times the Athenian state was always represented by 'the Athenians' and never by 'Athens' or 'Attica'. The state itself is always called *politeia* by the Greeks, which means simply the body of the citizens or the institution of the citizens, in other words, the same as *civitas*. The word 'polis' was used occasionally but only in a secondary way and, as it were, for brevity's sake.

In the Orient, with its sedentary way of life, this was different. There the ethnic name was never used for the state. Only such nomad people as, e.g., the Churri or the Achlame and Chabiri, who had no fixed territory, formed an exception. As a rule the city itself (the Assyrian word is *alu*) with its territory (*matu*) stood in the foreground. If one wanted to express the concept 'the Babylonians' one had to say: 'the people (*ameluti*) of the territory (*matu*) of the city (*alu*) of Babylon'. The state also was embodied in 'the territory of the city of Babylon, Assur', etc., or their kings respectively ('king of the territory of the city of Babylon, Assur' etc.).

It is this tendency towards personal association which I think to be the third component in the formation of the Greek polis; for this principle added to the city culture and the Mediterranean breadth and liberality that self-assertion and autonomy which was to play such an outstanding role in the forthcoming developments. But it took more than a millennium to bring these three elements into complete harmony.

The period which followed the invasion of about 2000 B.C. and lasted till about 1600 did not achieve this harmony. Of course, we know little about that period. On the one hand the small cities of the pre-Hellenic time were maintained. But the rulers or lords seem to have had no palaces that could be distinguished from the private buildings,<sup>21</sup> and in general the excavations have revealed a much more rustic and simple cultural niveau. The splendour of the close-by Minoan palaces may have had a rather paralysing effect on the development of those early Hellenes. Moreover the Cretans still controlled the sea.

<sup>21</sup> In my opinion the house Nr. D of Asine has rightly been claimed as the residence of a lord (cf. Froedin-Persson, *Asine*, 1938, fgg. 42, 49, 47); the same is true for the central establishment of Malthi (Valmin, *Swedish Messenia Expedition*, 1938, pp. 77 *et seq.*, fgg. 19 *et seq.*).

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It was as late as 1580 that the introduction of the chariot and of chivalric warfare brought about a complete change in social and cultural conditions. This was the beginning of the Mycenaean period. The same era witnessed the rise of an aristocratic-chivalric class from the common people, a class which entered into close relations with Crete and at times with the Orient.<sup>22</sup> From there they took over the palace-like houses, and, in keeping with the new aristocratic style, they fortified these residences or even made them into real citadels.

This change, indeed, led in a direction quite different from the one the polis was actually to follow. For all over Greece two separate social strata, a higher and a lower one, were now formed, which were no longer dependent on the individual cities. The upper stratum was embodied in a chivalric class, which applied the principle of association on an entirely different and rather supranational plane. Still in the Iliad we recognise how the lords, from Thessaly to Ithaca and to the Peloponnesus, form a unified social stratum, with its own public opinion and with the king of Mycenae as 'the most kingly', *primus inter pares*, at the helm. It is characteristic of that development that the position of this hegemon was rather shaky. According to the Iliad, there was so much criticism and opposition on the part of the other noble lords that an overlord such as Agamemnon had a hard time saving his prestige and the prerogatives of his position. But the point which concerns us most is that the local factors lost importance and interest in favour of the feudal cross-relations, arising from friendships among 'hosts' and 'guests' and family ties cutting across all territorial boundaries. A cultural expression of this supranational nobility is found—as Nilsson has taught us—in the evolution of a master religion of the Olympic gods with Zeus as the hegemon and with the *étiquette* of that nobility.<sup>23</sup>

Between 1200 and 1000 B.C. other invasions of the Eastern Mediterranean took place, to which the Mycenaean culture largely succumbed. The castles, palaces, and most of the settlements were destroyed. Many of the Mycenaean Greeks emigrated to the islands and to the west coast of Anatolia. The coarse, uncivilised Dorians and north-western Greeks pushed in from the mountain ranges of the Balkans.

When at about 1000 B.C. this movement came to a stop at last, it became evident that the nobility had survived the turmoil. We now find them

<sup>22</sup> Cf. especially my treatment in *Hethiter und Achaeer*, 1935, pp. 158 *et seq.*

<sup>23</sup> Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, I, 1941, pp. 327 *et seq.*; some further information also in my book on *Poseidon und die Entstehung des griechischen Goetterglaubens*, 1950, p. 153.

also in the new Greek settlements on the islands and in Ionia. Even the Dorians produced an analogous ruling class, which inserted itself adroitly into the indigenous nobility. And yet we recognise a decisive turn: the nobility had manifestly become impoverished, and the old castles and palaces were not rebuilt. They were replaced mostly by sanctuaries. In Ionia, likewise, we find no separate residences for the lords who now live in the city among the other citizens—as for instance Ulysses in the *Odyssey*—unless they preferred an estate in the countryside.

At this point the city life began to exercise its strongly equalising force in Hellas. The noble dynasties were the first victim. One by one the various families were deprived of their princely prerogatives. They were levelled down, as it were, into the stratum of nobles, a process for which the *Odyssey* gives a revealing illustration in the events on Ithaca. Thus we may fix the change from monarchy to aristocratic republic at about the eighth century. City and state had always been identical in Greece with its naturally small territories. Now the city-state became a *republic* for the first time. This was a major step toward the polis.

However, the supra-national connexion within the caste of nobles was still the more powerful factor. Friendship and hospitality were not barred by national boundaries, and the Lelantian feud, e.g., divided the Hellenic nobility according to such friendships. But everywhere we can observe how, gradually, this ruling class loses cohesion and finally disintegrates. Ever since the kings had been eliminated, the nobility had wielded absolute power and had given themselves to a shameless exploitation of the common people. The ensuing unbearable conditions made for disunity among the nobility itself; individual families quarrelled with one another; and now emerged the drawing power of what was to become the 'polis'.

The aristocratic-supranational interpretation of the principle of association was now opposed by a new interpretation of this same principle, in the *territorial* sense, applied to the inhabitants representing the individual *state*, and thus to the 'people of the state' (*Staatsvolk*). The 'citizenship' suddenly moved into the foreground. It is true that there were as yet many gradations in so far as rights were concerned; but the citizen body was already felt as a whole and as something that exceeded the distinctions of class. There was thus a *politeia* in the sense of *civitas*, defined as 'the Athenians', 'the Corinthians', etc. The assembly of the people, too, clearly demarcated this *politeia*, regardless of the fact that the poor enjoyed no active civic rights beyond that of participating in this assembly. But they were 'Athenians', or 'Corinthians', they had the basic privileges and

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the protection of their home-state and, in all probability, a vote in the assembly of the people.<sup>24</sup>

For the first time patriotism became the highest virtue in this *politeia*. For the first time the Greeks were filled with ambition and pride as *citizens*; and polis began to compete with polis. We seem to be witnessing the labour pains of the polis—a process which took place athwart the seventh and sixth centuries.

It is worth noting that the idea of the polis was first promoted by two rather different historical factors: by lawgivers like Solon and Pittacus on the one hand, and by tyrants and autocrats like Kypselos and Peisistratos on the other. In both cases the purpose was to break the hybris and injustice of the aristocratic regime and to free the people from lawlessness and economic distress.<sup>25</sup> Solon and Pittacus, who themselves belonged to the noble class, tried to find a compromise solution which would be bearable for both parties. Again and again we find the word *patris* in the poems of Solon; it is the polis of Athens, according to his words, over which the goddess Athena holds her protecting hands; on behalf of this polis he implores the gods to grant them *Eunomia*,<sup>26</sup> the boon of adulthood.

The polis idea of the tyrants was conceived differently. They too rejected the one-sided demands of the nobility, to which they incidentally belonged, and tried to reconcile the people with the upper classes on the basis of a common patriotism.<sup>27</sup> But they did not credit the people, the citizenship, which they thus created, with political maturity and the capacity for self-government. They claimed supreme authority, based on their personal and hereditary power. Here lay the inconsistency which eventually was to lead to their overthrow. The merit of the tyrants, however, was that they introduced and upheld the idea of *representative government* in the polis which was to take over the functions exercised so far by the

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<sup>24</sup> In Aristotle this aspect of the *politeia* has been rather distorted, in as much as he neglects the fact that, basically, membership in the citizenry was assured by the right of domicile, a right which was never contested, not even by the oligarchs, as is well known. Compared to this basic right of belonging to the citizenry, even the right to participate in the assembly of the people must appear as secondary.

<sup>25</sup> Pittacus belonged to the nobility at least through his marriage with a woman of the Eupatridae family.

<sup>26</sup> Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca*, 1949, Pallas Athena, Fgg. 3, 4; *patris*, Fgg. 2; 23, 9; 24, 8; *eunomia*, Fgg. 3, 32.

<sup>27</sup> How closely Peisistratos was related to the noble caste is revealed by the assistance which the nobility of Eretria, Thebes, and Argos gave him at his second return to Athens. Further, the Archon lists by Meritt, *Hesperia*, VIII, 1939, pp. 59 *et seq.* show that the Alcmaeonids lived unharmed and unmolested in Athens up to the assassination of Hipparchus and that they even held the highest positions.

courts of the nobility: the protection of the arts. Solemn festivals, competitive sports, and magnificent buildings were now in the service of this supreme cause; poets and poetry were promoted and supported.

When the Peisistratides fell and Solon's ideas finally triumphed over those of the tyrants, his young, and as yet very moderate, democracy took over from the tyrannis the supreme ideal of a representative polis, dedicated to the protection and promotion of the arts. This finally signified the *kairos* of optimal harmony among the three components of the polis, each of which had existed separately for a long time. The genesis of the polis was completed.

How the polis fulfilled its great mission in the fifth and fourth centuries cannot be developed in detail in these pages. We shall restrict ourselves to a summary enumeration of its most important innovations and creations.

In literature we owe to the polis tragedy and comedy; in the plastic and graphic arts the polis inaugurated the style we call 'classical', with its own ideal of beauty which has remained the ideal down to modern times. The revolutionary spirit of the polis manifested itself in a constant fight against the monarchical, dictatorial, or oligarchical forms of government and in the promotion of the democratic ideal and the autonomy of the citizen body. This achievement was paralleled by another revolutionary act: the emancipation of intellectual life from Greek mythology and the attempt to create a new concept of the universe with the help of philosophy, ethics, and science. The polis, in fact, succeeded in bringing philosophy to a bloom, in laying the foundations for science, and pointing the way to a new ethics. Plato and Aristotle failed, on the other hand, in their efforts to erect a new faith in the gods in place of the old religion which the age of enlightenment had undermined. At this point we see the limits that were set to the creative possibilities of the polis. Its revolutionary spirit had been able to destroy the old religion; but in its anthropocentric attitude it was unable to create a new one.

In conclusion let me mention one more important fact: the principle of autonomy in personal association remained valid throughout the bloom and maturity of the polis. Indeed, one gets the impression that the 'personal' character of association was even intensified. The sovereignty of the citizenry tolerated less and less restrictions, not even the smallest. It became more and more impatient of its own officials and functionaries and sought to free the assembly of the people (as the sole carrier of public opinion) of any restrictions whatever. For this purpose 'ostracism' was introduced already under Cleisthenes, and it became thus possible to exile

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every year one citizen for a period of ten years, often for no other reason than for having attracted public displeasure or suspicion. A short time later the election of the higher officials was replaced by appointment by lot: whereby, of course, these offices lost their significance. It is true that the individual citizen now enjoyed absolute freedom. He was allowed to write and teach, to act and create as freely as nowhere else in the world, for he was a co-sovereign and nobody's subject. But he who excelled in true creativeness found himself watched more suspiciously than ever by public opinion, which wielded supreme power. This public opinion threatened him with ostracism and lawsuits. Thus Anaxagoras was exiled; Pheidias died in prison; Aspasia was threatened with prosecution; Pericles was deprived of his office. Blind passion issued death sentence after death sentence in the lawsuit against the Hermocopidae; and capital punishment was meted out to the victorious generals of the battle of the Arinnusae. Finally public suspicion hit even the greatest and most innocent, Socrates. Freedom and creativity, passion and blind arbitrariness thus are close neighbours in this polis. Here again we become aware—as so often in history—of the ineluctable connexion between light and shadow in the same picture.

This brings us to the conclusion of these pages, in which we tried to show what a long and painstaking way history often has to go to arrive at the optimal result. The coincidence of Oriental, Aegean, and Indo-European factors, and an experimentation of well over a thousand years with all these components eventually brought about the polis.