

THE THOUGHT OF SOCRATES.

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I.

EVERY exposition of Greek thought, from the most pedantic to the most popular, has been divided into the two chapters: "Before Socrates," "After Socrates"; between which has stood a third, devoted to Socrates himself. Though he published no book in prose or verse, no philosophic hexameters on nature, no dialectic treatise on the Absolute, no criticism on ethics, politics, or the divinities that shape or refuse to shape the ends of man, his centrality to the development of speculation, as the mind which, while itself indifferent to the activities of its predecessors, brought to light other principles not only directive for thought in hitherto uncharted realms, but essential for any rational solution of those problems already broached, has been until very recently beyond all dispute, and will always in any case challenge disproof. And the importance of his practical wisdom for the unwritten history of conduct is presumably quite as great. Thus we are now face to face with one of the five or six most impressive and vital questions in the history of intelligence (as opposed to the history of human vanities and insanities—the rise and fall of dynasties and the interminable slaughters on land and sea): just what did this man stand for who lived so long ago under the hill temple-crowned, in the market-place girded by porticoes, within the walls against which even then the hostile armies were more than once encamped?

The question is difficult not alone because it is so much larger than every writer who would answer it; but because it is just here that our sources are so difficult and confusing. Biographical reports, when uncontaminated by miraculous elements or by suspicion of rhetorical purpose or partisanship, when squaring with the public customs and affairs of the times, and finally, when tending toward a consistent portrayal of character and conduct, we may trust, in

default of any contrary evidence. Allowing for some possible ambiguities of imperfect expression, I suppose no scholar would seriously quarrel with the statements of the preceding chapter, as not being founded on serviceable authority. It called for no special gift to note and record the concrete events, whatever gifts were needed to record them beautifully. But to understand thought, thought new and deep, expressed symbolically, whimsically, mischievously, trippingly on the tongue, now to this one, now to that, now here, now there, now touching this matter, now that, did call for an alertness of attention, a keenness of perception, a steadiness of memory, and an objectivity of judgment not present at Athens, nor indeed commensurate with man's limited brains yet anywhere; while to set it all down as if verbatim was, as shown in a previous chapter, the attempt either of self-delusion or of literary fiction. We are shut up forever to reading between the lines and to estimating the cumulative evidence of innumerable hints, which, taken separately, we would have no means of testing, and no right to feel sure of. We can bring the difficulty home to ourselves, if we imagine posterity, without the *Essays*, dependent for its knowledge of Emerson's thought, on (hypothetical) miscellanies of conversation reported and edited by Alcott, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and other neighbors of the Concord apple-trees and pines.

The histories of philosophy, despite the imposing names on their title pages, mislead us (to borrow the language of Frau Academia) with the specious clarity of a rationalizing schematismus. Here just what Socrates repudiated and contributed is numbered and sectioned and paragraphed with that illuminating precision which facilitates preparation for the final examination. The studies of Grote and of Zeller, based upon a wide erudition and developed with a philosophic grasp it were pedantry to commend, convey also a misleading impression of certainty, which the contradictory results of the German scholarship of the last fifteen years, of Doering with his Xenophontic Socrates, of Joël who clings to Aristotle, of Roeck who picks his data from portions of Xenophon and from much indirect and elusive testimony in the attitude of contemporaries or in the comment of tradition, tends to destroy, without, however, furnishing any constructive substitution in which we can feel full confidence. The new critics confuse while they help; and the day has gone by when even a popular essayist can content himself with compiling from the old. Tentatively and modestly I will set down my own opinions, which, I suppose, will differ from those of better men in lacking the organization and definitiveness that, though

much to be desired, it is impossible for me with intellectual honesty to reach.

II.

What thought had been busied with before Socrates is, from the point of view of its dynamic contributions, far more important in the case of Plato in whom unite elements of the Eleatic, the Heraclitic, and the Pythagorean speculation, than in the case of his master who is notorious for his break with the past. From the point of view of a crisis in the human intellect, however, it is necessary to make some mention of that thought here. A few words, then, with the emphasis on antecedents rather than on influence.

During a generation or two preceding Socrates, in the sea-washed colonies to east and west had developed a number of theories of universal nature, as free and large and intangible as the starry heavens and salt winds about them. The search for the universal explanation of things which had begun in the naive materialistic monisms of the Milesians, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, as deductions from the apparent omnipresence of water, the atmospheric indefinite, or air, turned, with that sudden acceleration which characterized Greek progress everywhere in the fifth century, very shortly to rational analysis of concept and sense-impression of the phenomenal world. The Eleatics of Magna Graecia, holding the primacy of reason over sense, discovered the antinomies which forced them to deny reality to change and plurality; the first of metaphysicians, they proclaimed the absolute and pointed a way to scepticism. The great Ephesian, though positing like the physicists of Miletus, a material principle, fire, as the substratum of the multitudinous visible universe, is chiefly notable for paradoxes, as analytically derived as those of the Eleatics, which forced him to deny ultimate and permanent reality to anything but the Logos, the law of change itself, and to affirm relativity, the absolute instability of all things, as the inherent logical implication of being—pleasure conditioned by pain, life by death, thesis by anti-thesis. In the eternal flux there can be no certainty of truth, and Heraclitus, too, points a way to scepticism.

Pythagoreanism, coming after all pretty close to the intellectual basis of the world-ground in its doctrine of numbers, however fantastically applied and involved in that hocus-pocus which so often has accompanied primitive mathematics, is an esoteric cult of religious mystics with liturgy and rites.

Empedocles of Agrigentum, imagining a cosmogony almost as mythical and arbitrary as that of Hesiod, yet peopling it with eternal substances (earth, air, fire, and water) and eternal principles of cosmic energy (attraction and repulsion), is, from our point of view to-day, physicist rather than philosopher. So too chiefly Anaxagoras of Athens, as far as we can judge, who taught infinite atoms and a universal mind-stuff.

Contemporary with Socrates off at Abdera in Thrace Democritus was teaching in numerous books now lost a mechanism of nature—atoms, motion, and the void—which, with modifications and extensions and a more elaborate terminology, is the physics and chemistry of to-day—or at least of yesterday.

These courageous efforts to master experience were all primarily directed outward. The challenge came from the majesty and mystery of the external universe. But in meeting it thought soon became conscious of its own mystery, and man himself became part of the problem. In the irremediable flux of Heraclitus and the cold atomism of Democritus men's minds tend to vanish into mere sensations differing for each: truth is as multiple as humanity: there is no universal principle of knowledge or thinking or conduct: man is the measure of all things. So Protagoras, the sophist. Meantime the later Eleatic, the sophist Gorgias, perhaps in half-jest, has pushed the dialectic reasoning of the school to the negation of being itself.

The path is open to absolute scepticism. The exploration of reason is ending in unreason. Speculation has thus far approached man from without; and that way madness lies. It must make a new start,—with man himself, man in his humble activities and daily round, irrespective of atoms clashing in the void and theories clashing in the brain. The philosophic implications in the simple mental life of an Athenian cobbler or saddler or armor-smith may bring us back to some conviction of permanence and certainty in thought. Thereafter it will be time enough to look again at the cosmos. Socrates, beginning and ending with man, ultimately saves Greek philosophy from self-slaughter. It is not for nothing that he is an Athenian.

But it is easy to present the situation too academically. Scepticism is troubling a few speculative heads. Their notions are abroad in Athens, imported over seas in parchment-rolls, well boxed from the damp salt air, or stalking the streets on the lips of the traveling professors. They are affecting not only the intellects of the abstracted, but doubtless the moral conduct of some of the

active young men; but that Socrates in his new direction was consciously phrasing a philosophic task, or by saving philosophy was saving mankind, are propositions which distort both the larger mission of the sage and the relatively secondary importance of technically philosophic systems for the public health. From Socrates, as must be noted later, most subsequent Greek schools seem directly or indirectly to derive. But he was not aiming to reform philosophy. Nor could his re-formation of philosophy be a revolution—except in philosophy, a fairly negligible phase of human progress, if we take into account the few in any age who mull over its puzzles. No, Socrates's interest was in men and his aim to reform men; and, though he doubtless checkmated philosophic nihilism in more than one aggressive young dupe, he awoke to a sense of their ignorance and their heritage in the laws of the spirit many more, less sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought than ailing from that moral lethargy which still keeps out the kingdom.

It is easy in another matter to misrepresent the situation. It is not as if philosophy and morals came to a standstill, say about 440, to await help from Socrates. Historians distort the chronology. Gorgias, Protagoras, and Anaxagoras were teaching in Athens long after that date, and scepticism itself may not have been full blown when Socrates began his public work. Direct evidence is lacking, but there is plausibility in the conjecture that his first conversations antedated even the first appearance of the sophists. Gorgias, for example, came to Athens in 427, only five years before Socrates was lampooned in the *Clouds*.

In still a third matter the situation may be misrepresented. Socrates, during his long life, was not the only teacher at Athens who held that the proper study of mankind is man. Protagoras himself laid the stress there, as the logical result of his own scepticism, and the later sophists seem to have occupied themselves entirely with intellectual conduct and with moral conduct, like Socrates, independent, as to the former, of cosmic speculations and, as to the latter, of mere tradition. They certainly also used the cross-examining method, associated now with Socrates, on which a word below. As with Socrates, their business was the education of youth.

But Socrates is a greater sophist—not simply because he tarries in Athens, and they wander from city to city; not only because he teaches in the Agora and they in private homes; not altogether because he gives and they sell instruction, nor even because his wisdom is humble that it knows no more and their knowledge sometimes proud in that it learned so much—greater because of greater

moral earnestness. There were honest sophists, although contemporary writers and later anecdotists testify that some even then were the unprincipled jugglers with reason that have given the name its long current and unfortunate association. But none except Socrates made truth and righteousness the be-all and the end-all. A greater sophist, also, it need not be added, because a greater intellect and a greater personality.

And now, if with a little more imagination than poor Wagner, the student has begun

“Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen,

let him attempt

“Zu schauen, wie vor uns ein weiser Mann gedacht.”

III.

The thought of Socrates is implicit in his method. He was not a formal lecturer, as other sophists doubtless were at times, and as Plato and Aristotle were later. He talked, as all Athens was talking; he asked questions, and applied the answers to the business of further questions, as men had done before and have done ever since. He utilized on occasion the keener procedure of the disciplined mind, the dialectic which, applied first by Zeno the Eleatic to abstract matter and motion, etc., it was now the sophists' service to apply to human conduct. He shared, I repeat, his cross-examining method of instruction with the sophists, just as Jesus shared his parabolic instruction with the rabbis. But like Jesus, by a powerful originality he made a common device so much his own that we now connect it only with him.

Aristophanes, as we have seen, represents him as formally teaching his method, but this appears to be a wilful or reckless identification of Socrates with his fellow sophists who we know imparted the art of clever reasoning as a practical instrument, whereas Socrates, according to all other traditions, used it to impart truths beyond itself, teaching method merely by showing it in operation.

“He conducted discussion by proceeding step by step from one point of general agreement to another” (*Memorabilia*, IV, 6), and “by shredding off all superficial qualities laid bare the kernel of the matter” (*Memorabilia*, III, 2). He begins with the point of view of his interlocutor or opponent and, with an irony kindly or irritating according to circumstances and with frequent use of

homely illustrations, leads him on inductively to one admission after another, until he sees the implication in his own thought, that is, until he is face to face with himself as the unwitting possessor of a particular truth. Each man has within him truth, though as yet foetal and powerless to be born; Socrates comes calling himself the midwife. This was presumably his interpretation of the Delphic adage, "know thyself"; and, far from proud of his midwifery, he was "eager to cultivate a spirit of independence in others" (*Memorabilia*, IV, 7). He bored deeper into the strata of thought than the other sophists, and knew better its hidden caverns and springs; and, more than they, tapped it for living waters. The *intellectus sibi permisus*, "the intellect left to itself,"—the phrase is Bacon's—the spontaneous reason of haphazard man he strove to make conscious and self-directive. His aim implied confidence in universals of the truth of which each individual partook, as well as confidence in human nature capable of self-salvation.

All our sources indicate that Socrates was unwearied in his inquiries for the *τί ἐστι*, the What, the essential meaning of a thing. In Xenophon he appears discriminating, defining. The Platonic figure is presumably dramatically true to his intellectual attitude. The nub of the satire of the *Clouds* is rationalizing fanaticism corrupting the youth (for which Aristophanes surely should have borrowed Schopenhauer's Aristophanean coinage applied to Hegel—*Windbeutelei*, windbaggery). And Aristotle says in a famous passage (*Metaphysics*, I, 6, 3) that has caused a deal of trouble: "Socrates discovered inductive discourse and the definition of general terms," in contrast, as the modern critics point out, to the mere grammatical distinctions of the sophists. But our critics have certainly exaggerated what were for Socrates simply short formularies of the factors to be examined, not logic-proof concepts of abstract philosophy. My Socrates was not a *Begriffsphilosoph*, and would have enjoyed the practical joke of Diogenes (of the school of Antisthenes, a disciple of the midwife), who, hearing (as the story goes) of Plato's definition of *homo sapiens* as a featherless biped, plucked a rooster and carried it over to the Academy as an example of Plato's "man."

IV.

But these short formularies of the factors to be examined were of prime importance. Socrates emphasized the rational, the cognitive, aspect of virtue, as no other teacher: *τὰς γὰρ ἀρετὰς ἐπι-*

στήμας ἐποίει—“He made the virtues knowledges” (Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, I, 1), and since our first historian of philosophy recurs to the theory at length a dozen times (in all three *Ethics*), to explain and refute it, with that modernity and subtilty that forever astonishes us in

“Il maestro di color che sanno,”

we must accept it as true at least to one side of Socrates's thought. Virtue is knowledge. In a sense: “To be pious is to *know* what is due to the gods; to be just is to *know* what is due to men; to be courageous is to *know* what is to be feared and what is not; to be temperate is to *know* how to use what is good and avoid what is evil” (*Encycl. Brit.*).

Various comments difficult to organize crowd upon us for expression. What of this dynamic relation between right thinking and right conduct, between ignorance and evil? How did Socrates arrive at the idea? How far did he admit its modification by other factors in human nature? Has it an element of truth?

The idea, in the first place, were a witness to the character of Socrates, whom a noble serenity of reason dominated like an irrefragable god. It were, too, an idea typically Ionic, Athenian, sprung from that stock which stressed the *λόγος* of life, even as the ideal of the Doric (Sparta) was the *ἐγκράτεια*, the *ἔργα* (deeds).

Socrates saw the actual identity of knowing and being in the theoretical sciences: to know geometry is to be a geometer. He may not have appreciated the difference of aim in the practical arts. He may have said that to know medicine is to be a physician, and thus have construed conduct itself as the science-art of life, so that knowing virtue was the same as being virtuous, and he may not have sufficiently perceived that the aims of the theoretic science are self-inclusive, and those of the practical arts in every case respective somewhats beyond themselves.

However, I do not care to push the Aristotelian critique further, as my imagination is haunted with something like an uncomfortably reiterated and all but inscrutable chuckle of Socrates that yet seems to say: “This great man's subtilty and system takes the old beggar too solemnly. And I didn't reckon in the irrational part of the soul (*ἄλογον μέρος ψυχῆς*)? And the will being in my view subservient to thought, the result is determinism? And was the marketplace, then, such a poorly equipped laboratory that my researches left me so ignorant of the twists and starts and explosions of human nature? And will he deny the larger implications for systematic

thought (if he must make me a system) which may be read out of my dealings with men?"

Granted that Socrates in speech and practice proceeded from the proposition to know is to be, 'applied specifically to conduct; granted that like every new and great thought, like the Copernican astronomy, like Biblical criticism, it was at first formulated too absolutely; granted that Socrates was not a theoretic psychologist and that indeed the psychology of the will and the emotions was not very extensively developed even till long after Aristotle; granted that life is forever in advance of all speculation upon it and that the first serious speculations on morals may as such have been an inadequate or inconsistent phrasing of impulses, motives, and ethical stimulus obvious even in the veriest honey-smearing brat screaming under his mother's sandal in an Athenian alley-way: it is yet impossible to square the thought and service of Socrates entirely with Aristotle's report; it is yet impossible to identify my Socrates entirely with him of the text-books.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, said the adoring Hebrew; to know the right, as implicit in thy nature, is the beginning of wisdom, doubtless said the quizzical Greek: each in his own tongue. Knowledge is the *sine qua non*: not following a Pythagorean ritual, not following the Attic sires, not in itself following the laws of the state, but ethical insight. Socrates preached the self-reliance of an individual moral vision which was yet founded in universal man.

After the insight, what? For a finely balanced soul, in a sense, nothing. Insight merges into conduct; the initial readjustments of knowledge become, if not considered too curiously by the analytic psychologist, the readjustments of action; there is no fight pending with the world, the flesh, or the devil; he sees and he forthwith is what he sees. This was, I think, Socrates's ideal man. Socrates made less than we do of character up-built by struggle and of the glories of doing one's duty against the grain. He was a Greek; we are Teutons with a Hebraic education.

Note, however, the condition: "for a finely balanced soul." Self-control, balance, poise, is the cardinal Socratic virtue. When present, moral insight is moral conduct. But more than that, its presence is practically identical with moral insight as well. "Between wisdom and balance of soul he drew no distinction"—*σοφίαν καὶ σωφροσύνην οὐ διώριζεν* (Memorabilia, III, 9) is Xenophon's comment, and not too much stress is to be laid on the fact that his word is *σοφία* (wisdom), not *ἐπιστήμη* (knowledge). And in a

neighboring passage, "He said that justice, moreover, and all other virtue is wisdom."

Is, then, complete insight itself possible without this balance? If we take Xenophon absolutely, apparently not. Wrong conduct is either blindness or madness, i. e., either failure of insight or lack of soul balance; but these are practically two aspects of the same thing. Balance of soul, insight, right conduct is the Socratic manhood, the not entirely mysterious three-in-one of this pagan anthropologist.

But what of the avowed situation of Ovid's Medea, and of so many others less damned to fame—

"Video meliora, proboque:
Deteriora sequor"?

Would Socrates have denied the major?—Presumably he would first have questioned it; but often enough he was face to face with gifted men, like Alcibiades, who knew right and did wrong, with intelligent but vicious humanity where the cure, if any, could not be alone merely more intellectuality. He believed in training soul and body to self-mastery, not only as right conduct in itself but as the prerequisite for right thinking and right conduct (cf. *Memorabilia*, IV, 5). This is potent to any one who reads between the lines of our sources; and has perceived that Socrates's identification of different factors, is, if anything, more than an insistence on the primary importance of moral cognition, but an immortal hyperbole of an original mind, not busied with a formal system, and not bothered by its inconsistencies, as when perhaps he said "courageous men are those who have knowledge to cope with terrors and dangers well and nobly," the adverbs seeming to imply the recognition of traits of character antecedent to the knowledge.

He recognized, though he may never have formulated, back of self-control, insight, and conduct, the facts of temperament and environment, without wavering in practice from his belief in the relative teachability of virtue analogous to the teaching of a trade or art. He does not, however, seem to have valued over-much teaching through the emotions. There are hints that he more than once stirred the emulous heart by noble examples cited, but the oft mentioned enthusiasm of his listeners was roused usually either by his sweet reasonableness or the unplanned and unmediated effect of his own brave and kindly personality. Of the blazing passion, in plea or threat, of Mohammed and the Hebrew prophets, or of the

austere yet plangent appeal of the loving Jesus there is not a trace. There are many different voices for the schooling of man.

The new pedagogy stands quite across the world from where Socrates stood. With its experiments on the ethical emotions of cats and dogs, its statistics of innocent nursery prayers and depravities, its questionnaires on the moral agitations at puberty, and its roll-calls of public pensioners in Sing Sing or Fort Leavenworth, it has all but demonstrated the negligibility of knowing as a factor in virtue. And the parlor-philosopher, calling Sunday afternoon, shakes his head and assures me there is no connection between education and morality. Sad. And true, possibly, if by knowing we mean knowing mathematics and by education education in linguistics or the new pedagogy; verbiage, if we mean knowing moral values. The intellectual is still fundamental, and great character is still impossible without just thought as a big block in the underpinning. Meantime the common sense of mankind is rather with Socrates at bottom than with the new pedagogy, unconsciously testifying something of its unshaken view-point in countless familiar turns of speech: "*Know* the right and do it;" "You ought to *know* better;" "Poor fellow, he didn't *know* how disgraceful his actions were;" "What could you expect from a man who never had a chance to *know* the ideals of good citizenship;" "You're wrong, can't you *see* it?" etc., etc., all of which adumbrate the cognitive (without psychologizing it away from the imagination) and neglect the emotional altogether, as dynamic for conduct.

Kant founded the moral life in the good will; Socrates in right thinking. Yet each implies the factor made paramount by the other: Kant says act so that the maxim of thy conduct is fit to become universal law and implies the rationalizing, generalizing, judging, knowing mind; Socrates says a man without self-control is little better than the beasts, and implies that energy of soul to which modern psychology gives the name will. A worthy moral life is impossible without both, but the romantic ethical tendencies of today need the propaedeutic of Socrates more than of Kant. The good will we have always with us, giving often enough, with ghastly best wishes, unwittingly a serpent for a fish and a stone for bread; but the intelligence to see the practical bearings of conduct and to discriminate between higher and lower ideals is too often lacking—to the dwarfing of the individual and to the confusion of society. The fool in Sill's poem (which goes deep) prayed not for the good will, but for wisdom; and therefore the less fool he.

Socrates associated *ἀρετή*, "virtue," with some further ideas

more prominent in his thought than would be presumed from the brief mention that can here be made of them.

He was, I believe, an incorrigible utilitarian. The measure of any thing's worth was to him in its adaptation to use. But after all, the crux is in the content of use; and Socrates recognized only noble uses. Reason as we will, we cannot reason away his implicit idealism: such and such conduct is useful—for what—for making you useful to the state, a brave soldier? for making you worth while to yourself, self-respecting? "But what the use?" We can not go far without standing before the mystery of the approving or condemning moral consciousness itself. Socrates appears never to have thought the matter out; nor need we just here. In spite of his rationalistic bent, he accepted as instinctively as most men the obligation to the ideal.

He preached companionship; and boasted himself to be both lover and the pander too. "I am an adept in love's lore"...the disciples "will not suffer me day or night to leave them, forever studying to learn love-charms and incantations at my lips." These words are found not in Plato's Symposium, but in the prosaic narrative of Xenophon, whose placidity in assuring us in another passage that "all the while it was obvious the going forth of his soul was not towards excellence of body in the bloom of beauty, but rather towards faculties of the soul unfolding in virtue," is a good indication that we have here an element of the historic Socrates. But friendship was founded on character: "In whatsoever you desire to be esteemed good, endeavor to be good" (*Memorabilia*, II, 6); to be a good friend, you must be a good man. Love was also fellow-service: the good friend tried to make his friend better. On the other hand, it was useful to acquire friends—they were the best possessions. The politic utilitarian peeps out again. But useful for what?—for the cult of generous helpers, for the freemasons of the Good. We come round again and again to the center of the Socratic utilitarianism which measured finally the useful things in the moral realm by their usefulness for the ideal manhood. I have employed the vilified name for rhetorical surprise. It has here little in common with its use in modern philosophy, though modern utilitarians have been too ready to exclaim, "Lo, he has become as one of us."

Socrates would not have been a Greek if his ethics had not had a social and political reference. Ideal manhood and ideal citizenship would have been for practical teaching one thing to him. He would have been hugely impressed with the adroit patience and

clever tinkering amid loneliness and deprivation of Robinson Crusoe; he would have admitted doubtless that the brooding, skinclad sailor was not without some insight and some self-control which is of virtue; but for Socrates he would have lacked both the main opportunities and the main ends of good conduct: a state of fellow men. Thus the Athenian stands in almost brutal contrast to those gentle hermits of the inner life who have in times past peopled the caves of Egypt and the crags of the Himalayas.

This is clear for instance in the emphasis he seems to have put upon the ideal of a leader, the man best equipped to manage something, whether the drilling of a chorus for the theater, or the marshalling of soldiers into battle, or the ruling of a commonwealth.

Some aspects of this ideal are to be sure extra-ethical. The Greek *ἀρετή* means human excellence, *Tüchtigkeit*, efficiency, with or without what we would call an ethical connotation, and it illustrates that differing focus of thought, that differing idea-group, that differing line of cleavage that so often strikes the student of a foreign tongue. I have not hesitated, however, heretofore, to translate it "virtue," for it is its aspect of moral efficiency that is so prominent in Socrates, though its absolute sense of simple efficiency doubtless tended in his thinking to specious analogies. Our word "good" offers a modern parallel, both in its double sense and in its sometimes ambiguous and misleading use in thought.

Socrates would not have been a Greek if he had not emphasized the sanctity of the sovereign laws as a guiding principle of conduct. The Greeks often spoke as if the state were the end of man; that is, as if man received his justification only in so far as he contributed to its perfection. That a state is but the wise communal means to opportunity, variety, unfoldment, manhood, of the only earthly reality that counts, individual human beings, is scarcely the point of departure of Plato's Republic or even of Aristotle's Politics, but is the result of a long development in political science, fascinating, but irrelevant here. Just how far Socrates failed to see it as we do, we have no certain knowledge. It is, however, on several grounds, to be confidently presumed that he derived the sanction of the civil law from justice, and not as is often declared, justice from the law. In the corrupt and shifting politics of Athens there were laws which he condemned and deliberately disobeyed in the interests of higher laws. And he would have taken courageously by the arm the Sophoclean Antigone, as she determined to bury her brother Polyneices in spite of the state decree, and have said, "Thou art right, my child; indeed,

'The life of these laws is not of to-day,
Or yesterday; but from all time, and, lo,
Knoweth no man when first they were
put forth.' "

V.

That Socrates conceived the laws of right thinking and doing as organic and not statutory, as not imposed from without but as implicated in the nature of the organism and as universal as man seems clear from the general tendency and headway of his teachings. A ship may tack more than once in its course, but we measure the meaning and purpose of the voyage correctly only when we have absorbed the casual deviations into a more comprehensive cartography. His conception of virtue has the transcendental implication: it roots in a beyond; conceptually, in the universality of the ideal; categorically, in his naive and unexamined assumption of man's sense of obligation to the ideal when discovered.

This is the thoroughfare from ethics to religion. When the soul, finally conscious of that transcendental implication (though it be named more simply, or named not at all), and awake with rejoicing or dismay to the realization that virtue streams ultimately from the shining foreheads of the gods, it perforce reaches out with trust or prayer. It becomes Micah uttering the finality: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Nor is the essential attitude altered if for his baffled spirit the Divine Singular or Plural merges into the Infinite Mystery that rebukes our petty vocabularies. There is no other highway. The philosophic reason that, examining the transcendental bearings of logic and nature, arrives at a world-ground, arrives only at the intellectual last, at the speculative satisfaction, which, though it may bulwark religion, can scarcely compel it. The feeling of physical helplessness or dependence or terror, the suggestions of spirit-things from dream or hallucination, or eery winds or nodding tree, may issue in beliefs with incantations and petitions and burnt offerings, reachings out to a Superior or a Host, but this is religion only in the Lucretian sense, denying often enough even the majesty of man himself—

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

A not ignoble morality is possible, unaccompanied by the reaching out which merges it with religion; but religion (apart

from anthropological investigation) gives over not only its dignity and its beauty, but even its meaning if sundered from exalted morality.

If to Socrates was not revealed the transcendental implication of his life, if Socrates reached not out for the justification and sustenance of his ethic towards a Divine, then Socrates, though at the temple door, and though a servant there who worked righteousness and thus, according to bluff and honest Peter, also acceptable to Him, was still not a teacher of religion. His character, his service would remain lofty memorial of humanity, lofty witness of a god unknown; but he were still not a religious mind. This *if* we have yet to consider.

It becomes more and more plausible that the fatal indictment is rooted in observed fact: "Socrates is guilty of not worshipping the gods whom the city worships." If he had been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries at that time newly popular, his apologists would have risen forthwith against the dicasts. Plato's Apology practically dodged this charge of the indictment. Aristophanes, years before, had formulated it, and we cannot any longer throw Aristophanes peremptorily out of court as a mere irresponsible buffoon in an ugly temper. Satire makes no appeal unless it phrases a common belief: there would be nothing fetching about a satire on Roosevelt as an atheist, or on Emerson as a hunter and rough-rider, except as a cheaply comic inversion of well-known habits and traits, and Aristophanes was hardly perpetrating that sort of jest. His satire on the sordidness of the school-house was founded on the fact of the poor and mean estate of Socrates's person; his satire on the Socratic speculations was founded in the fact of Socrates's perpetual rationalizing; his satire on the corruption of youth on the fact of Socrates's influencing young men to think new thoughts unprescribed by the elders; and his satire on Socrates's irreligion must likewise have been founded on fact—misunderstood fact, possibly, but fact misunderstood only as most of Athens may have misunderstood it. The Socrates of Plato, perhaps, helps us little; but it is to be observed that his remarks on dreams, oracles and the gods have an elusive playfulness or poetry, pointing if pointing at all beyond Plato, to a mind rather mischievously at ease in Zion, but not hostile to contemporary beliefs only because so far above them; and that his beautiful prayer to "Pan and ye other gods who frequent this spot" asks, quite contrary to popular petition, "in the first place to be good within"; and that the nearer Plato's Socrates seems to approach historic reality the more his

religious allusions approach the indefinite "Divine," and the more eloquent is the expression of the moral law. The movement of thought with which Socrates was most nearly associated was away from the folk religion. Socrates was so much with Euripides, the infidel poet of the Enlightenment, that rumor accused him of dramatic collaboration. The chorus at the end of the *Frogs*—a satire on that poet—sings with meaning: "Hail to him who [unlike Euripides] neither keeps company nor gossips with Socrates." And again, the keen intelligence of Socrates, as we have tried to analyze him, consorts awkwardly with the popular Olympians.

Against all this, we have the explicit testimony of the *Memorabilia*: Socrates was the most orthodox son of the state religion; the pillar and deacon of the church; the ambling odor of sanctity, now closeted with this priest now with that, running about from altar to altar with incense and winecup or telling his beads to every saint in the calendar. We share Xenophon's own puzzlement that the state could have condemned to death such a simple-minded old gentleman for impiety.

But this was not the man they condemned. As suggested in the first chapter, it was almost a formula with Xenophon, when he admired a man (and he had in excess the goodly gift of admiration) to extol him for the piety and pious practices which played a dominant part in the eulogist's own life. That he deliberately grafted these domestic pieties upon Socrates is impossible; if he had conceived Socrates as the impious neglecter or defamer of the gods, he would have been the last to attach himself or to rise in defense of the man. But that he absurdly misconstrued him seems patent. Socrates shared, as no other teacher, the life of his city; and the religious rites were so closely associated with folk-habits that he may well have attended them from time to time in the satisfaction of the social instinct of man. He may well not have sloughed off some deep-rooted ancestral prejudices: even Emerson raised his hands with the dismay of all his Puritan sires when he discovered the children in the house playing battledore and shuttlecock one Sabbath morn. He may well have used often enough the current coin of speech, in Greek, as in all languages full of conventional religious phrases. But it was not alone in whatever unconscious relations Socrates may have maintained to the state religion that Xenophon misconstrued him. The profounder interests and ideas and temperament of Socrates he equally misread. Socrates visited everybody and studied everywhere: but he was not necessarily more a hierophant for visiting a seer than he was

a shoemaker for visiting a cobbler. "When any one came seeking for help which no human wisdom could supply, he would counsel him to give heed to divination" (*Memorabilia*, IV, 7): the Socratic irony Xenophon presumably never half mastered. And, again, if Xenophon had asked him if he believed in Zeus and Athene and Apollo, he would doubtless have said yes, without hypocrisy, but also without explaining the ethnic period which lay between Xenophon's meaning of belief and his own. I myself believe in those resplendent deities. The fact is that religious narrowness always naively interprets the religious life of another by its own, unless kept back by clubs and spears. Give it the salute of mere human recognition, and it claims you for its sect. I have heard of an old lady who was moved by the orthodoxy of "that devout man, Mr. Gibbon." Joseph Cook, after an impertinent pilgrimage to Concord, announced so blatantly his conversion of Emerson that the family finally caused a printed denial to be circulated. The evangelist's methods were sometimes disingenuous; but here he seems merely to have fallen victim to his fatuity. The apostle probably asked: "Mr. Emerson, do you believe in sin? in salvation? in the saviour? in rewards and punishments? in the scriptures?" And the patient heathen as probably nodded a winsome assent of infinite detachment. I used to see at Cambridge my revered teacher William James crossing over every morning at nine o'clock to the brief chapel exercises in the yard, and have heard him both commended and ridiculed by students who equally misconceived the simplicity and depth of that analytic yet brooding mind.

But we are approaching a point of view. If Xenophon cannot be taken literally, he adumbrates a positive truth. If Socrates was not religious in the folk-sense, he was religious in a higher sense. He did recognize the transcendental implication. Even Xenophon now and then seems to have caught his larger phrase: "His formula of prayer was simple—Give me that which is best for me." And it is difficult to imagine Plato making an absolute atheist even the dramatic protagonist of an ethical philosophy in which the transcendental implication is consciously conceived as fundamental. But much further it seems impossible to go. Socrates recognized the divine foundation and sanction of the moral law, whether he ever uttered the argument from design so rhetorically developed by Xenophon or not. But the rest is silence. Whether he held to one divine being, as is not unlikely; and whether immortality was more than the high hope of the *Apology*, as seems doubtful—we can not report. An early tradition tells of a Hindu conversing with Soc-

rates (and it is not historically impossible that some soldier from the Indus, impressed into the Persian armies, remained in Greece, as exile or slave, after the defeat). And he said, "Tell me, Socrates, what is the substance of your teaching?" "Human affairs." "But you can not know human affairs if you don't know first the divine." Socrates, though no Oriental, may have assented in his own fashion. Yet the tradition hints at the true situation. He proclaimed the nobility of man, rather than the decrees of a god. He found the divine written in the human heart and brain, not on tablets of stone in the mountains. He came with no avowed revelation; he burned with no wrath against the folk-religion; he inaugurated no specifically religious reform. He was a messenger, a ministrant, a saviour, whose ethical idealism in word and conduct had its conscious religious aspect; but he was not primarily a religious leader. Mohammed passed from Allah down to man; it was man who led Socrates on to Zeus.

Yet the indictment went on to accuse him of introducing gods of his own. Of this there is no evidence in the sense apparently intended. Plato makes Meletus call Socrates during the trial "a complete atheist"; and, when Meletus hung up the indictment he was either wilfully lying or but stating an assumed corollary to what was possibly to him the sum of atheism—denial of the city's gods. Or the historic kernel may be to seek in Socrates's modes of thinking and speaking about the Divine. What's in a name? Everything for popular thought. Emerson's "Brahma" is to many people either a meaningless or a blasphemous poem; change the name to "God" and they would paste it in their hymn-books. Describe with all science and beauty the life-habits and appearance of a flower, and then halt in a momentary slip of memory, and your amateur botanist supposes you an ignoramus because you can't name it. For most people a rose, if named *Symplocarpus foetidus*, would *not* smell as sweet. If the originality of Socrates ever invented new names for divine things, that would have been sufficient grounds for his enemies to suspect him of inventing new divinities; just as his use at other times of familiar names seems to have been a good ground for such friends as Xenophon to suppose him orthodox. For the rest, to me this specification in the indictment is but one more proof that the Socratic message of righteousness was often enough verbally associated with the transcendental implication. For, when we say that Socrates was not primarily a religious teacher we do not forget that he was put to death partially on a charge of religious teaching: the inconsistency is merely formal.

Xenophon refers the charge to a misunderstanding of the *daimonion* which, according to common tradition, Socrates often mentioned as his warning voice or sign. Whether this explanation be in line with a hint in the preceding paragraph or not, may be left to the reader. We are forced, however, to examine the phenomenon in itself. What was the *daimonion* (τὸ δαιμόνιον)? The question is double: what was it to Socrates? what is it for us? Though Socrates seems to have treated it, or pretended to treat it, somewhat like a familiar spirit or good genius, the word has properly no personal or theological meaning. Euripides and Thucydides, both men of the Enlightenment, use it of that which, given by fate, man must adjust himself toward and to. It was not synonymous with "demon"; Cicero rightly translated it *divinum quiddam* (*De divinatione*, I, 54, 122). To Socrates it may have been a literal voice, sounding in the inner ear. Not alone visionaries like Joan of Arc and Swedenborg, have heard voices: Pascal and Luther heard them, though the former was the shrewdest intellect and the latter the soundest stomach of his age, and both men rooted on solid earth. If so, we turn the problem over to the psychologists—without, however, implying the neurotic decadence that becomes the business of the alienist. And they may name it a manifestation of the transcendental ego, or an instance of double personality, or an objectification of an unusually developed instinct of antipathy or of an abhorrent conscience, a non-rational residuum in the most rationalistic of men. Or to Socrates it may have been but a playful mode of referring to his disapproval of whatnots of conduct, ethical or otherwise, a disapproval reasoned out or immediately felt. The suggestion, tentative as it is, is still not an arbitrary assimilation of an ancient mind to modern rationalism. We know the ironic habit of Socrates, ironic not only toward others, but, with that deeper wisdom, ironic toward himself. We know he was given to playful exaggeration, especially to quizzical tropes. His pedagogic method he called midwifery; his faculty for friendship and for bringing friends together he referred to as incantations or pandering, using the most erotic expressions, which, in literal use, referred to things often even from the Greek point of view immoral; so too he seems to have spoken of his mantic, his oracular power, meaning simply foresight or premonition. The conception of the mind and temper of Socrates to which I have come inclines me to number the *daimonion* also among the tropes.

Again, if we take the Daimonion literally, what of the Dog? The Platonic Socrates is found of enforcing his asseverations by a

blasphemous canine oath, which sounds like a historic reminiscence and may hint at another source of the charge of impiety and new divinities. "By the Dog they would" (Phaedo); "By the Dog, Gorgias, there will be a great deal of discussion before we get at the truth of all this" (Gorgias); "Not until, by the Dog, as I believe, he had simply learned by heart the entire discourse" (Phaedrus); and "By the Dog" he swears again in the Charmides, in the Lysis, and in the Republic. By what Dog? Molossian hound or Xanthippe's terrier? or some Egyptian deity that barks, not bellows? or Cerberus? More like. Strange and gruesome idolatry, which troubled some patristic admirers of the old pagan, as much as the cock his dying gasp bade sacrifice to Asclepius.