

laws. The rule would still be egoism, but enlightened self-interest might be compatible with law and justice, as the most feasible way of living together. This view, though not an invitation to lawlessness, is still not compatible with the idea that the city is a life in common. This cool way of holding a fellow citizen at arm's length until one is sure he can get as much as he gives is not in the spirit of a "community." Accordingly, Aristotle argues against it in the *Politics*,¹³ where he attributes it to the Sophist, Lycophron. Since Lycophron was a Sophist of the second generation, a pupil of Gorgias, it is possible that a sort of contract-theory — a utilitarian development of the principle of self-interest — existed early in the fourth century. At a later date this kind of political philosophy reappeared in the Epicureans.

Before the close of the fifth century, then, the contrast of nature and convention had begun to develop in two main directions. The one conceived nature as a law of justice and right inherent in human beings and in the world. This view necessarily leaned to the assumption that the order in the world is intelligent and beneficent; it could be critical of abuses but it was essentially moralist and in the last resort religious. The other conceived nature non-morally, and as manifested in human beings it was self-assertion or egoism, the desire for pleasure or for power. This view might be developed as a kind of Nietzschean doctrine of self-expression, or in its more moderate forms it might become a kind of utilitarianism; the extreme forms could become theories of a definitely anti-social complexion. Already in the fifth century, therefore, there were ideas, not as yet systematic or abstract, which contain suggestions of most of the philosophical systems which were produced in the fourth century. Perhaps it needed only that Athens should fall upon evil days, as she did at the close of the Peloponnesian War, to make her people contemplative rather than active, and to make her a "school for Hellas" in a sense of which Thucydides never dreamed.

SOCRATES

The personal agency by which suggestive ideas were turned into explicit philosophy was Socrates, and, curiously enough, all the possibilities were equally indebted to him. The profoundly ex-

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

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

What exactly were Socrates's conclusions about politics is not known. But in general the implications of identifying virtue with knowledge are too clear to be missed. (Socrates must have been an outspoken critic of the Athenian democracy, with its presumption that any man can fill any office.) This is broadly suggested in

the *Apology* and practically stated by Xenophon in the *Memorabilia*; ¹⁴ and in any case Socrates's trial and conviction are a little hard to understand unless there was "politics" somewhere behind it. It may very well be, then, that some considerable measure of the political principles developed in the *Republic* really belonged to Socrates and were learned directly from him by Plato. However this may be, the intellectualist cast of the *Republic*, the inclination to find salvation in an adequately educated ruler, is certainly an elaboration of Socrates's certainty that virtue, political virtue not excluded, is knowledge.

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¹⁴ Bk. I, ch. ii, 9.