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The politics of immortality

«Politics» in the present essay refers to the *polis*; my topic is the connection between certain doctrines of the soul and certain roles for the citizen, taking as political acts both the retirement from the competition for power and the claim to have earned a special place within it.

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Claude Lévi-Strauss has drawn attention to the systematic relation which can exist between a society and its magicians, not in spite of but precisely because of the anti-social mentality of the latter. The society (I paraphrase freely) has surplus of unanswered question, the magician a surplus of unquestioned answers; the basis therefore exists for an exchange[1]. Confronted with the unintelligible one looks about for guidance, as Achilles confronted by the plague says: «Let us ask some seer or priest, or even a dealer in dreams, for the dream too is from Zeus» (*Il.*, 1, 62-63).

Among the Greeks religious specialists dealt with *surplus problems*, with the realm of the unnatural (*ta daimonia*). Ordinary priesthoods which dealt with ordinary problems were held by ordinary persons in virtue of the secular social status, sometimes as

[1] Lévi-Strauss, 1958, pp. 199-200: «Si... la relation essentielle est celle entre le shaman et le groupe, il faut... poser la question... du rapport entre pensées normale et pathologique. Or, dans toute perspective non scientifique... pensée pathologique et pensée normale ne s'opposent pas, elles se complètent. En présence d'un univers qu'elle est avide de comprendre, mais dont elle ne parvient pas à dominer les mécanismes, la pensée normale demande toujours leur sens aux choses, qui le refusent; au contraire, la pensée dite pathologique déborde d'interprétations et de résonances affectives, dont elle est toujours prête à surcharger une réalité autrement déficitaire. Pour l'une, il y a du non-vérifiable expérimentalement, c'est-à-dire de l'exigible; pour l'autre, des expériences sans objet, soit du disponible... Par la collaboration collective à la cure shamanistique, un arbitrage s'établit entre ces deux situations complémentaires.»

hereditary privileges which conferred status. When however there was an exceptional problem — particularly some disease of man or nature, *loimos* or *limos* (cf. Hesiod *Works and Days* 243) — it would be felt that the cause must be some unnatural act, some crossing of sacred boundaries; an individual with supernatural powers would be called upon to identify the cause and placate the god. Such superior insight in Homer is transmitted from father to son (*Od.*, 15, 255-256) and is socially recognised as a craft, like carpentry or poetry (*Od.*, 17, 384-385).

In the sphere of normal religion, by contrast, the crossing of boundaries (narrated in the *aition*, the story of the origin of the ritual), is set in the mythical past. Once, so the story goes, someone scoffed at the god or fornicated in the temple or did something equally dangerous; then there was *loimos* or *limos*, plague or famine, or both; then the oracle told the people to institute the ritual, which puts things right. The ritual represents a situation of *normal danger* (a notion I borrow from Angelo Brelich); the god is always angry, but as the ritual is regularly performed the god is always appeased and danger avoided.

From an early period, then, the religion of the citystate can be divided between two aspects. There is normal religion, in which problems are continually present, continually resolved. And there is abnormal religion, in which exceptional problems are resolved (in principle) once and for all. Only in the latter realm are the practitioners characterized by special personal links to the gods.

Such a person has a social role which changes with social conditions — even if practices and doctrines remain unchanged. A guru, even though he changes his teaching not at all, becomes someone different when transported from Bhutan to Los Angeles. In the archaic period we see Greek wonder-workers dealing less with communities and more with individuals, and, in the case of individuals, concerned less with their re-aggregation into society through purification of some personal pollution, concerned more with their separation from society through pure habits — in contrast to kinds of pollution held to be socially pervasive. Walter Burkert called this transformation the shift from «craft» to «sect»[2]. It is the creation of a religion opposed to «the world».

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[2] Burkert, 1982.

Burkert would allow «sect» to apply only to those who conduct a common religious life, sustain one another in worldly affairs, and so on. The critical difference, however, is not here but in the relation betwen self-evaluation and the cultural mainstream. The Desert Fathers were sectarians, though scattered; it is possible to form a sect of one, providing that person scorns the praise and censure of the world. Such a one becomes «holier than thou» and excites the hostile ridicule of normal folk — as Theseus ridicules Hippolytus, who claims exceptional purity, as a follower of Orpheus (E. *Hipp.*, 946-957). In the late archaic and classical periods these «Orphics» come into view as the typical (to use the American term) «counter-cultural» figures; they were holy men who continued to practice the craft of healing and prophecy, but who also presented themselves as models for an alternative lifestyle.

An index of the change may be found in changing attitudes toward the afterlife. The survival of the dead is in some sense a culture-universal, since it is undeniable; they survive in our memories of them, in the consequences of their acts, in their judgement of us which we carry with us internalised as an ethical standard. Most peoples have imagined this persistence as the presence of the dead in some kind of other world; since that world represents the dead for the living it will be an extension of this one. Such is Hades in Homer; since Achilles was best of the Achaeans it is obvious that he will have «great power among the dead» (*Od.*, 11, 485). Menelaus will not have to die at all; he will go to the Isles of the Blessed because he has married Helen and is therefore «son-in-law to Zeus» (*Od.*, 4, 569). One improves his position in the next world, in other words, by the same means by which he has improved it in this. Nor is the picture essentially changed by the existence of mystery rites which promise a better afterlife to the initiate (H.H. Dem., 480-483); the initiates do not seem to have looked or behaved differently from the uninitiated or to have felt any particular solidarity with one another; if certain crimes barred one from initiation, these were not different from the crimes which were grounds for exclusion from ordinary civic life.

The critical change occurs when the next world is seen as compensatory for the moral inadequacy of this one. The earliest plain statement of this doctrine known to me is in Pindar's 2nd Olympian, in the mid-Vth century. Here he asserts[3] that mortals pay in this life for

[3] In my reading of this passage I follow Nilsson, 1935.

wrongs committed in their previous live as spirits in the other world before they were born into this one, and will pay in the other world for crimes committed in this one (P., Ol., 2, 53-56). Thus is contrived a double theodicy: apparently underserved misfortune is explained and apparently successful misconduct promised to punishment.

Pindar says that those who can pass three time without fault in each direction proceed to the Isles of the Blessed (P., Ol., 2, 68-77). He thus more or less idiosyncratically unites the three leading themes of Greek eschatology: the moment of death as a moment of judgement, metempsychosis, and the release from this world into a Golden Age. Further these last things have immediate relevance; Pindar prefaces the passage with an assertion that only those can be trusted with wealth who understand this corrective to its temptations (P., Ol., 2, 53-56).

We call the eschatological passage in the Second Olympian «Orphic» (although Pindar does not mention Orpheus) because that is our general — and necessarily vague — term for those aspects of Greek religion marked by concern for personal purity and personal immortality. Probably the Greeks themselves were vague about the category; Theseus assumes that since Hippolytus claims to be chaste (a claim not characteristic of the Orphics) he must also be a vegetarian and read Orphic books. All three would be tokens of a rejection of the world, and therefore mutually convertable.

For the Greeks «Orpheus» was most often a literary persona; Orpheus was a name, like Homer, Hesiod, or Theognis, to which certain kinds of poems could be attributed. Orpheus uniquely among these personae (there are no stories about Musaeus, except that he was sometimes caled son of Orpheus and/or father of Eumolpus) was himself a hero in legend — he had sailed with the Argonauts, gone to Hades to seek his bride, etc. Homer and Hesiod place themselves long after the times of which they tell, but Orpheus speaks directly from the time of the heroes, from a period of origins when man and god were still close. To adopt the name of Orpheus, therefore, is to bypass tradition and claim (as it were) a fresh revelation; thus Orpheus became the spokesman of the alternative culture.

The most important poems attributed to Orpheus were alternative Theogonies — alternative to the Theogony of Hesiod, which was already canonical in the fifth century (Hdt., 2, 53) and probably in the sixth. Hesiod represents the condition of the whole cosmos as one of *normal danger.* Order has been achieved from chaos by the rule of

Zeus. Zeus obtained power by defeating the Titans and then Typhoeus, and finally by avoiding an unlucky marriage. The Titans and Typhoeus, however, still exist, closely guarded, and Typhoeus from his underground prison stirs the earth with terrible winds; Zeus, further, might yet make some unlucky marriage. The *Iliad*, in fact, is an account of the consequences of his avoidance of an unlucky marriage with Thetis. The price of cosmic order, in other words, is eternal vigilance; the implications for humankind are set out in Hesiod's proem, where we learn that the king is the representative of Zeus on earth and brings peace by his eloquence, which «quickly brings even to a great quarrel a fitting solution» (Hes., *Th.*, 87). Normal danger requires continual mediation.

Hesiod neither in the *Theogony* nor the *Works and Days* gives any account of the origin of humanity; we are simply here, and he teaches us to understand ourselves in terms of our relation to the gods. The Orphic theogonies[4], by contrast, culminated in anthropogony, and represented humanity as a negative consequence of cosmic history. We are fallen, trapped in a cosmic cycle of sin and suffering, from which we can be released by Dionysiac purification. Thus is projected on the cosmic scale the Orphic withdrawal from society; religion is not intended to show us our location in the public order, but rather to rescue us from it. The alternative to mediation is salvation. The cosmos presents a problem which, for the Orphic, stood to be answered in the manner of abnormal religion: by means of a special link with the gods, and (for the individual) once and for all.

Such a religion, as Dario Sabbatucci has shown us[5], attacks the citystate at its ideological heart. A claim to personal immortality is a political act; it is a claim to personal value as against the evaluations of this world, and as such sets one against the powers of this world, with resulting quietism, resistance, or even martyrdom. It is therefore puzzling that Orphic adherents had so little political impact. From the anecdote of King Leotychides (Plu., 224e), through Democritus (fr., 297) to Demosthenes' account of Aeschines and his mother (D., 38, 259-260) and the well-known passage in the *Republic* (Pl., *Rep.*, 364b) we find these rites of purification treated with cheerful contempt. This

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[4] Here I rely on West, 1983, observant of the cautions of Casadio, 1986.

[5] Sabbatucci, 1979.

puzzle leads us to the one Orphic sect which did have some political impact, namely philosophy.

The ancients traced *philosophia* — in the sense of a way of life — back to Pythagoras (D.L., *Proem.*, 12); we may trace it one step further back, to Pythogoras' teacher Pherecydes of Syros[6]. Pherecydes, who sometimes is counted among the Seven Sages and of whom «many wonders are told» (D.L., 1, 116) wrote a Theogony and is also said to have been «the first to introduce the doctrine of metempsychosis» (Suidas s.v. Pherecydes). In the general sense of the word, that is, he was an Orphic.

Ion of Chios (fr., 2) says that Pythagoras wrote poems under the name of Orpheus; Pythagoras therefore was absolutely an Orphic. So long as he remained in the Aegean he seems to have been much like the others. The fifth-century sources for him give no hint of his political activity; the only early mention of followers, *Puthagareioi*, is in Herodotus (Her., 2, 81) who speaks of *orgia* and assimilates them to those of the other Orphics. Pythagoras was famous for *sophia*; Heracleitus (fr., 40) mockingly classes him with Hesiod, Xenophanes, and Hecataius, and Xenophanes (fr., 129) mocks him in the tone typical of mockery of the Orphics.

In middle life, however, some time in the last third of the sixth century, Pythagoras departed for Croton in Italy — and disappeared from view. We have no fifth-century sources for his western activities. Herodotus wrote of events at Croton — of the war with Sybaris and of the return of Democedes and his marriage to the daughter of Milo (who according to later Pythagorean story was Pythagoras' most important pupil) without ever mentioning Pythagoras. Evidently Herodotus' sources did not consider Pythagoras important or had some other reason for deleting him.

Some time in the last quarter of the fifth century Pythagoreans began to appear in mainland Greece; some became influential at Thebes, and they established a community in Phlius, in northern Arcadia (the dramatic location of Plato's *Phaedo*). They evidently exercised a considerable influence on Socrates, and some of them lived long enough to become the sources of the first written accounts

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[6] Pythagoras' presence at the funeral of Pherecydes was evidently included in all the early *Lives* (Porphyry *VP*, 54-56) even though it presented chronological problems. Cf. also Aristotle, fr., 191.

of the Pythagoreans, those written by Aristotle and his school. Aristoxenus knew these as «the last Pythagoreans» (D.L., 8, 46); not one of them could have known the Master personally. They told a tale of his initial political success and of succeeding political catastrophes. No doubt they were as unreliable as refugee sources usually are — the silence of Herodotus must give us pause. Their accounts of Pythagoras, however, were valid representation of what it meant to them in the fourth century to be Pythagoreans. And two other facts are clear: first, the school survived its master; 150 years after his death Archytas was still organising a Pythagorean politics in Taras. Pythagoras, in other words, was not a *merely* charismatic figure; he created an enduring institution — or in Max Weber's phrase, «routinized the charisma». Second, this movement was sufficiently politically significant to be considered a public menace; the refugee status of its adherents is proof of that.

Lacking reliable sources for the process whereby Pythagoras became political we are reduced to speculation; let us begin with the obvious point that this transformation is associated with his journey to the West[7]. This reminds us that the archaic and classical Greeks were a frontier people; in the West and also in the North the frontier remained open for four hundred years, and during this time every city in effect said to its citizens what the Laws of Athens say to Socrates «we dot not forbid you, if you wish to go out to a colony» (Pl., *Cr.*, 51d). Since the frontier was open to all it was in a sense everywhere; new cities were not restricted to the periphery — Heracleia in Trachinia was founded during the Peloponnesian War (T., 3, 92). Even the indigenes were to be found everywhere; the Greek homeland was sufficiently «Balkanized» that it could be plausible that Thales of Miletus was a Phoenician (D.L., 1, 22) and Pythagoras of Samos an Etruscan (Aristoxenus ap. D.L., 8, 1). Nevertheless the experience of the frontier was particularly intense on the periphery, and Greek culture there received a particular realization.

An open frontier is an anxious place. The Greeks generally tried to mandate tradition and continuity by asserting that each colony was an extension of a mother-city whose *nomoi* and cults it continued,

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[7] Aristoxenus (apud Porphyry *VP*, 9) says that Pythagoras left Samos in distaste for the tyranny of Polycrates; the departure of Greeks for the frontier is usually in story ascribed to some political difference.

but the population was in fact always more or less diverse, and had to come to terms with a novel setting, and with the indigenes. The result was cultural disorder and a corresponding «rage for order», a search for quick simplified solutions which would shield the new communities from annihilation. To return to Weber's terms: where traditional authority is unavailable, we must rely on other types, both rational and charismatic.

Charisma and rationality often complement one another as two aspects of a single solution. A typical example is the relation to the land. In traditional societies this relation exists; it remains only to be explained in myth and legitimated in ritual. The myth and the ritual are in turn warranted by the reality to which they refer. The land is ours, say the people of Attica, because our first kings were born from the land; the proof is that (so far as we know) we have always been here. Such is the circularity of traditional culture.

In a new community, this relation stands to be created; the city has to be organized and the land distributed. The result can be seen in the rational street plans of the colonial cities and in the traces of their geometric land systems. Through the survey, the community in a single rational act took command of the landscape and acculturated it. But precisely because this was an *act* it could not itself be rationally motivated; why is the city here rather than elsewhere? Why does it belong to these people rather than others? The link between the universal and the particular, between the idea and the historical actuality, was made by the charismatic *oikistes*, guided by oracles and honored by hero cult. The foundation of a city was like the purification of a city, a once-and-for-all solution of the type characteristic of abnormal religion.

Charismatic authority derives from another world; therefore it is invulnerable to empirical criticism. The frontier, which is by definition a horizon of the unexpected, stimulates empirical inquiry and at the same time brings us up against the limits of empiricism. Charismatic revelation then fills the gaps. The frontier is notoriously a world of plain talk and ingenious inventions; it is also the proper home of sects, cranks, and visionaries.

Early philosophy was just such a combination of rationality and revelation — most typically in Parmenides, who founded the science of metaphysics on a mystical journey of the soul[8]. Parmenides

[8] Cf. Gernet, 1968.

himself seems to have enjoyed a successful political career at Velia; we would expect that on the periphery philosophy and other visionary movements could become politically influential. (Cf. Vinogradoff's proposals in this volume concerning the Orphics of Olbia.) If we ask why the Pythagoreans had a uniquely extended success in this enterprise, the answer may have to do with another Weberian distinction: between the emissary prophet and the exemplary prophet.

The emissary prophet is the type with which we of the Abrahamic tradition are most familar; he brings a message from the other world, the good news of a new promise or the command of a new law. He proposes a new social order based on the revaluation of the existing order, and as such appeals particularly to the dispossessed and the disenchanted. He offers a salvation which (however taxing) is simple; it is immediately available to all who respond and submit.

Most of the Orphics were emissary prophets; typical was Empedocles, with his message of purification and his vision of restoration of the Golden Age of Aphrodite, when the cosmos was ruled by Love instead of Strife. Such prophets had little political success among the Greeks, no doubt because there was no politics of the dispossessed among them — except for tyranny; among the tyrants the Orphics did enjoy a certain esteem. Otherwise Greek politics was played out within the elite of the *possessores*, the propertied, as the struggle between the many and the few, between those who held their property as a livelihood — typically a small farm — and those whose property was disposable as a fortune (and this also is from Weber), such that they were able to become creditors and make the many their debtors. Tyranny was not an alternative to this struggle but an indication that it had reached such critical proportions that politics in the ordinary sense was no longer possible; the classes then would be rescued from their struggle by an extra-political regime.

On the frontier — especially in Sicily and Scythia — tyranny seems to have become almost normal. As charismatic marginal figures the tyrants everywhere had a natural affinity for charismatic religious figures, as the Peisistratids cultivated Onomacritus. Pindar's «Orphic» Second Olympian was addressed to a tyrant, as were, evidently, most of the «Orphic» passages in his poems. Empedocles provided the religious sanction of tyranny with his doctrine of the superior beings, the last born, who having completed the cycle of rebirth are now ready at death to become gods, and are in the meantime «seers, and dealers in dreams, and healers, and foremost among

earthdwelling men» (fr. 146 — «foremost» evidently in a political sense; cf. P. fr. 131 «*basileis*»). Thus, in constrast to Hesiod, Empedocles makes of the king not a mediator but a savior and assimilates him to the holy men of abnormal religion.

The exemplary prophet (to return to Weber) in contrast to such urgent claims and promises stands apart from the world and allows it to seek him. He is not so much messenger as model; his life is a method of salvation. Such a prophet, says Weber, (and I paraphrase) speaks not to the dispossessed but to the highest social strata, which he offers to raise (as it were) still higher, out of the world altogether. Salvation, formally offered to all, is in any case available only to a few, since it can be obtained only by a lifetime of patient effort — or, more likely, many lifetimes. Weber's example is the Buddha; the Greek example is Pythagoras.

Pythagoras was known as the author of a *tropos biou*, a way of life «illustrious above all others» (Pl. *Rep.*, 600b); the Pythagoreans shared an *askēsis*, a discipline, which seems to have included practices intended to train the memory. They were marked by their observance of certain prohibitions — which, since they were unaccompanied by explanations, enjoyed the charisma of the arbitrary; the prohibition of beans, for instance, was explained in ancient times half a dozen ways. They learned and taught certain doctrines, which were evidently a melange of science and magic, mathematics and miracles. Theirs was a little like a mystery cult, but to an important degree they substituted education for initiation[9]. It was precisely this substitution, I suspect, that made them so dangerous.

The social framework was evidently already there; Vinogradoff in the present volume cites two graffiti from Gela which show that the Pythagorean slogan *koina ta philon*, «friends hold in common», was already current before their time in the aristocratic symposia of the West, and we can well believe that such aristocratic factions were often united by a religious bond. The Pythagoreans created within this elite an alternative elite. Politics was thus re-evaluated as the conflict between the philosophers and the many; the many were no

[9] Metempsychosis seems to have been re-evaluated by the Pythagoreans; from being a test of the soul it became an opportunity to extend education through many lifetimes. Hence the emphasis on remembering past lives.

longer defined socio-economically but were made to include all the unenlightened, howsoever rich and powerful. The philosophers were united by an alternative ethic; they abjured honor and gain in favor of *theoria*, «theory» (Heracleides Ponticus ap. Cicero *Tusc.*, 5, 3, 8). They thus surpressed competition within the group. More than one story tells us that Pythagorean «friendship» was a marvel to the many (cf. Aristoxemus ap. Iamblichus VP., 233); Plato contrasted philosophical friendship with «the run-of-the-mill conradeship of most friends, cultivated in entertainment and through initiation» (Pl., *Ep.*, 7, 333e). The solidarity of the philosophers made them a potent philosophical faction. Wherever the philosophers gathered they presented themselves as an alternative government and made of knowledge a legitimating claim to power.

The tradition had an idea of how power could have been achieved: some 300 Pythagoreans, acting as a faction, could dominate the Council of the Thousand and the entire city of Croton (Appolonius ap. Iamblichus VP., 254). If so, they originated the «invisible oligarchy» as we meet it again in Athens in 411: «the people and the lot-chosen council still met, but they debated nothing that had not been decided by the conspirators...» (T., 8, 66, 1). From the philosophical point of view the project was the purification of the ruling class, an Orphism not of the individual but of the polity, not of the margins but of the center.

When two hundred years after the event Timaeus of Tauromenium attempted to reconstruct the political adventures of the Pythagoreans he worked primarily from Pythagorean sources — as written up by the Peripatetics — but told the story within a familiar Greek frame, wherein success and prosperity (*truphē*) bring insolence, which leads to error, which leads to failure. First there was Siris, a sort of proto-Sybaris full of *truphē*; Siris was destroyed by her neighbors, and by Croton (whose troops committed sacrilege there). Croton then insolently attacked Locri with apparently overwhelming force; the Locrians, assisted by miracles (in the version canonical at Locri the Locrians borrowed the Dioscuri from Sparta) won the great victory of the Sagra. Croton then sank into indolence and despair, from which she was rescued by the arrival of Pythagoras. When the tyrant of Sybaris (a city proverbial for *truphē*) expelled certain aristocrats, Croton, by the advice of Pythagoras, received them; the ensuing war resulted in the total destruction of Sybaris, in spite of her apparently

overwhelming forces[10]. The subsequent refusal of the Pythagoreans to distribute the territory of Sybaris (consequent on the Pythagorean hostility to property) led to a popular uprising against them; this was the beginning of the long persecution and gradual diaspora of the Pythagoreans. Croton was unable to digest the prosperity Pythagorean discipline had brought her.

We may notice that Pythagoras does not attack Locri (he turns Croton from the wrong enemy to the right one) and that Locri seems to be uninjured by her success on the Sagra. There was another story (Ar., *Rhet.*, 1395a1, cf. 1412a22) which probably accounted for this latter fact. Stesichorus told the Locrians that if they did not restrain their *hybris* «their [famous musical] grasshopers would sing on the ground» — that is, there would be no trees for the grasshoppers because their lands would be laid waste. Since the Locrian grasshopper was in other stories a sign of superiority over Rhegion (Conon 5) this story was probably a warning not to attack Rhegion — most probably in the aftermath of the Sagra. It seems to me significant that Locri should have been kept temperate by a poet while Croton had to be returned to discipline by a philosopher, and that the great victory of Croton over Sybaris was achieved by discipline whereas the great victory of Locri on the Sagra was achieved by miracles.

There was another story about the two communities in the early Peripatetic literature, probably in Dikaiarchos:

> When the friends were overcome Pythagoras at first found safe harbor in Caulonia, and then went to Locri. Informed of this certain Locrian elders went to the borders, and these meeting him said: «We, Pythagoras, hear that you are a wise man and a clever one. But since we find nothing to complain of in our own laws we shall do our best to adhere to those we have. You for your part must go elsewhere — taking from us any necessities you lack.» Since his reception by the city of the Locrians was as I have described it he sailed to Taras, and as he was treated there much as in Croton he came to Metapontum. Everywhere there were great civil wars, which even now the people of those parts remember and narrate, calling them «that of the Pythagoreans».
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> Porphyry, *VP*, 56

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[10] In this reconstruction I rely on Pompeius Trogus (in Justin's epitome) for the sequence up to and including the arrival of Pythagoras, on Iamblichus and Porphyry for the succeeding events; there is nothing in Justin about the war against Sybaris. Nevertheless we are told that Pythagoras on his arrival found a Croton where «nulla virtutis exercitatio, nulla armorum cura fuit». This phrase evidently looks forward to the reorganization of the city for war under Pythagoras'leadership; I take the war in question to be that against Sybaris (which must have been in Pompeius' source, which I take to be Timaeus).

The Locrians neither rescued Pythagoras nor persecuted him; they alone among the Italian cities were untouched by philosophy — evidently because they did not need it. They were already disciplined. Since this story comes to us through Pythagorean sources, that was evidently a Pythagorean opinion.

Locri has been called the western Sparta. The Pythagorean attitude toward Locri is indeed strikingly parallel to the Socratic attitude toward Sparta; in both cases we have a community taken by the philosophers as a kind of prefiguration of the philosophical utopia, and at the same time as the opposite of it. «You did not prefer Sparta or Crete», say the Laws of Athens to Socrates, «although you're always saying they have *eunomia*» (Pl., *Crito*, 52d). Socrates teases Hippias that the Lacedaimonians did not wish to learn virtue from him — because «they have not the tradition of changing their laws, nor of educating their sons contrary to their habitual mode» (Pl., *Hp., Ma.*, 284b). In the *Protagoras* (342-343) the joke is developed: the Spartans, so Socrates claims, are the greatest philosophers in the world, but in secret; that is the real reason for their exclusion of foreigners. Their dialectic, however, produces only proverbs! In the *Republic* (548b) he speaks more seriously of Sparta (under the name of «timocracy») as the second-best state, lacking only the «true Muse of philosophy».

Sparta and Locri were linked in many ways, not least that they were the two important cites which had avoided the experience of tyranny. Instead each had early been given a definitive organization attributed by their citizens to a lawgiver. Opposition to the tyrant links the lawgiver to the philosopher.

Lycurgus of Sparta was of course the prototypical law giver (although one of his laws was that laws should not be written, so that an appeal to Lycurgus was always an appeal to «tradition» and the «habitual mode»). Zaleukus of Locri was the author of the earliest written code. Both cities were in a way working utopias, living proof that the state could be taken in hand by reason and become a work of art. In this sense both were protophilosophical.

The contrast with philosophy is however obvious. Philosophy was everywhere a destabilizing influence, evangelistic in its outreach to all stations of life — and even to the barbarians (Aristoxenus ap. Porphyry, *VP*, 21). Sparta and Locri were closed, secretive communities, admired but not imitated. If the philosophers sought to *routinize the charisma* and thus make history by building a new society, the

lawgivers sought rather to *rationalize tradition*, to freeze the inherited order and thus resist history.

The alternative to history is myth, enacted in rituals which constantly recreate the original condition of things. At Sparta one has the impression of a society ritualized in an attempt to inhabit Hesiod's Golden Age: without labor, without women, and even (since the kings were in a sense divine) in a sense feasting with the gods.

The Spartans embraced the destiny of the warrior (even though they were slow to go to war); they dominated their neighbors and were known for their hostility to tyranny. The Locrians, by contrast, seem to have abandoned power in favor of happiness; they relied on the protection of the Sicilian tyrants to secure their independence in Italy. If Sparta was the prototypically masculine state, Locri (to judge by her art) was uniquely feminine. I have a sense that the Golden Age to which the Locrians aspired was that of Empedocles, ruled by Love.

This brings us to the question of the relation of these cities to the non-philosophical religious movements of the age. We know that Sparta could employ an Orphic «craftsman» to solve her surplus problems, and we may suspect a local eschatology. Certainly Pausanias shows us an extraordinary proliferation of hero-cult and memorials of the dead in Laconia. Most of the evidence, however, was systematically destroyed by the philosophers, who early adopted Sparta (as the Pythagoreans tried to claim Zaleukus) and described her in a secularized deformation, with her institutions re-interpreted under the sign of utility. Spartan eschatology can only be guessed at through her plastic art — which has remarkable links with Locrian (which in turn influenced Etruria).

Locri's links with the tyrants might well have made her more hospitable to Orphic doctrines; also the oldest of the so-called «Orphic tablets» was found at Hipponion, in the Locrian culture area. However, one adept does not make a culture. Otherwise the evidence is again largely in the plastic arts, and certainty will have to await a method for the sure interpretation of iconography. We do have the odd story in Aristotle (*Pol.*, 1274a) — «in defiance of the chronology» — that the teacher of both Lycurgus and Zaleukus was a certain Thales, and that the teacher of Thales was a Locrian named Onomacritus, «the first to be skilled at lawgiving». The only Onomacritus known to me is the Athenian Orphic; the name itself might have religious connotations. The anecdote, which claims Locrian influence on Sparta, is probably Locrian in origin, and sug-

gests the possibility that the Locrians thought of themselves as an Orphic polity — if that is not a contradiction in terms. But here we enter the realm of pure speculation*.

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