❀ *Plato and Dionysius* ❀

PLATO

AND

DIONYSIUS

A DOUBLE BIOGRAPHY

TRANSLATED BY JOEL AMES FROM THE GERMAN OF

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NEW YORK 1947
ALFRED A. KNOPF

THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK,
PUBLISHED BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

FIRST EDITION

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PREFACE

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

> *We ought to regard him, not as the author of a philosophical system in vita umbratica, but rather as a political agitator determined to turn the whole world upside down.*
>
> Nietzsche on PLATO

The Plato who meant to turn the world upside down

WAS NOT Plato primarily a metaphysician and the discoverer of the world of ideas? Was he not a logician who began the extrication of the basic categories of the thought process? He was primarily a man who had arrived at a passionate recognition that the world of human affairs was not to go on as it had been going. And the little that we know of his life is the most tangible evidence of this passion of his. It was a life lived for a grand objective: to make an end of the inveterate, the overt or covert, war of all against all.

How extensive is our knowledge of that life? Plato's name has come down to us associated not only with the dialogues, but also with a series of letters. Most of the letters are regarded by the experts as forgeries; but the longest of

them, the so-called seventh, will hardly be challenged as to its authenticity. That letter is the elderly author's retrospective survey of his own life.

It is the self-portrait of a man resolved upon a radical alteration in the collective life of humanity. It was a product of Plato's seventy-second year. In it he chronicled his three journeys to the island of Sicily. Three several times he embarked on the attempt to turn the kingdom of Syracuse, the most powerful of the military states of that era, into the Just State. Three several times his endeavor came to nought. That fact states the central tragedy of his life.

He was unable to turn his ideal into a reality. Nevertheless, the book in which he laid down his prospectus became one of the most fructifying documents in all the world's literature. We know it as the Republic.

It tells the story of a man who was not content to accept as an inalienable dispensation of divine justice the human suffering that he experienced and observed. It tells, furthermore, the story of an anonymous dictator and of his adversary, Plato.

From the vantage of World War II

The man that Plato was is less actual in our awareness than the doctrines that he taught. Our perception of him is obfuscated by philological and philosophical problems.

When, during the first World War, I was beginning my own studies Plato was a particular darling of German professors of philosophy. What every one of them wanted of him was the sanction of his ipse dixit for one or another subtle variant of the latest theory of cognition. Of the actual man whose leverage had made itself felt for two thousand years we heard nothing whatever, even from the one most ardent German Hellenist of the day. This was the professor

of classical philology at the University of Berlin and a world-recognized authority, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf. He inspired generation after generation of the university students who sat at his feet with enthusiasm for the splendor that was Attica. But he expressly refused to descant on the life of Plato. His answer to our urgent pleas for a portrait of him who had created the Republic was invariably the punditical pronouncement: "Everything trustworthy that we can learn about the life of Plato from sources other than his own works can be written on a single quarto page." He did not survive to see the resurgence of Plato's dictator in our time.

The decade just past has been an incomparable school for a biographer of Plato. In the course of those years in which democracies were collapsing like houses of cards and the continent of Europe was bringing forth a crop of despotisms, I reread Plato's letters, and after them the Republic, and after that the other works, one by one. And this time I contrived to do what I had never done before: I descried the man who had written the works of Plato. The formidable kinds of insight that that decade was forcing upon us helped me to enter into the presence of Plato in his habit as he lived.

What any given eye construes as the past is always one or another version of the present. The reader has but to read the opening chapter of this biographical narrative, "The Making of a Tyrant of Antiquity," to gain a vivid perception of how the bitter discoveries that we ourselves made have sharpened the focus of our vision on that remote bygone age.

These latterday discoveries guided my own vision particularly to Plato's mighty antagonist, Dionysius I of Syracuse, and thence to his son, Dionysius II. Each was in turn the

Führer of the most powerful dictatorship of the time. Dionysius I was the pre-eminent political figure of the fourth century B.C., between Pericles and Alexander the Great. Plato's work endures, defying the millennia. Of his overpowering enemy Dionysius nought survives but a confusion of ruined masonry. This can, indeed, be seen even now. It is what is left of the colossal prisonhouse into which Dionysius converted the kingdom of Syracuse.

Even the writings of his official biographer, Philistus, have perished from the earth. Greek historians of a late period, however, knew and made use of them. And Plutarch gives us portraits of both of the Dionysii as historical tradition transmitted them to him. But is is not until we read what Plato underwent at the hands of his two tyrants, it is not until we reflect on what we have suffered in our own flesh from the rise and rank growth of demagogic despots in these latter days, that the two Dionysii turn into actual flesh and blood. Doing so, they bring Plato himself back into the domain of actualities.

Thus, the present essay in biography became perforce a dual chronicle—a life story wherein Plato and Plato's absolute antithesis reciprocally illuminate each other. But could this formula avoid according the Dionysii overmuch space, awarding them overmuch deference? The author of this fragment of history, *Plato and Dionysius*, found it a fascinating task to depict the hellhounds of our epoch in one of the greatest of their prototypes. And it may be that such an enterprise, involving as it does the displacement to a vast remove of what is all too near ourselves, is not altogether devoid of utility. The global success of any human being blinds his contemporaries. Even the global failure of a human being blinds his contemporaries. Inasmuch as he fosters or frustrates the interests of millions, he is blessed

and cursed on a millionfold scale, and with every argument that that most obsequious of vassals, the human brain, knows how to conjure up. For that reason it is salutary, if we would perceive the object of execration and apotheosis with superior clarity, to look back two millennia and contemplate him in one of his ancestral incarnations. On that score alone, then, I approached the careers of the Dionysii with more than a modicum of intentness.

Let not the reader, however, discount the result as a literary artifice when he sees totalitarian Syracuse of the year 399 B.C. take on before him, in an easily penetrable historical disguise, all the essential aspects of the Third Reich itself. And let not the reader fancy himself imposed upon when he rediscovers in the Athens of 399—the year in which Socrates was condemned to death—some of the more depressing stigmata of our modern democracies. Here is no falsification, no invention, no theatricalizing.

Neither is there any overlooking of the two thousand intervening years. What was the Europe of Plato's age? Little more than the upper seaboard of the Mediterranean basin. Attica, the hub of European civilization, had an area of but some five thousand square miles. Athens, the most populous of all Greek cities, was five miles in perimeter. Phidias built the Parthenon and Sophocles wrote the Antigone for four and a half million Greeks. Between their day and our own, Europe has appreciably expanded.

Nor would I beguile any reader into minimizing the intervening changes. The fourth century B.C. was innocent of railroads, receiving sets, magnetic mines, atom bombs. It did have, however, an unimportant office worker whom sundry men of means patronized and pampered to the extent that he became a powerful demagogue and subverter. It also had democracies dedicated to the principle of free-

dom for the enemies of democracy. The mechanical appurtenances of civilization have so evolved and proliferated in the last two thousand years that on the surface there is no comparison between Plato's world and ours. Nevertheless, the most important problem with which Plato grappled is the world's most important problem at this very hour; and it is still an unsolved one. Like certain of us today, he was gravely disturbed about various aspects of contemporary democracy. Also, again like certain of us, he had a passionate hatred of all dictators, from the legitimate emperor of Persia in the east to the illegitimate bourgeois overlord of Syracuse in the west.

What, then, did Plato want? What, then, do we ourselves want?

The substance of this chronicle

Our slice of history begins by reconstituting the career of the most powerful dictator of the classical world, Dionysius I of Syracuse. He was a city employee of insignificant bodily stature but great oratorical prowess, whom the financial interests of his democracy financed that he might subvert democracy. The evolution of this unsuspecting republic into the greatest military power of the time will seem very familiar to the modern reader.

From the Syracusan dictatorship we turn to its diametric opposite, the famous Athenian democracy, which was the vehicle of considerable liberty but also of a corresponding amount of weakness. It was against this background of liberty-in-decadence that the trial of Socrates was consummated; and a very characteristic transaction it was.

The tension that existed between the powerful and ruthless dictatorship and the humane and weakly democracy supplied the formative environment in which Plato's life

developed. He was an Athenian of the aristocracy, born a year after the death of the great Athenian statesman Pericles. When Plato was twenty-four his country, democratic Athens, was decisively defeated in war by militaristic Sparta. When he was twenty-nine his revered teacher Socrates was put to death by the democracy of Athens. Plato was anti-democratic by both birth and education; and thus he meant by "democracy," not some ideal construction of the mind, but the everyday actuality that he was experiencing.

Like any other Athenian, he did, however, hate dictatorship. He had, too, an extreme abhorrence of the dominating figures of the caste into which he had been born. Thus he occupied a mid-region between opposing parties. He saw no prospect of ever holding office in his own country. Presently he embarked on a long voyage taken to exchange views on learned subjects with noteworthy scholars in Egypt and in Lower Italy. In the course of the voyage he received an invitation to the Syracusan court; and thus he came into personal contact with the pre-eminent autocrat of the age.

Plato was then thirty-nine, Dionysius forty-one; but their contemporaneity was the whole story of what they had in common. Dionysius was nettled by the moralistic and sermonic tone that Plato adopted on the occasion of the audience granted him, and the autocrat's retaliation took the form of causing Plato to be sold into slavery. Plato had, a few years later, a retaliation of his own: he wrote his Republic, in the pages of which it was and is possible to read his candid opinion of Dionysius and all his kind, including every Führer that has since followed in his steps.

It was a sadly disillusioned scholar that returned to his native city. Plato had been nurturing a hope that with the aid of the one strong man, Dionysius, he would contrive to rear the structure that he had not contrived to rear with the

aid of the many weak men of Athens. He now resigned himself to forgoing the creation to which he had felt himself destined from birth: to wit, a society of human beings organized according to the pattern that had long obsessed him. Together with a few friends he established, in a quasi-rural retreat outside the city gates, his Academy. In it all manner of problems were studied, taught, investigated. Nevertheless the one problem that continued to occupy the center of his mind was how to make the collective life of humanity human. Being now precluded from accomplishing this task himself as a statesman, he described its accomplishment in the pages of his Republic. "What is just?" was the question to which he addressed himself in those pages. His answer was that those who administer power must not want to get anything out of it for themselves, whereas those whose goal is the enjoyment of existence must have no power to wield. This revolutionary book was also, among other things, a *roman-à-clef* with Dionysius of Syracuse as its protagonist.

Dionysius appears to have been in no wise inconvenienced by the strictures of his powerless adversary. His own power was steadily waxing, his life becoming steadily richer in gratifications. He even lived to enjoy the eventual fulfillment of his one most overweening desire; for the glorious Athenian republic, pre-eminent and final arbiter in every issue touching the arts and sciences, bestowed upon him a literary award for one of his poetic compositions.

When Plato was sixty-one, Dionysius died. A year later a letter reached the Academy from his son and successor, Dionysius II. It was a kind of letter that fledgling rulers now and then indite. One of Plato's disciples had read some of the Republic to the new occupant of the throne. The young man was fired with enthusiasm for the Just State and its in-

ventor, and Plato was now besought to lose no time in getting to Syracuse to begin the task of renovation.

This second Dionysius would never be able to outdo his father in the matter of accumulating additional power. He was assured, however, that he could be something greater than his envied predecessor had ever been: he could be the perfect ruler according to Plato's formula. Thus, having ambition, he was all agog to get his clutches on the wonder-working sage. As for Plato, he had no great taste for undertaking a journey. Age was already weighing on him; and assuredly he had no pleasant memories to serve as a bond between himself and the Syracuse of the Dionysii. Still, he had written with his own hand that there could be no improvement in the state of the world until such time as the son of a powerful ruler should subordinate himself to a philosopher, thus joining wisdom to power. And now that very consummation had come to pass. The great desire of his whole life could, after all, attain fulfillment. And so he made his second journey to Syracuse.

His purpose was to initiate the young ruler into his own doctrines. But the young ruler differed from his late father only to the extent of thinking it eminently desirable to use the creator of the Just State as an ornamental adjunct of his own unjust state. He did not, indeed, sell Plato into slavery as his sire of unblest memory had done. Nevertheless the exasperating counselor did not get away unscathed from the fastness of the son, either.

Plato went back to his Academy and rededicated his life to his researches and his teaching. And presently, at hard on seventy, he was beguiled into making a third journey to Syracuse. At first his answer to all the beguilements was an emphatic No. But he was subjected to pressures from every quarter. He was solemnly assured that the young sovereign

had undergone a radical change for the better. Plato had but to make his way to Syracuse and inaugurate the state he had envisioned. In the end the fervent aspiration of a whole lifetime flared up anew in the old man. For the first time since the passing of the Golden Age the life of humankind was going to become truly human, and it was to be his doing. He set forth, then, on the third of his passages to Sicily. The experiment went even more dismally than the two preceding ones. Plato was finally thrown into a barracks full of mercenaries—mercenaries who were his implacable enemies. He emerged with his bare life.

And even that is not quite the last chapter of the lamentable story. Plato's favorite disciple Dion, cousin to the younger Dionysius, equipped an expeditionary force to take the field against Syracuse, overthrew the tyrant, and was himself assassinated three years later without having made a going concern of Plato's program. Not the Just State, but a gigantic chaos, was the latter end of the dictatorship that Plato had meant to see transformed into a dictatorship of justice.

The humane world that he had meant to turn into a practical and solid reality remains to this day a piece of literature.

And the moral of the fable?

It may be that some reader will draw a doleful kind of inference from the events rechronicled in these chapters. He may, for example, inquire whether philosophers are not invariably and inevitably condemned to shipwreck from the moment of undertaking to cope with the world's practical affairs. Ought not he who loves wisdom to withhold his hand from everyday actualities ? Is it not, indeed, as much to his own advantage as to his fellow men's that he shall do

just that? Be this as it may, Frederick the Great once averred: "If I wanted to impose drastic penalties on a province, I would give it a philosopher for its regent."

And Plato did not even stop at being the mere philosopher. He was notoriously an idealist to boot. But idealists —so observes my realistic-minded reader—will never come to terms with the far from ideal exigencies of mundane affairs. There are a thousand beguiling ideas in the world. They blow like gentle winds over the surfaces of solid realities without ever jostling them from their foundations. Idealists bring revival, refreshment, conceivably renovation; but they affect no single fundamental in the history of Adam and his sadly deficient breed. Some such epilogue a reader here and there may append to the sorry conclusion of the sorry history.

Is it, however, exactly meet that we should hold philosophers in utter contempt in an era in which nonphilosophers, antiphilosophers, have been demonstrating to us whither their chosen road leads? And is the right era for making a mock of idealists that particular era in which the realists have been proving what manner of reality they would introduce into the scheme of things?

Furthermore, was Plato, when all is said, the sort of idealistic milksop that the word "idealist" brings to mind in connection with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Plato was by no means blind to the implications of power. He was rooted and grounded in one perception that is crucial for the political idealist, though it is constantly being lost sight of and is totally missing in numerous ostensible democracies of our century: to wit, the perception that everything depends on paving ways for the transition of the ideal into the realm of power, to the end that it shall wax great and strong.

It is child's play to learn by experience what is good, what evil—provided we do not also insist on the futile attempt at logical proof. There has never been serious contention on that issue, though more than one history of morals has undertaken to persuade us otherwise. On the other hand, it is incalculably difficult to find the means whereby the Good —and let us not be intimidated by semantics—shall be enabled to attain power and remain in power.

It was that route that Plato was hunting for. He did not discover it, although he did discover many a reality that will yet help make it traversable. The route itself has never been discovered, either, by any subsequent explorer. Yet every seeker of it has kindled his ardor at the fire of Plato's passion, from Plato's day straight down to Tolstoy's. That is why this man whose birth occurred two thousand three hundred and seventy-five years ago remains to this day and moment unforgotten.

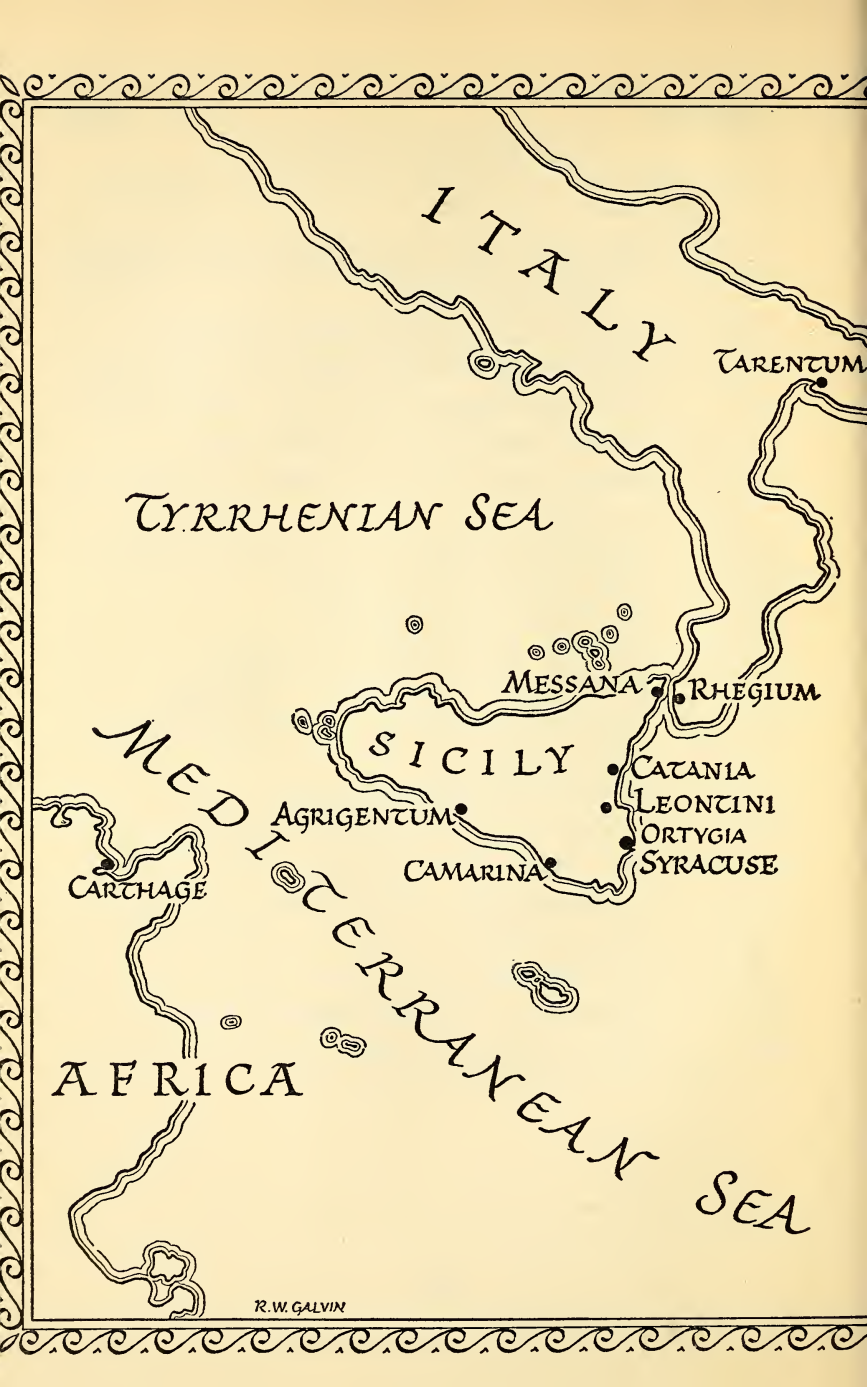
And it is why this somber story with its unhappy ending is also a sublime, an inspiring story. He who reads may well bear in mind the history of all the abortive experiments that have preceded all the eventually successful experiments. And Plato? The meaning of his life is to be found in the unconquerable will to repeat the great experiment again and again, applying it to new historical situations as they arise, invigorating it with the accumulated experiences of two thousand intervening years.

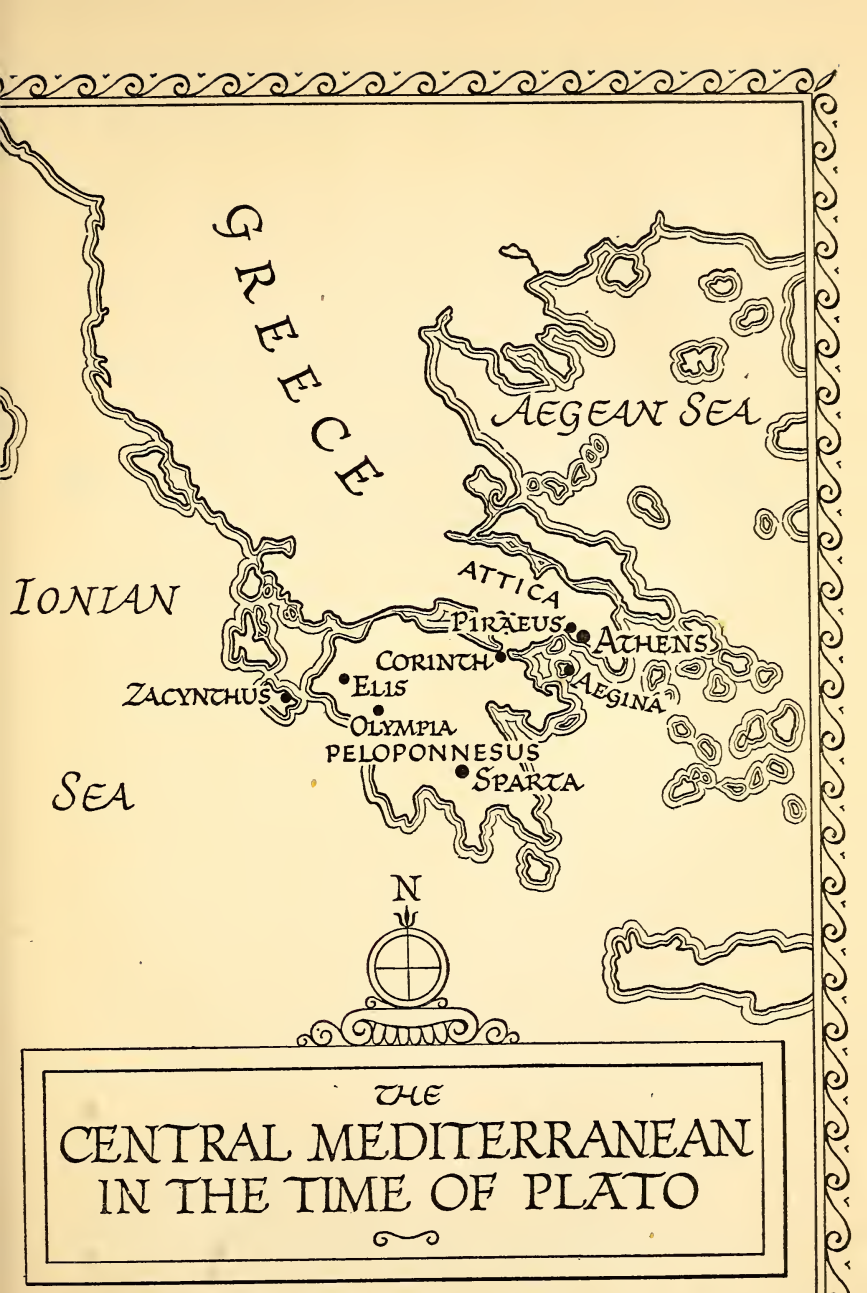
Ludwig Marcuse

January 1947

CHRONOLOGY

431 B.C.	Beginning of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta
429	Death of the Athenian statesman Pericles
406	Deaths of the dramatists Sophocles and Euripides
404	End of the Peloponnesian War. Athens capitulates. The Thirty Tyrants take over
399	Socrates put to death in Athens at the age of seventy
398	Appearance of Plato's Apologia and his Crito
389	Appearance of Plato's Gorgias
389–8	Plato visits Italy and Syracuse
385 ?	Plato founds his Academy in Athens
372 ?	Appearance of Plato's Politeia (The State)
367	Death of Dionysius the Great of Syracuse at the age of sixty-three
366–5	Plato's second visit to Syracuse
362 ?	Appearance of Plato's Politikos (The Statesman)
361–60	Plato's third visit to Syracuse
357	Dion's expedition against Syracuse to overthrow Dionysius II
356	Birth of Alexander the Great
354	Assassination of Dion at the age of fifty-five
347	Death of Plato in his eighty-second year. Appearance of his Nomoi (Laws)


ITALY
TARENTUM
TYRRHENIAN SEA
MESSANA
RHEGIUM
SICILY
CATANIA
LEONTINI
ORTYGIA
SYRACUSE
AGRIGENTUM
CAMARINA
CARTHAGE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
AFRICA
R.W. GALVIN



THE
CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN IN THE TIME OF PLATO

I. *Dictatorship and Democracy*

CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A TYRANT OF ANTIQUITY

THE MARKET place of Syracuse was a caldron of heat and humanity. Through the northern environs, a confusion of stone tombs, caves, and newish residential suburbs, the swarms of refugees had filed down the narrow, craggy path past the stone quarries. From the islet of Ortygia they had got here by crossing the narrow causeway connecting that mere splinter of land with the marshy waterfront of Syracuse. The market-place, lying level between marsh and rocky plateau, was as full as it could hold of hustle and outcry and fear.

A formidable shock had driven the city's blood inward to its heart, and here it was wildly seething. Agrigentum had fallen—after Selinus and Himera, quite the loveliest of the cities of men, as Pindar called it. Voyagers approaching it by sea from the south, when they lifted up their eyes to the crest of its hill, had beheld a gateway to paradise in the form of five gleaming temples. That gateway was now no more. And presently it would be the turn of Gela, Camerina, Syracuse itself, Catania, Naxos, Messana. Refugees from town after town gave the ill tidings the confirmation of faces and voices full of terror. All who had not promptly made their escape into Italy across the narrow strait were seeking refuge here, incidentally sowing alarm among their protectors. The

dismay of the whole island of Sicily was wreaking itself on the market place of Syracuse.

It is human to think more charitably of the dead than of the living: the mere fact that they are gone from us is an appeal to sympathy. Agrigentum the traditionary and sometimes resented rival city was achieving, here in the noisy square and under the transfiguring light of death, a gracious resurrection. What a superb spectacle, for example, had been furnished by Exainetus' triumphal homecoming from Olympia, with three hundred chariots and their dazzling array of white horses for a ceremonial escort ! What a magnificent wedding the great Antisthenes Rhodus had contrived for his daughter, with endless troops of horsemen and eight hundred chariots in the bridal procession ! Whole mountains of wood had been built up on the temple altars and in the city streets, imposing mounds of fagots at every studio and workshop, and when the flames leaped skyward up there at the citadel the whole town had been transformed into a sea of fire dotted with islands magically bearing aloft the most fairylike palaces. The death of beauty is more fully and finally death than that of the commonplace. The Syracusans stared into the void left by the fall of Agrigentum, and they were appalled.

Between the destroyed city and Carthage there lay no great expanse of sea. The upper edge of Africa and the lower of Europe form a mouth with its lips but slightly parted. The two cities had had a powerful affinity. Agrigentum possessed a superabundance of olive groves and vineyards, Carthage a tyrannical appetite for wine and olives. Carthage had been attaining satiety, Agrigentum enormous wealth. Its people had been drinking out of golden goblets, prinking their pets with silver combs, sleeping in ivory beds; and they still had so much wine left over from trade that they could grat-

ify an occasional fancy for treating their houses as ships in distress—for jettisoning all manner of superfluities by way of the windows. For they liked to drink rather more than was good for them. The authorities felt obliged to discountenance such mischiefs, but in the end they had had to give in and assume toward these drunken capers the attitude of a passive audience of sea gods. There had been all kinds of such merry goings-on in the life of the lamented neighbor city. Young gentlemen had put up monuments to prize-winning ponies, and young ladies to their pet birds. The most enduring monument, however, was the one the great philosopher Empedocles had erected to his fellow citizens in the epigram: "They abandoned themselves to pleasure as if they were to die on the morrow, yet built their houses as if they were to live forever." Where in all the world, including Athens, had any such temple been built to Olympian Zeus? Seventy years of labor it had cost—labor done for an eternity that was to end almost before it had begun.

For it had suddenly occurred to those traders from Africa that there were ways of plucking the coveted fruits without paying the market price. There came a time when the men of Agrigentum dared spend their nights in ivory beds no more, but only in the deal bunks of the watchtowers. (They were truly Agrigentian bunks, though, with a mattress, a blanket, and two pillows apiece.) No one would have thought it conceivable that in the face of all that austerity the enemy's approach could catch the defenders napping. And yet the Carthaginian fleet did slip undetected across the sea under cover of night, a soundless shadow in which Iberians, Balearic hucksters, Mauretanians, Numidians, Campanians could not be told apart. The masthead lanterns were so effectively shrouded that not a betraying sliver of light leaked through. To make sure that no spy should give

advance warning, the captains had even been forbidden to unseal their orders until they were well at sea. And now some twenty thousand armed citizens and a hundred and eighty thousand women, children, foreigners, and slaves had been despoiled—the first class of its wealth, the rest of their wealthy overlords. The time had been when Carthaginian captives toiled to raise the splendor that was Agrigentum; now Carthaginian conquerors were turning its site back into the original waste. History is just as a lottery is just: her caprices may on occasion gratify even our human weakness for appropriate balance. These concessions of hers are singularly pleasing to the idealist: they give him the illusion of having read the mind of God Himself.

This time the enemy had become the beneficiary of fate's equalizing justice. The panic-stricken Syracusans had nothing to offset it but one of the standard consolations of the vanquished: to wit, someone whom they could blame, someone who offered an opportunity to dull the pain of their own defeat in the pleasure of inflicting pain on a scapegoat. Whom could they saddle with the responsibility for this appalling disaster? The men were demanding what contribution their military commanders had made toward the defense of Agrigentum. The mere asking of questions touching others' guilt always leaves one's own innocence at least half established.

The market place was in an uproar like that of an ocean laboring to bring forth human sounds. Every syllable launched from the speakers' dais was muted before it reached a single hearer. Then a young man of some twenty-five years began to hew a widening passage for what he was saying. He was talking loudly, passionately; and yet that was not what made him the focus of attention. If he had been talking in a placid murmur, he would assuredly have restored the

crowd's calm with even more dispatch. He knew how to release the general tension. He was calling for action, and action drastic enough to make a clean sweep of all moodiness. "Fellow citizens: What is the good of putting this question to a formal vote ? What is the good of a legalistic inquisition ? Patience is a virtue that is at home only in periods of tranquillity. Those who are wrought up about something today cannot lay their agitation aside to be embodied in some resolution to be framed the day after tomorrow. Well, then, let everyone that is impatient stir up all those that are equally impatient against this lackadaisical government of ours. Here and now, this instant, we must judge, we must proclaim judgment, we must execute judgment. Death to the guilty !"

The new era of the republic of Syracuse dawned with the realization that defeat could be washed out in no medium but the blood of fellow citizens.

People's hearts warmed to this self-appointed savior. He was dispensing the agreeable words that victims love—such words as "now" and "execute." The victims were with him from the first cue. How recklessly he was trampling on whatever got in his way ! What heart that fact alone was putting into the bewildered, the dazed ! How adroit his program was ! And how men are inflamed by sheer simplicity in a program when they are too angry for deliberate reflection, for the detailed steps of a subtly reasoned procedure ! Young Dionysius won the hearts of his poor frightened and afflicted fellow citizens by giving them precisely what they required: an imperative for here and now. When a theater is on fire people crowd to the nearest narrow exit, ignoring the broad main entrance farther away. It takes the inquest to establish that that is why so many of them perished.

Even in that tumultuous sea of the market place there

was one tiny islet of solid land: the presiding officer of the assembly. His it was faithfully to enforce the rules of procedure that must be observed in the republic of Syracuse. Elected by the drawing of a bean, after the great Athenian model, he showed himself in this tempest to be not worth the bean he had drawn. His efforts were as frenzied and as footling as those of some poor helpless watchman patrolling a dike and trying to beat back a spring tide with his naked hands. He no longer had the courage to deny this beardless orator the floor, as the presiding officer could once have done. The time had gone by when he had the power to send these gentlemen of Syracuse home to their womenfolk the moment they became too obstreperous. There had been too many instances of some peremptory leader's discovering how smoothly it was possible to govern by simply cutting off debate. The president of the assembly had but one recourse for dealing with this turbulent Dionysius, and that was to fine him. He could at least repeat that medicine until the unruly fellow was sufficiently tamed and had begun to moderate his headlong pace. And, as a matter of fact, the wind would very quickly have been taken out of Dionysius' sails—he was an insignificant clerk in one of the city offices, with no considerable amount of cash to squander—had not a powerful ally unexpectedly brought him fresh momentum.

All of a sudden Philistus appeared at his shoulder—a conjuncture that the beholders found hard to believe even when they saw it.

In all such upheavals the most timorous are the most insecure, and the most insecure are those who have the least to lose. Here in the Syracusan market place there were sundry men less unnerved than their fellows—men not abandoned to mere excitement. These were expending themselves, not in swelling the general outcry, but rather in

grappling with a practical problem: to wit, what one pregnant hour of this sort could be made to bring forth. There was, for example, Hipparinus, scion of a family accustomed to the exercise of power. The governance of human beings takes as much experience as that of ships. The governors of the people are not so readily bedeviled as the people they govern, who cannot distinguish between a mere popular demand and an axiom of statecraft. For that reason the powerful make a point of putting on serenity and even geniality in proportion as the innocent mob succumbs to excitement; for moments of revolutionary frenzy can be extremely serviceable when astute reactionaries know how to exploit them. And Philistus, a rich young friend of Hipparinus himself, was that kind of exploiter. While the rank and file were absorbed in their foretaste of vengeance and even fancying themselves as makers of history, Philistus was granting a connoisseur's response to the young upstart's extraordinary gifts as an orator. Philistus was, in fact, staking something on him. The amount that he risked losing was not extravagant. The populace of Syracuse was to be had at a bargain.

The insignificant clerk was, after all, no completely unknown quantity. He was, in fact, a good deal more than the ordinary anonymous office worker. Not so long ago he had seen service as a soldier, and he had fought not only with valor, but also on the right side, under an officer who was a member of Philistus' own party. The fishermen and cobblers and market porters had banished an important general, Hermocrates. Later, marching his forces against Syracuse, he had been killed. Dionysius, sorely wounded, had lain on the battlefield among a heap of the slain; but no one had noticed him there. The rabble in the market place could, then, still accept him as merely one of themselves;

whereas Philistus, knowing his history, could recognize with satisfaction that the young veteran who had fought with a will against the wicked mob in a good cause had it in him actually to become this same mob's idol. It was a singular stroke of fortune; for the fate that showers gifts on the ruling class does not ordinarily include the knack of swaying the common herd. The chilling voice of mere prudence never reaches the emotions of an inflamed populace. But the populace was responding to Dionysius—his Dionysius and its own.

Philistus stepped forward, then. He had no thought of speaking himself: what, indeed, could he say that would cross the gulf between himself and the people? He stepped forward merely by way of encouraging the vociferous clerk to blurt out everything that came into his head. He himself, the exalted sponsor, stood ready, naturally, to make amends sentence by sentence to the flouted rules of procedure, even if the expensive flood of rhetoric were to run on until nightfall. This princely tender was within his unconditional democratic rights. After all, the rich man had equal political rights with the pauper, and the constitution permitted every citizen to hold forth as many minutes as he was able to pay for.

The chairman scrutinized this position and found it unassailable. The crowd held its breath when it heard the patrician putting his resources at the demagogue's disposal. Its dilemma was this: either it had to regard Philistus as one with itself (which was preposterous) or else it had to ascribe to Dionysius' harangue a magic actually capable of pulling the wool over the eyes of the people's enemy (which was altogether preferable). Philistus himself was more than satisfied. At a single stroke he had done for the braggart mob —the antagonist that gallant Hermocrates himself, superbly

armed and with an army of heroic desperadoes at his back, had not managed to overpower. The people, it appears, will hold out against the most frightful engines of destruction, only to be bowled over by some clever sleight-of-hand performance; their heads are invariably feebler than their hands. Considering the success the little climber was acquiring, Philistus did not even begrudge him his few jeers at the expense of the social class to which his benefactor belonged. After all, nobody expects to dictate to a rat-catcher about what register of his flute he must use to beguile his paltry victims.

As for Dionysius, he was a good deal astonished by the unexpected aid. He felt as if the laws regulating mundane affairs had suddenly been abrogated—as if he were soaring weightless through the air by the mere waving of his arms. The president was shielding him, in the belief that he was thereby conforming strictly to a law of the republic. The crowd was acclaiming him, in the belief that it had won a sweeping victory. Philistus with all his wealth was egging him on, in the belief that he had executed a master stroke. Presently the little clerk, with all these forces suddenly abetting him, was making an uncompromising attack on the ruling caste; and he was amazed when this too went off so smoothly. To be sure, he was dealing in mere platitudes to which his audience was already committed heart and soul; for example, that all that the rich want from politics is power for themselves. But this time—and here was the truly grotesque twist in the situation—the rich themselves were applauding the attack and actually paying their own funeral expenses. "The rich hold their poorer fellow citizens in contempt," Dionysius roared. "The rich use the poor as slaves. The rich batten on their country's miseries." For these denunciations, too, rich Philistus handed out his cash, not

even withholding his hand at the dictum: "Our leaders must be chosen from among the common people, not from the narrow circle of the aristocracy!"

That this pronouncement of the people's advocate was presently flouted in practice was a fact that escaped everybody; people were too uplifted to be very analytical.

Along with Dionysius, the ostensible man of the people, elderly Hipparinus the conspicuous aristocrat was elected to a generalship. Dionysius lost no time about actually pleading the cause of his former comrades, the supporters of dead Hermocrates, who were now languishing in exile; and even this fact passed without challenge in the general jubilation. "What folly, my dear fellow countrymen, that we should try to recruit soldiers in Italy and the Peloponnesus, while leaving the sons of our own Syracuse to rot in foreign lands! The fact is, these proscribed men are our finest patriots: did they not refuse to fight for Carthage against their own country? Does that fact give them no claim to the gratitude of their fatherland? Are we not at last going to bury those old, forgotten dissensions?" And Dionysius proceeded to do the burying himself, first by bringing home the men who had dedicated themselves to making a clean sweep of democracy, and secondly by marrying the daughter of the slain nemesis of democracy, Hermocrates.

Anyone putting out to sea from the harbor of Syracuse and looking back to Sicily had the illusion that the mountains were drawing steadily nearer to the margin of the bay until they rose abrupt and sheer out of the Tyrrhenian Sea itself. Later still, all the voyager could make out was the line of the rocky ridge on Ortygia, with the colossal statue of Athene at its crest. Finally, all that remained visible was the goddess's glittering shield, the traveler's last farewell

from his country. That was the instant at which the Syracusan going abroad made his votive offering to the gods who were to watch over him in alien waters—the instant in which his sacrificial vessel was swallowed up in the sea. Such visible points of departure give a pattern to existence; they bring it home to a man through the sense of sight that he has crossed a line of demarcation.

But who could say what irrevocable line it was that the Syracusans stepped across when, conformably to their country's laws, they gave their suffrages to Dionysius, abetted as he was by Philistus' money? For two generations they had been opening their annual celebration of the Festival of Liberty with the sacrifice of five hundred and fifty oxen, which they honorably shared with their gods—Zeus and Athene cherishing the goodly savor of scorching bone, and the friends of liberty that of the reeking flesh. But it is easy enough to celebrate liberty, hard enough to preserve it; and hardest of all when its enemy is set apart from its friends by no definable barriers. He that comes with the sword can be beaten back with the sword; but how is liberty to be safeguarded from those wolves in sheep's clothing who first extol liberty that they may presently rend it?

The theater at Syracuse faced the city gates. The long rows of seats made by hewing out the somber gray stone were filled with people anything but somber. Above the amphitheater ran a curving avenue lined with tombs.

The Syracusans were a sprightly people, and they valued the nonpolitical drama as a relief from the wear-and-tear of business. It thoroughly agreed with them to have their interludes of pure irresponsible spectatorship, as, for instance, at the mimes of the famous Sophron, written in the everyday

speech of the people. In one of them he had Sicilian fish prepared for the table precisely as in their own kitchens, and that they thought immense.

Unfortunately, this exposed site did not provide overmuch shelter for people in a mood of amiable concentration. Any sudden gust might topple over a gay poster or two, any black shadow of a passing cloud put an outburst of merriment into swift eclipse. Some uproar breaking out on the broad street just below might jostle the audience out of its absorption in a witty dialogue on the man-eating shark, disrupting the neatest inventions, so little shielded from annoyance was that roofless mart of magic hewn out of natural ledges.

Thus it befell that when their general, Dionysius, came marching back to the barracks in Syracuse at the head of his troops on the highway leading into the city from the west, and four hundred horses and two thousand footsoldiers swung vigorously along below the amphitheater, bellowing pleasantries, the spectators found the gay scene on the stage quickly obliterated. Dionysius was certainly no diverting invention of Sophron the comedist; on the contrary, he was a reminder of one extremely tense and gloomy day in the Syracusan market place. Since that day they had goggled a little at this and regaled themselves a little with that and managed to forget a good deal of unpleasantness. But the promoted clerk had spent the interval prosecuting a much more serious business—even if he had not yet got around to the offensive against the Carthaginians. The play was about ended; the people hurried down into the city; and at the Achradine gate they met the savior of their country, just back from a punitive expedition against the neighbor city of Gela.

The new leader whom they had got elevated in a single

session from clerk to general was a man of violence. In that he was like any other usurper flying into rages in an effort to make people forget how open to challenge his status is. The insecurity of his position, always a powerful incentive to action, was driving him on. At Gela he had just won another victory for his people—a more brilliant victory than that of the market place, in connection with which they had had to take into account the connections of the worthy Hipparinus and of the wealthy Philistus. At Gela he had had the nobles condemned root and branch, put to death, and expropriated. His prestige as a popular idol was now solidly established, and out of the substance of his plutocratic victims he had paid his soldiers twice what Syracuse had promised them. Thus they were in good spirits, and they were exchanging badinage with the theatergoers on every topic from the man-eating shark to the wealth of the late patricians of Gela, wiped out in a twinkling as all the people's enemies ought to be.

Where a popular speaker holds forth, a popular audience will soon enough collect. Dionysius lost no time about loosing a torrent of oratory to compensate the theatergoers snatched so brusquely from their enjoyments. Gela had shown him once more how easy it is to govern—if you have no scruples. Nobody had opposed him; getting his own way was easier and easier. And suddenly he struck out toward a new objective. "So *this* is the state of affairs in Syracuse! Your soldiers go without their money while your gentlefolk take their pleasure at the playhouse!" No one dared breathe. Everyone felt personally guilty. Whom in particular was he thinking of? Not, assuredly, the honest simpleton who was now gaping at him as if he were the man-eating shark incarnate. Dionysius was lashing himself into a foaming fury; he was now all but screaming. "Our worst

enemies are not over there in Carthage: they are right here in Syracuse! These scoundrels are a good deal more dangerous than Himilco of Carthage and his whole nation put together."

What were the names of the men he was indicting? Dionysius was out to rid himself of the kingmakers—Hipparinus and his faction.

The subtle and dramatic gradations of his progress from bad to worse were ample atonement to his audience for the unceremonious interruption of their play. And he had still not acquainted his apprehensive fellow citizens with the worst. The enemy had sent an ambassador to him, ostensibly to treat for the ransom of his prisoners. What the ambassador had actually had the impudence to propose was that he fold his hands and refrain from any action against the Carthaginians. So they took him for as unmitigated a blackguard as his military compeer Hipparinus, did they? He had to get thus much off his conscience this very hour and instant. But would it be enough to set the ponderous mass in motion? He had better make sure by giving this languid rabble an extra shove, lest they stop short of the precise mark he had prescribed for them. "No man of honor," Dionysius trumpeted in peroration, "can continue to be your general under any such handicaps." Well, they now had a whole night ahead of them to mull over what they could do toward dealing with the handicaps.

There is nothing that puts a worse blight on the spirit than to be brought up short in the midst of gaiety. Contentment and happy illusions ought to dissolve gradually. As if the mere assault on their temper were not enough, there now came this violent arraignment, beating on their unprepared mood like a rain squall out of a cloudless sky. They crept away home in blank dejection. The men they had just

heard indicted were going to pay through the nose for their ugly mood. To think that they had been existing within the walls of their own city with no more protection than that ! What would have become of them if they had failed to discover Dionysius ? The realization of this blessing went far to lighten the curse of their despondency.

When the populace is constantly being appealed to for ratification of this and that, the day of its enslavement is not far off. Here it was once more, herded together to cast its ballots. Not yet was the sovereign electorate of Syracuse aware that what was really being demanded of it was a statistical uproar in honor of the actual sovereign. It was a noteworthy day, that following the afternoon at the amphitheater. Emissaries had come from Gela to tell the Syracusans how their Dionysius had covered himself with glory in the neighbor city. Hearing them, the men of Syracuse believed in their savior with a faith unshakable; when outsiders sing the praises of something that belongs to us, we cannot but think that its claims are overwhelming. If the people of Gela were unwilling to exist any longer except under the aegis of this Dionysius, he must indeed be a towering figure. His domination was increasing beyond all limits, and everyone was making it a point of self-respect to echo his precise opinions.

How exactly right he was ! This was indeed no time to be sitting in theaters slapping one's thighs. The enemy was entrenched in the very heart of their own city; had not Dionysius pointed that out yesterday in his speech at the city gate ? A single night had sufficed to convert his assertion into an axiom. The charges that their hero was now flinging at his governmental associates—to no random collection of citizens as on the preceding day, but before the whole assembly in the market place—contributed nothing new. But

what need was there of anything new? To raise fresh considerations merely sets people to reflecting, whereas sheer repetition undermines the very power of resistance, even in the reflective. Dionysius was not throwing light on an issue: he was pouncing on what he wanted. And he was pouncing on his people with iron claws when he affirmed that he would honorably renounce the task he could not honorably discharge.

It was unthinkable that such a man should be hamstrung by worthless associates. Things had got to the point where the people could not even imagine trying to get along without him. One speaker proposed that he be made absolute commander-in-chief: could they, when you came right down to it, afford to procrastinate until the battering-rams were at their very walls? Let a later assembly settle the status of the other generals at its leisure. This was an altogether admirable program; why, they had been mentally adjusted to it ever since yesterday! It made sense to all of them. By way of exception, a few timorous elders would doubtless rake up sundry unfortunate occurrences of bygone times, but it is the way of old men to be forever calling attention to something tiresome; their range of experience demands it of them. Let these hesitant old gentlemen now give a thought to that great Syracusan, Gelon. What was the explanation of the brilliant victory he had won at Himera? Simply the fact that he had had in his own hands the control of the republic's full resources. No species of rejoinder could make any headway against this citation of the most illustrious episode in the nation's history. To bring up a national hero is to transcend argument. The most dangerous illusions of any people are those that derive from its historic legends.

The most venerable Syracusans still living might well

have witnessed as striplings the state funeral of Gelon and the erection in his honor of a memorial crowned with nine lordly turrets. In the wake of his tremendous victory he had appeared in the market place in the midst of armed citizens without a single weapon, wearing no armor; and that was how they had perpetuated him there in everlasting marble. For in death he was more than ever the victor of Himera. Over whatever else he may have been, his fame had long since drawn the mantle of charity. It is the supreme triumph of a tyrant to be so overwhelmingly the master that he can lay his head in any subject's lap without a qualm. Gelon the Great, who had betrayed and plundered and enslaved and butchered poor and rich alike, was apotheosized as his country's benefactor and savior. He had subjugated his fellow citizens to the point where there was no more need of armor between their daggers and his own breast; they loved him even after he was cold in death and thus quite powerless to do them harm. Indeed, his posthumous glory was shining enough to irradiate the somber reigns of his brothers Hieron and Thrasybulus, who succeeded him. In their own persons they had, unfortunately, won no Battle of Himera that could gloss over their deeds of horror. But the power of Gelon had been such that today, seventy-five years after his death, he could still attest to the people of Syracuse that everything was going to be all right, as it had been after that classic victory, if they would but put the whole responsibility into the hands of Dionysius.

And it was so voted by the grandsons of the hero's contemporaries. Glory to Gelon, to the Battle of Himera! Down with generals that bargain with the enemy! Maybe now people can at last take their ease in the theater again. The balloting made Dionysius absolute commander-in-chief. He promptly doubled the soldiers' pay.

The gathering had assembled that morning in high good humor. The general satisfaction had mounted as the time for voting neared. Yet when the assembly broke up, the people were moody. Though they had accomplished exactly what they set out to do, they were now utterly apathetic about it. The doldrums often overtake a tippler without warning, almost before he has got down the last enjoyable dram. Probably they were already present, though suppressed under layers of avidity, abandon, and mere helpless pertinacity. Many of these people had had an uncomfortable awareness of what they were doing, and yet had gone right on insensately doing it. Once caught up in the momentum of the thing, they could not be checked by mere perception. Eyes are good for nothing but to see the road ahead: they do not furnish anyone with a set of brakes. Now that momentum had had its way, the people soberly surveyed the havoc and with sighs of resignation concluded that what they had done, by irreproachably democratic processes and with wild enthusiasm, was to create a dictator.

They had what they wanted—and they were sullen by reason of also having what they did not want. It was in a brooding and downcast frame of mind that they straggled back to their houses.

Leontini, the neighboring city to the north of Syracuse, was situated in a depression between two rocky heights, somewhat removed from the sea. It was a place quite unlike any other. People left homeless by the Carthaginians or compelled to make their escape from some local despot sought refuge there. Leontini was not so much a city as an asylum.

All male Syracusans under forty and fit for military serv-

ice, Dionysius the commander-in-chief proclaimed, were to proceed to Leontini fully armed and provisioned for a month. It appeared, then, that there was still to be no action against the southern enemy. There was another antagonist with whom it was even more imperative to deal at once; and the general did not mean that Syracuse should be the battlefield. The city was ideally suited to making the traditional enemy disorganize himself as he threaded the surrounding marshes, but it offered no advantages for fighting the enemy within; and that was the immediate program. There were in the city various families of long-established prestige, such as Hipparinus', that for generation after generation had asserted their title to power and were not going to yield it to any casual understrapper. Also, here was a people that, however volatile, was not going to be able instantly to forget how sweet was the taste of liberty. Nevertheless, the men of Syracuse were not over-receptive to the gospel as preached by Dionysius.

What he needed was uprooted men who could root themselves in him, derelict men to moor themselves to him. Leontini, that home of the homeless, was just the place to look for them. At the same time this shift of scene made it possible to rid himself of all the Syracusans over forty. He had no great fondness for elderly men: they made too hard a job of coming to a decision, not being able to shake off their clog of accumulated experience. He was all in favor of youth, as reckless men are—youth being inveterately ready to dedicate to any wild undertaking the surplus energy that elderly fools deprecate as "visionary." In fine, Dionysius the robber chieftain struck his decisive blow at Leontini with a picturesque swarm of undisciplined youngsters and desperate outcasts.

Just how did he happen to hit on this striking, this pres-

ently triumphant device ? No honest republican pilot would ever have sailed any such course. Every man stops at just those interpretations of history that he has it in him to make use of. A more genuine man of the people, studying the careers of former tyrants, might learn two lessons: first, that the tyrants were eventually assassinated, and secondly that their assassins were exalted to the skies. If he happened to think of Pisistratus, who had put himself at the head of an uprising of tenant farmers and field hands and so established a despotism, total revulsion would make him oblivious of the details of the despot's career. Not so young Dionysius. As one who had joined the powerful Hermocrates to help him enslave the people of Syracuse, he must have been thoroughly familiar with the blood-stained ghost of Pisistratus—almost as familiar as a pupil is with his teacher. The pupil's mind had somehow stored away Pisistratus' masterstroke of recruiting an army of thugs, and the latterday despot was now brilliantly reapplying the effective ancient formula. Thus, every man re-creates a past that suits him—and only the effete are content to stop at mere academic knowledge.

It was the night preceding the mass meeting. The General was encamped outside the city gates of Leontini. Suddenly an uproar broke out in his tent, mingled with shouts of "Murder !" Dionysius plunged out as if the Furies were on his heels. Murder ! Whence and how ? Who had undertaken to assassinate him ? Everyone was running hither and yon, and a surge of excitement overswept the camp to its utmost corner. In no time at all the whole encampment was aware that the enemies of liberty had tried to strike down the standard-bearer of liberty. Nobody knew the names of the would-be assassins; nobody knew what they looked like. But the point that mattered was known: to wit, that the

criminals, being Dionysius' enemies, were the people's enemies; for Dionysius was the people.

The people of Leontini were staring intently upward at the citadel. A huge beacon was flaring up there. The important members of the staff were ordered to report to the General on the instant. There was a great bustling to and fro; wherefore even the most distant spectator could gather that weighty doings were afoot. Interminable consultations were going on; wherefore it was patent to all and sundry that momentous problems must be reaching solution. The peaceful night had suddenly turned martial; it had become one of those nights that see the manufacture of the world's rulers.

Ordinary people who placidly convene after a good night's sleep are not much given to passing extraordinary resolutions without convincing argument. The people of Leontini had had scarcely any sleep at all, and they were beyond control. The night sky up there above the citadel had been reddened with flames for hours, and fire always incites people to irresponsibility. Moreover, a fresh bulletin had been arriving every hour with news of major importance that flatly contradicted all preceding bulletins—a further proof that something stupendous had come to pass. The people, instead of going to bed, had been racking their brains with the questions of who and why and what next. After such a night even stolid folk are ripe for unconsidered acts—and this flotsam of ruined beings was anything but stolid.

In these conditions the massed multitude was informed that poor sorely persecuted and defenseless liberty would have to be given a bodyguard of six hundred men. Possibly they had the less hesitancy in assenting to this extraordinary proposal because the master of the new corps would be leaving their little city no later than the next day. Suppose

Dionysius of Syracuse was henceforth to have his private army: what was that to, say, the Agrigentian refugees in Leontini ? They conceded him his six hundred, then; whereupon he pressed for a thousand. And the ones he took to his bosom were the most destitute, the most desperate. He gave them, too, the most resplendent equipment—one more earnest of great things in store for them. Next he promoted and cashiered his officers in a way to make every one of them directly dependent on him. And then he led his motley but devoted force back to his native city.

Syracuse might have barred its gates against him. Conceivably more than one of the people had it in mind that there were plenty of historical precedents for launching a drive for power with the discovery of a conspiracy to assassinate. Pisistratus himself had got his bodyguard of ruffians by that expedient, to the eventual discomfiture of the Athenians. But the city also had a sprinkling of prudent folk who argued that Dionysius' young rapscallions would go to any length whatever, especially with only the older men left there to stop them. Others, deeply impressed by the brisk vigor with which Dionysius had acted, counted on his making short work of any number of superfluous windbags. Besides, was he not an implacable enemy of Carthage, and therefore a true patriot, and therefore already a virtual demigod ? There were even some trusting souls who, in the teeth of every evidence, faced the future with an optimism to which they were going to cling regardless; and these were confident that Dionysius was going to be satisfied and even overwhelmed with gratitude as soon as he had finally got the power he wanted. Those who shut their eyes to the implications of power have only themselves to thank for the abuse of power.

The outcome seemed almost to justify the credulous in

their credulity. Dionysius did not assume the title of king. His behavior was unexceptionably democratic. He convoked the popular assembly as formerly. He had issues voted on as if the most important thing in the world to him were the preferences of his fellow citizens. And anyone who persisted in questioning whether Syracuse was still a democracy vanished into the quarries of Epipolae. The number of questioners was, to be sure, not great.

One veritable miracle had come to pass in the city. Its citizens had hitherto been flying at one another's throats in vindictive partisan contention: now, of a sudden, they were one heart and one soul. Their heart and their soul and their will were those of Dionysius. The lowly clerk had discovered the philosophers' stone and, thanks to it, had brilliantly solved the most formidable problem of politics: how to transmute a myriad conflicting ideas and self-interests into one united whole. The solution was to subordinate these disparate elements to one single overmastering idea and self-interest.

Philistus and his group were sadly disillusioned men. This fellow had slipped through their fingers, and their political acumen had ceased to look particularly redoubtable.

The gods had been kind enough to send them a deliverer. The whole dismal nightmare of government by the people had been dispelled without a particle of trouble. But as soon as they undertook to seat themselves on the throne they discovered that it was already occupied, and by no other than their own cat's-paw. For untold ages their ancestors had given the orders and his had obeyed them. What would be he at this moment if they had not given him a leg up, that day in the market place? Nothing but a petty civil servant under a serious cloud!

All that was true enough. But history has the obduracy not even to admit the claims of the powerful to gratitude, once a more powerful has superseded them. Dionysius the nobody had made himself somebody, and he had no more need of Philistus' money. He could help himself to money now—all he wanted of it. He did not even need the approbation of the sovereign people any more. He could manufacture that for himself—all he needed of it. He even had the power to suppress objectionable dreams. A patrician lady of Himera had a dream in which a muscular blond man lay in chains at the feet of Zeus. The soothsayers said that this man was the despoiler of Sicily. The lady subsequently recognized her blond cockerel, the despoiler, in the boisterous Syracusan commander-in-chief. Dionysius adjudged this dream detrimental to public morale, and he had sentence pronounced on it—a sentence that included the dreamer. A man with that amount of power could assuredly renounce the support of Philistus and his kin.

The ruling classes do not throw down their hand as readily as the common people do. After all, they know their trade and its tricks, and furthermore they are entrenched in the conviction that fitness for a place on or near the throne is something that they inevitably drank in from their mothers' breasts. The rightful rulers, then, were confidently waiting for their first chance to tumble the upstart back down to the level from which they had helped him rise. They had not long to wait. He finally moved against the Carthaginians. Now let him prove that he was made of different stuff from the succession of generals whose heads he had clamored for in that maiden speech of his ! But Dionysius, so far from being victorious, evacuated Gela and Camerina without losing a man. In short, the foreign enemy's turn had not yet come. Syracuse itself was incompletely subjugated. It

was going to take a while longer to re-educate the tractable and smash the intractable.

The nobles would have been only too glad to do away with their betrayer on his march back from the field. But Dionysius himself intuitively grasped their secret intention, and since Leontini he had kept himself enclosed in a living, moving fortress. The plotters thereupon revised their scheme and hurried back to Syracuse, which they were allowed to enter unimpeded. They would now have been able to kick the insolent cub back to his office desk if they had truly possessed the hereditary wisdom on which they plumed themselves. But they did not possess it. If he was nothing more than an office hack with delusions of grandeur, they were just as certainly nothing more than vindictive swashbucklers; and they now frittered away the brief allowance of time that had been granted them. They went to the palace that the plebeian nobody had had built for him near the water front, on the main harbor, and there they took their vengeance by helping themselves to much valuable loot, and also to Hermocrates' daughter—Dionysius' wife. Stupidity compounded ! It enabled Dionysius to stride into Syracuse—and into history—in the role of great man.

He approached the city at the head of a hundred horsemen and six hundred footsoldiers. The closed gates he unlocked with fire. That swampy region abounded in tall reeds: he had them bundled together, piled up, and set alight. The flames gnawed the obstacle away and proclaimed with red-hot emphasis that the master was at hand. He and his men took the unfortified city by assault and dealt with it according to the dictates of policy and of his own rage. He was well endowed by nature for tyranny: his very wrath was unchained according to a pattern of strategy.

Such men as he have been associated through the centuries with the rather complimentary adjective "blood-stained." The genus bloody tyrant is unknown to nature: it is a product of human manufacture, and a less sublime one than our Shakespeares would have it. Dionysius himself had by no means an insatiable appetite for blood-letting. Indeed, he seems to have begun as an amiable enough blond boy, conspicuously well-mannered, possibly a little overambitious, cursed with a fatal compulsion to argue his fellows into silence. Then a moment's caprice pushed him to the forefront of the stage, and after that, comprehensibly enough, he forgot how to laugh. A leading role carries with it a compulsion to signal deeds; these breed resistance; and resistance in turn further incites the author of the deeds. After all, who had begun this blood-letting, anyway? They had driven his dishonored wife to suicide, and he had simply made an appropriate blood offering to her shade. Was he expected, under such provocation, to remain genial? The time might come when people would spontaneously reconcile themselves to him, and then he too, like Gelon of blessed memory, would thread his way unarmored through thickets of weapons, a sight as touching as an innocent young girl taking a stroll on an evening of springtime.

In the meantime he must by all means encase himself in heavy armor and wear it day and night. And outside his iron shell he provided himself with another of masonry—a thick-walled castle with one entrance only, and it consisting of five successive portals. The tyrant's stronghold was shrewdly located on the narrow causeway between the islet of Ortygia and the Syracusan shore. To the south it was protected by the main harbor, to the north by the secondary harbor, lined with armories and dockyards. To the west, on the side facing the city, the way to the castle was barred by three

high walls, and to the east, on the tiny island in the rear of the fortress, the distinctively uniformed bodyguard maintained its watch. This islet, the cradle of Syracuse and formerly its most populous quarter, was swept clean of its inhabitants, and among the temples of the gods and by the sacred fount of Arethusa there was now an encampment of Celts, Iberians, and many another picturesque breed of the vagabond horde that was always quick to swarm around an audacious adventurer anywhere between Asia Minor and the western confines of the Grecian Empire. Only by way of the grounds and passageways of the castle did they have access to the city. Was the tyrant keeping his bodyguard sequestered lest it become infected with the townsmen's libertarian prejudices, or were the townsmen themselves being insulated from adventurous fantasy?

Could anything, however, be more in the realm of fantasy than the solid fact of everything that Dionysius had handed to his people?

Nothing now retained the aspect that had marked it a little while back. Everything once stable had become fluid, and yesterday's chaff was today's sound seed. There is no more disrupting force in the world than a Dionysius. He is compelled to do away with every influence that existed before his advent, simply because it does not owe its existence to him. Dionysius confiscated the property of the nobles. He divested ordinary citizens of their political rights and likewise of their money. He emancipated the serfs, descendants of the aboriginal population, thereby aggrieving everybody without prejudice. He invented new privileges and new restrictions with engaging inconsistency. He was progressive, he was reactionary, and he was a little of everything betwixt the two; all parties were equally alien to his sym-

pathies. He had no fondness for the ruling class, his potential competitor; and none for the populace, which, after all, existed but to be governed. He was at one and the same time a plebeian revolutionary and an enemy of the people. He loved neither freeman nor slave. He forced free women into marriages with freed slaves—whose freedom consisted in the fact that their former masters were now no freer than they. He loved neither Greek nor barbarian: he wiped out Greek communities, he colonized the sites with barbarians, and if the barbarian beneficiaries were insufficiently grateful he sent them into the front battle line to be mowed down. He ruled from a height above all ethical considerations. Wanting nothing but absolute freedom for himself, he was logically compelled to impose absolute slavery on everybody else. He severed every kind of bond and replaced it with some new kind. People could form no sort of connection save under his auspices; and no one in the whole realm could continue to draw breath but by his sufferance. Dionysius was living, then, in a perfection of harmony with the stern laws of the world of human beings.

Among these laws is one even more autocratic than the most uncompromising autocrat. It is possible to arrest a rolling ball, but it is not possible to arrest a growing organism. No policeman manages to bring the tide of history to a full stop after one of its mighty surges has tossed a dwarf on to some exalted place. For that reason all Dionysii habituate themselves to incessant action, patterning their lives after rapids in a river. To be sure, there was now no will to set itself up against his. He had an impregnable fortress, an invincible bodyguard, and the most seductive female spies. Nevertheless, there were still the conquered, who had lost a good deal too much to take it quietly, and there were still the conquerors, who had won too little to be satisfied. There

were also emigrants who had removed themselves bag and baggage to the towns under Carthaginian control; and these were to Dionysius a constant and maddening reminder of the line at which his power stopped short. But above all there was the unremitting tension peculiar to someone struggling to balance himself on the comb of a running wave. Everything impels him forward, and if he is not to slip off he must find some fresh impulsion to ride—one that will bear him higher yet. But where to find one?

Nothing but hate is capable of forcing such impulsions out of the inert human mass. Dionysius—a god of the winds within the limits of his own sphere—accordingly proceeded to whip up an anti-Carthaginian tempest; for he had a choice of but two enemies with whom to stir his countrymen to action, and the second was—Dionysius. Actually, there had for some time been an understanding with the traditionary foe. A provisional peace treaty had stipulated that the Syracusans were to put themselves under Dionysius' rule. It would certainly have been possible to make the best of it for the next half century. But inasmuch as Dionysius' fellow countrymen, not without cause, felt themselves to have been grievously enslaved, there was no recourse for their master but to escort them into a war of liberation. He initiated, then, the most far-reaching rearmament program the world had ever seen. The whole Syracusan dominion was turned into a vast armory.

Gymnasiums and warehouses were adapted to the production of swords, shields, helmets, armor. Every warrior was to do his fighting with the tools of his native region: accordingly, Greek and Phoenician artisans were busy forging Gallic and Iberian gear. A museum of the various countries' implements of war became a schoolhouse to the armament industry. The swarms of munitions workers over-

flowed the anterooms of temples. Distinguished citizens made their own residences available. Whole mountains of weapons accumulated, and the humiliated nation's pride rose along with these mountains. The world was abuzz with awesome statistics. Prizes were offered for military inventions. Engineers from all over creation got together in Syracuse and collaborated to devise new engines of war. Hitherto unimagined monsters of stone and of wood came into being—petroboloi that catapulted boulders of as much as two hundredweight into an enemy's ranks, oxyboloi that darted light splinters of stone. The aged King of Sparta deplored this inhuman technique of mechanized warfare, saying: "It has ceased to depend on *men*." Greece had passed her Periclean glory, the age of Phidias, Anaxagoras, Aspasia: she had lived to see this Dionysian neo-renaissance of quinqueremes, catapults, casemates—these last, creations of the most daringly experimental engineers, actually containing underground stables and barracks with artfully masked entrances.

Dionysius himself was particularly fetched by the new naval giants. Ever since Corinth had brought out the earliest trireme he had been much troubled in his mind, and he meant to produce something that would outclass it. Immense numbers of trees were felled on Aetna; the logs were twitched to sea level by mule power and thence rafted down to Syracuse; keel after keel was laid in the dockyards. The hulls were built up and up, five decks high. And all these things—the arsenals fuller than they could hold, the mighty pieces of artillery, the floating monsters, the passageways hewn out of solid rock—were supposed to indemnify the people of Syracuse for the loss of a boon that, by comparison with the tremendous creations now being bestowed on them, was patently contemptible: to wit, their liberty.

Dionysius' forges raised a deafening clangor. It was the insistent pounding of a heart that could not endure silence, because in silence it would become aware of its own emptiness.

Rearmament was a costly business. There was no inexhaustible supply of ready cash, such as Athens possessed in the form of her tutelary goddess's treasure; the present underpinning of power was not, as it had been in Pericles' day and dominion, the overflowing coffer. Existence was from hand to mouth; the mouth was insatiable, but the hand was a mighty one. Trade and manufacture were encouraged in order to create confidence, and then their profits were taxed out of existence (conformably to an obliging resolution passed by the popular assembly) by way of a safeguard against loss of confidence. Business flourished, and the people grew poorer and poorer. To begin with, only the rich were mulcted—the proclaimed enemies of the commonwealth. The rest were granted some leeway: their relinquishment of everything they possessed was spread over a five-year period. When they pressed for the repayment of these ostensible loans, Dionysius acceded to their request (with the aid of stamps and dies) by doubling the value of the silver unit of coinage—the exquisite tetradrachma, which the master engravers Conon, Euainetus, and Eumenes had graced with the profile of Arethusa, the four plunging steeds, and winged Nike wearing her crown of victory. The coinage now showed no names but the artists': the great counterfeiter forbore to immortalize himself on them.

Even the poor were not overlooked. The peasants' cattle were taxed away from them. As soon as they were delivered to the slaughterhouses, a new decree prohibited any further slaughter. The peasants tried to outwit the extortioner by sacrificing their beasts to the gods. Dionysius, as one privy

to the thoughts of the supernal beings, thereupon excluded all female animals from the hecatomb. Copper was coated with tin and stamped with the dies intended for silver; and inasmuch as the master of the mint was a dictator who never bled the people without first having the people themselves decree that he should—in short, a democratic dictator, so to put it—the people, after weighing various persuasive considerations, pronounced themselves ready to accept tin for silver. They also pronounced the tyrant solvent and a sound risk: the trust funds of minors were taken out of the hands of trustees on the mere promise to restore them when the beneficiaries reached their majority. The national wealth now consisted exclusively of a resplendent military establishment. No highwayman could have appropriated it more effectively. Nor was it ever exhausted, for it was being constantly replenished out of the proceeds of universal forced labor—a method that no slave-owner had ever yet improved on.

Sixty thousand laborers were drafted to put up the tremendous wall that brought even the plateau of Epipolae into the scheme of fortifications. Six thousand yoke of oxen fetched the blocks down from the quarries. Pre-eminent citizens did duty as foremen. Conspicuously tireless workers were given decorations. Dionysius, habitually on hand with his staff officers, more than once soiled his own exalted hands among the ranks of labor when a workman had to be relieved because he was exhausted. Many a spectator's heart warmed to this beautiful exhibition of brotherly unity. Yes, all Syracusans were brothers now. Time was when Dionysius had had the peasants' houses searched for arms while they were at work in their fields. Now they were suffered to help him forge the sword against the common enemy. (It is worth recording, though, that when they marched out in

column their weapons were not turned over to them until they had got twelve miles from the city; and when the fighting was over these dangerous tools were taken away from them again at the same remove. But what did such trifling precautions matter, compared with the glorious age that it was now theirs to establish?) People were talking in a different vein these days. These days were seeing the emergence of something everlasting: this mighty fortress of Syracuse. A man concerned to encourage silence in his fellow citizens is bound to set great store by slave labor, which is voiceless—though so much sweat is poured out in performing it that an aeon would not suffice to obliterate the memory of the resulting monument to joy.

Thus the Syracusans reared their defenses against the ancestral foe—who, to be sure, would have to be provoked into attacking them if it were ever to be demonstrated that all this vast rearmament program had truly been a matter of life or death. The tyrant now had his own citadel outside the iron shell he wore; and outside the citadel he had the whole armed camp that was Syracuse. Fully to man it meant bringing in additional population from hither and yon—people from Agrigentum and Gela, from Camerina and Leontini, from Catania, from Naxos. Syracuse, now the largest city in Europe, was over three times as great as Athens and the Piraeus combined.

This was the only kind of greatness that Dionysius had to boast of.

Dionysius, after the suicide of the hapless wife who had not known how to reconcile herself to dishonor, had expressly decided that he would marry a girl from Rhegium. It was not that the women of that city were any more beautiful than others. But the strait separating Sicily from Italy,

which Rhegium dominated, was of crucial importance. Also, emigrants to Rhegium were spreading the report, and with notable success, that the discontented Syracusans were in the mood of throwing in their lot with any opponent of their dictator. Against falsehood there is always the shield and buckler of the truth; but against embarrassing truths there is no defense but force. Force can put on extremely gracious disguises: for example, the disguise of marrying one's victim. Dionysius required, then, in order to make Rhegium pliant to his will, a Rhegian girl. He offered that important city, by way of compensation, a slice of the territory of its hostile neighbor, Locri; for the speediest and most effective way to achieve unity is to buy it at the expense of some third party.

The overtures of the Syracusan ruler were put before the Rhegian popular assembly. But it showed not the slightest inclination to become a partaker-by-marriage in the destiny of Dionysius the Great. The answer that he was given sounded as if it had been dictated by some emigrant's insolence. The only woman in the whole city who would make him a fit wife, they said, was the hangman's daughter. It is injudicious to forecast the behavior of an absolute dictator by the canons of the plain citizenry. The people of Rhegium were to pay dearly, if belatedly, for their simplicity. Jungle beasts and absolute rulers ought to be either placated or annihilated. Any intermediate course is wrong, but none so wrong as enraging them.

Dionysius, being thus precluded from taking unto himself a Rhegian girl at the expense of Locri, proceeded to take a Locrian girl at the expense of Rhegium. The Locrian citizenry accepted his bargain and bestowed on him the daughter of Xenetus, the city's most distinguished resident. Young Doris saw the reflection of her bridegroom's power

even before she saw the person of him who wielded it. The first quinquereme to have slipped off the ways, the crown and glory of his navy, came bringing lavish gifts and bore the lovely bride away. The Syracusans can hardly have failed to enjoy transporting his gentle provincial beauty on that marvel of advanced technique, and thereby sealing the bond between love and war.

It was not exactly the usual thing to take two wives simultaneously, but Dionysius was, after all, in no wise exactly a usual person. He had paid his court to a girl from Rhegium because he was exasperated by the trouble-making emigrants. He had next sought the Locrian maiden in marriage to show the insolent Rhegians that they could not with impunity make a man of power the butt of witticisms. He now also took to wife Aristomache, Hipparinus' daughter—partly out of patriotic sentiment (Doris being, after all, a mere foreigner), but partly, too, because when all was said it would be salutary to re-establish the connections with the aristocracy that he had originally formed through his marriage to the daughter of Hermocrates. And, to aggrieve neither Doris nor Aristomache, neither Locri nor Syracuse, he married both girls in a single ceremony. Also, he was careful to honor both with equally extravagant homage. Aristomache went to her wedding in a car drawn by four gray horses, since with all the will in the world it was unfeasible to convey a Syracusan bride to Syracuse in a ship of the line. In Boeotia it was the usage to burn the axles of the bridal car by way of making the union indissoluble. There was no occasion to follow that practice here. The great cavern with the fivefold portal had one way in and no way out.

Dionysius royally entertained soldiers and civilians at his wedding feast. When it was over, their observance of the folk custom of following the wedded pair to the bridal

chamber was thwarted, to their regret, by the circumstance that there were two bridal chambers. What fun they would have had but for that, with their hammerings on the door, their bellowing of impudicities, while on the other side of the door the marriage was being consummated ! But which door were they to serenade now ? At which was the bridegroom's friend to stand guard in order to fend off the virgins who would try to rush to the rescue of the new-wedded member of their sisterhood ? This august bridegroom had two brides; and his subjects had to be content with wondering whether Doris or Aristomache was being made the first recipient of his favors.

That was a conundrum. They both lived in the same palace. They both ate at the same table. And they both went to Dionysius' bed—each on the night when it was her turn, which was every other night. So absolute was Dionysius' authority that the two wives lived together in concord. Unfortunately they did not, for symmetry's sake, both present him with sons on the same day. It was the foreign woman who first attained that goal. The people of Syracuse were considerably vexed thereby. Dionysius, who did not believe in the gods but did believe in witchcraft, had Doris's mother put to death. Might she not, on a night when he was to sleep with his Syracusan wife, have doctored his wine with ash of the bryony mingled with ox urine, to make him for that night sterile? Or might she not have coached Doris to walk in Aristomache's footprints, setting her own right foot always on the impression of her rival's left and saying at every step: "I have trodden you underfoot and am raised above you" ?

The festivals with which mere earthly gods regale their worshippers are ordinarily transient, the headaches that follow them persistent. The dual epithalamium had hardly

died away when Dionysius informed the popular assembly that he had now had his fill of citharas and flutes. Henceforth the catapult and the quinquereme were to sound the music; the dissonance of Carthaginian and Greek had been endured as long as it could be. It was no easy matter to prove the inevitability of war, for the Carthaginian attitude was altogether pacific. Dionysius was not even able to deny that those accursed savages had supplied a few models quite deserving of emulation—for example, their custom of crucifixion. But the Syracusans did not make it too diffcult for their master to persuade them of the fateful necessity of armed conflict. The Punic nation was the immemorial enemy: that was no Dionysian invention, but a fact out of their schoolbooks. It was, moreover, self-evident that this enemy would allow them no peace: else why have gone in so furiously for rearmament? There was, too, an unvoiced illusion that the man of power would deal more gently with his own people once their swords were reddened with enemy blood. But should nothing be accomplished toward winning final victory, could they not in the upshot at least rid themselves of the Carthaginian in their own midst—their master Dionysius?

In six short years of blazing energy the greatest military power in the world had shot upward and spread itself like the green bay tree. Its top darkened the sky; its roots in the earth were but shallow ones.

CHAPTER II

THE TRIAL OF SOCRATES

LIFE HAD become notably simplified. The ruler was governing by supremely logical principles: to wipe out any power that antedated his rise, to tolerate the rise of no new power, and to keep his own power steadily growing.

All building done by his subjects was after plans of his making. All their income was paid into his coffers. All votes passed in the popular assembly were ratifications of his will. When, as happened more than once, there was some minor flurry of disaffection, it was speedily and ruthlessly suppressed, and everything went on again as placidly as an animal on a leading string.

A good many contemporaries found this sort of unity extremely beguiling. A moving column of ants is a wonderful sight, when you take it in in one impressionistic look. Whatever makes a multitude as one is gratifying to the human mind, which is first of all an organizing tool and responds even when the triumph of organization over disorder is but illusory. Contemplate the individual insect's part in the moving column, and you will sadden at the sight. Even so, it will not do to exaggerate the wretchedness of the human units that made up the kingdom of Dionysius. Actually, it brought them some blessings, too. Liberty itself is not an unalloyed boon: it propounds more riddles for the individual than he knows how to answer. Under Diony-

sius, on the contrary, there was a large favorable balance of solutions over problems. To have a dictator is to see even the darkest paths suddenly flooded with light.

What a different story we read when we turn to Attica! The dwellers in that tiny country were rooted in the sentiment that it is better to live under bad laws than as slaves in a regimented state. Affixed to a pillar of the City Hall in its capital city was a sheet on which the fundamental tenet of the organic law was emblazoned. It was this: The assassin of an Athenian citizen who foments tyranny shall be subject to no punishment. It was, moreover, no easy matter in this dominion even to embark on the attempt to make oneself a Dionysius. All popular idols were early sent into precautionary banishment, honorably and without confiscation of their belongings. On this system some forty square miles of rocky and arid soil covered with but the most niggardly layer of humus had come to be the focal point of civilization. There was still Persia, to be sure, off there to the east; but any proper Athenian would rather forgo the most flattering audience with the most powerful sovereign on earth than make the required obeisance before Artaxerxes the Great. Every freeborn Athenian was a king in his own right; for he had no king set over him.

Five years earlier, following the unhappy outcome of the Peloponnesian War, the victor had set out to impose his own system of government on the vanquished. No single dictator coming to the fore, they had filled the breach with thirty of the breed. They annulled every provision of the Laws of Solon that contained a hint of casuistry; for to what does legalistic hairsplitting lead if not to chaos? Instruction in the art of public speaking was discontinued: the Athenians were supposed henceforth to perfect themselves in the art of public silence. The commercial warehouses were

sold to be pulled down for the materials in them. Everything was now dispensable—all the spices from India, the gorgeous floor coverings from Persia, the balm and frankincense from Syria, the fine polychrome leathers of the Phoenicians, the Egyptian papyrus and glass, the ivory from Libya, the Baltic amber, the British tin. Cosmopolitan Athens had been subjected to the law of backwoods Sparta: to wit, stay at home and dutifully live on black bean soup and diatribes against the joys of living.

Nevertheless, this organized campaign of deprivation presently miscarried. While, off to the westward, mighty forces were being forged into one sword in the hand of Dionysius, the men of Athens were racking their brains over the marvel that, when all was said, by no means all the old rooted things had been uprooted, or all the long-established bonds torn asunder. For the nation was as rich in factions as it was poor in territory. The range from extremists of the left to Spartophiles to royalists was filled in with every color of the spectrum. Athenians were wearing certain flowers as insignia of their political convictions, or coarse smocks, or unkempt beards and long hair, with every man jealously guarding his particular style. And meanwhile the dread of disintegration was mounting to a painful intensity in this freest of the world's peoples.

In the selfsame year in which the Syracusans, at the behest of their powerful master, were turning their native land into a forbidding prison, with everything going famously—in that same year, 399 B.C., it happened that in that world-renowned den of dialecticians, that paradise of contention and litigation, the city of Athens, where a full third of the citizenry were ordinarily sitting in judgment, a rich and respected leather-goods merchant named Anytus

(he was the son of a rich and respected leather-goods merchant named Anthemion) recruited two witnesses, confronted his notorious fellow citizen Socrates, and summoned him to appear before the appropriate jurisdiction in the ancient Hall of Kings on the market place, there to make answer to a complaint. An official of variegated functions—his duties included, for example, maintenance of the seats of tutelary divinities and supervision of the races of torchbearers at festivals—duly entered the complaint, enjoined the accused to prepare his rebuttal, and fixed the day for trial of the case. It attracted wide public attention; for when one man flouts what all hold sacred, it becomes every man's concern.

The whited tablet bearing an abstract of the indictment was now posted on the official black poplar on the market place. People stopped, read its text, and exhaustively discussed the issue. They were chronically given to taking all manner of things seriously. If a war were going on, the would-be tacticians would be sitting on the ground drawing military diagrams in the acquiescent sand. Let the times wear a more peaceful aspect, and they wrangled no less excitedly for that. Athens was, as the illustrious Pericles had long since remarked, the only city in which a man who held himself aloof was looked upon, not as a peace-loving citizen, but as a useless member of human society. Enforced silence will ultimately strangle even the most potent ideas. Alas for Syracuse ! The Athenians, on the contrary, gave everything that came into their heads the nourishment of the most animated discussion. No idea, whether sagacious or fatuous, original or commonplace, was suffered to wither in embryo.

And now, here was this affair of Socrates. He had been born seventy years before to a midwife and the artisan Sophroniscus, in the workingmen's suburb of Alopece. For

thirty years past the cloakless, barefoot, pug-nosed, bulb-eyed satyr had been keeping Athenian tongues wagging. The first to make him rather widely known had been the comic dramatists. They had portrayed him sometimes as a madcap fellow who, when invited to parties, made off with the wine jug, sometimes as a pathetic simpleton who worried his head about everybody else's welfare while remaining oblivious of whether he even got enough to eat himself; sometimes, too, as a blend of the nebulous nature philosopher Diogenes of Apollonia and the aggressive sophist Protagoras. And inasmuch as a literary portrait, if it be but distinctly enough etched, tends to supplant its living prototype, the Socrates who paced the streets of his city year in and year out became merged in the Socrates whom Teleclides and Eupolis, Callias and Ameipsias and Connus had depicted on the stage.

In reality, he was wont to stroll in all sobriety between the pillars of a certain gymnasium bordering on the open square in which the young men practiced athletic sports. A clot of babblers would be buzzing around him, and to them he would be inexorably holding forth. In this situation he could be seen by anyone on any day. For all that, the inner eye of the public could perceive nothing but the barefoot blusterer with a cheese-yellow face whom the great Aristophanes, more than another, had persuaded the public to see. With this inner eye they beheld him lying somewhere or other in a high-slung hammock, nose in air, eyes staring at the moon, mouth wide open, while a lizard solemnly dropped its turd on him. Nevertheless this wise dreamer paid his allegiance to a wildly eccentric philosophy. The firmament was one vast oven, and humankind its fuel. Thunder and lightning were the sirocco trapped aloft in the clouds and swelling them up like boils until suddenly

they exploded, then leaping irresistibly forth from the rent mass, catching fire from the speed of that mighty friction, and bursting into incandescence with a hissing roar. Thus to the general eye Socrates looked like an astronomical illiterate, relatively innocuous.

Some there were—indeed, more than a few—who understood him rather better than that. They had talked with him face to face. It had been a singular experience. He had strolled into their workshops and proceeded to wring from them one proposition after another—a forbidding form of extortion. He had badgered them from this position to that with big words, and there was no way of shaking him off. They had no sooner answered one question than he confronted them with another even more cockeyed. Uninitiated persons who knew him only by sight were constantly demanding to be told *why*, when all was said, the strange fellow was so wrought up about things. Ah, that indeed! It was more than the initiates themselves had managed to find out. To begin with, he seemed to have nothing more important on his mind than the work being done by the man he was talking with, who felt flattered and was glad to speak freely about his trade. But Socrates would presently interrupt the flood of loquacity in a most irksome fashion. His questions were such as no one had ever before propounded. What did he think he was up to, forcing his way into regions that nobody had ever invaded before?

And he was extraordinarily impish about it. Whenever he could coax anybody into a verbal trap, he took a malicious delight in it. What a treat it was for the cobbler, for once in a way, to cease from cobbling—a lowly task at best—and to sail proudly forth on the high seas of philosophy, declaiming his views on the great problems of existence in his very best diction! And all of a sudden he would find himself

trapped, helpless to make headway in any direction, hunting in vain for some way of escape. And in the end he would have no recourse but to admit, say, that men busy themselves with great affairs of state without even the capacity to set their own lives in order. Socrates was most polite, beyond question; he was actually benevolent. But did not what he said have rather the ring of "Cobbler, mind your last" ? The cobblers were not going to forget that. But the prominent and the educated were a good deal vexed with him, too: his talk was all of tailors, weavers, cooks, seamen, farmers, unadorned with versions of resplendent myths or quotations from the epic poets.

Not an engaging customer, this Socrates. He gave contentment to no one, and least of all to those who were fond of using an idea as a comfortable couch to stretch out on—as who is not ? Toward the end of an interminable and wearisome interchange you might have the delusion that you had arrived at an understanding with him. But there was always just one more trivial question on the tip of his tongue. And suddenly your finality had ceased to be final. The idea that you had got so completely tamed started to kick over the traces again. Nothing was now left in the place where you had just got it neatly stowed. There was no possible system of defense against him. He was like the electric eel that one incautiously touches: he administered a shock. One could only mumble: "Of course, Socrates, you are perfectly right. And yet, like most other people, I am left slightly skeptical by what you say." He could not be believed, and still less could he be confuted. One of the mysterious men of his age—their fellow citizen Socrates.

In front of the Hall of Justice stood a monument showing a wolf fenced in, symbol of the fleeing criminal appre-

hended. For every day that the court was in session this savage patron saint of justice received a stipend of half the customary pay of a judge—not a sum on which he could wax very fat. The ingenious symbolism had only a limited application to Socrates. He had never taken to flight, never been apprehended. He was, nevertheless, a ravening wolf in the Athenian fold.

The poor sheep who stood gossiping in groups around the foot of the monument, waiting for the trial to begin, were not altogether clear as to the precise object of the vulpine philosopher's appetite. Lacking instruction, they had to work out their own interpretation, as indeed they were in duty bound, being freeborn members of their tribe. Democracy often levies very exacting demands upon its demos, confronting every petty tradesman with more enigmas than a hundred sages could master.

If it had but been possible to place the man of mystery in some one political category, they could have dealt with him briskly enough. We need only know to what party a man belongs to tell what manner of man he is. The fact is, every man attaches the highest importance to his own perception of subtle distinctions, whereas he sees his neighbors only in a large summarizing way. But no one was going to get the hang of Socrates on that principle. If you gave a thought to the young nobles who danced attendance on him—say to the handsome young patrician Xenophon, redoubtable hunter of both wild animals and girls, or to highborn Plato over yonder—you had in spite of everything to regard this elderly and disregarded plebeian as a hanger-on of aristocrats himself. Also, he was known to have leanings toward Critias, most avaricious and most violent of nobles, and toward antidemocratic Sparta.

On the other hand, it was precisely the men of the nobil-

ity who, for a generation now, had been speaking of him with particular harshness; and it was only a few years since he had had that uncompromising clash with the thirty tyrants. Socrates had not run away when they came to power, as many a politician did. He continued to stroll about the market place, nor did he begin to keep his opinions to himself. It struck him as singular, he would say, that a man could exterminate part of the citizenry, debase the characters of another part, and still never suspect himself of being a bad ruler. Plato's uncle Critias, who was at that time the head of the Thirty, besides being a former pupil of Socrates, hit on the inspired thought of drawing the stubborn old fellow into co-operative action. (Dictators are passionate lovers of action: it is a corollary of their hating all criticism as the plague.) Socrates and four others were summoned, and the five were commissioned to go to Salamis and arrest a democrat named Leon, who was to be put to death. The four dutifully carried out their instructions; whereas Socrates just went quietly and calmly home. That transaction said to the rulers that he was deficient in patriotism, and they extended their prohibition of instruction in rhetoric to cover his lectures.

Was it permissible, Socrates thereupon inquired, to ask for explanation when there was something in a decree that one did not understand? "I am minded," he said, "to give obedience to the laws. Lest, however, I commit a transgression against the laws through ignorance, I could wish that I might know one thing: Are you banning the art of public speaking because you think it encourages falsehood or because you think it is serviceable to the cause of truth?" At that point Charicles, greatly angered, had enjoined him not to hold any further converse whatsoever with young persons. Socrates, even now, had not had enough. If he were

to abide by the strict letter of the law, he would have to know one thing more: up to exactly what age were people young? At that juncture he was baldly informed that his parables of cowherds were little to the purpose, and that furthermore he might be so good as to bear it in mind that the cowherds were not being oppressed in his person.

Young Plato had been considerably disappointed in his uncle Critias and his other uncle Charicles and their whole ilk, who had so blandly solicited Socrates' co-operation. Might this Plato be, after all, a renegade, and Socrates himself actually no friend of the nobility? But to whom was he a friend, then?

Five hundred and one men of Athens, soon to sit as judges, knew well enough what they wanted; but just how was anyone going to make out what this Socrates wanted? For the bill of indictment prepared against him by Thearion the baker, Mithaikos the cook, and Sarambos the merchant took in a lot of territory. Socrates, they alleged, refused to recognize the sovereignty of the people. Had he not contemptuously admitted as much when he declared that it was madness to choose the officers of the ship of state by the drawing of beans? (No one thought of choosing a tax collector or a carpenter or a flute player by any such device, although the errors they might commit were incalculably less damaging than errors in statecraft.) He had indoctrinated his pupils with the following argument: If it was lawful for a man to have his own father chained on his going insane, was it not likewise lawful for those of superior knowledge to chain those of inferior knowledge? Had he not culled out the most subversive passages to be found in the major poets and on their authority taught his pupils to be servile minions of the powerful? He had quoted Homer with approval:

"Neither is ruling by many a good; let one be the ruler,
One king, to whom the son of Cronus, the crooked-in-counsel,
Scepter and judgments hath given, that he may be sovereign among you." *

Indeed, on one occasion he had actually attempted at the last second to snatch a particularly nourishing mouthful from the high and mighty man in the street, in the form of ten army commanders who had won a huge victory and in the wake of it incurred the displeasure of the sovereign people. Socrates had been at the time presiding officer of the popular assembly. He had shown himself to be extremely intractable. The people, enraged against him, had demanded that anyone who stood out against the declared will of the people be dealt with as a traitor and included in the sentence imposed on the guilty commanders themselves. Not even that admonition made any difference to Socrates.

If Anytus, the eminent democrat who had now entered the complaint, were to prosecute the defendant on political grounds, the case would be simple enough. Socrates' enigmatic features could be redrawn with firm strokes until they became the standard portrait of a partisan opponent, with clarity achieved whether or no. Ah, but in what party did he belong? His leanings were toward the Spartan simplicity, and yet he was himself a typical Athenian windbag. Young nobles flocked around him, and yet he had provoked their class to vindictiveness against him. The five hundred and one men who were either to take his life or spare it before that day's sunset found themselves completely addled.

* The Iliad of Homer: a line for line translation in dactylic hexameters by William Benjamin Smith and Walter Miller. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1944

Maybe there would still be a last-minute chance to get to the bottom of the paradox—for, once the session had convened, it would be too late. If one of Socrates' disciples would turn up—Plato, say, or Antisthenes, or Aeschines—maybe it would be possible to pluck at his robe, coax him over by the stone wolf, and catechize him exhaustively. But would even that process really get anywhere? To what school of thought did Socrates adhere? To none. To what philosophical system? To none. Did he believe in marriage? He did. Did he love his country? He had distinguished himself as a soldier, not only in the general rout after the defeat at Delium, but also through the bitter Thracian winter before Potidaea, where he chose to wear only a single cloak and went barefoot on the frozen earth. Also, he loved Athens so well that he had never felt the slightest need to visit other cities. Did he believe in the state? He recognized its authority. What was his attitude toward the gods? He made them every offering required by immemorial usage. Why, Socrates was a model citizen!

But why on earth, then, should he spend year after year heckling every poet, politician, and artisan that crossed his path? And what did he mean by the fantastic assertion that he who chooses to do wrong is a better man than he who does wrong under compulsion? Now, who was going to get at the inwardness of that? Unfortunately, Socrates had not committed anything to writing. The written word left him cold: it was tongueless and supplied no answers to questions. On the other hand, he had eloquence in excess.

Thus, one man said this and another man pointed out that, and if the inquirer were to pay heed to *all* his pupils he would presently find himself trying to cope, not with one Socrates, but with a dozen. But how was anybody to take the measure of a man whose very disciples could not agree

as to his identity ? Very decidedly, any such man is a dangerous character—not because his specific teachings are thus and so, but because it is impossible ever really to know where one stands with him.

The court usher summoned the parties to the suit. They ascended the platform, on which the judges were already seated on wooden benches overspread with rush mats. Ten of them had been assigned to special duties by the presiding officer. Four were to supervise the voting, five the collection of court fees. To the tenth was entrusted the management of the water clock. In the event of a document misread or the like, he would temporarily plug its outlet, and time would elapse at the expense of neither side.

The railing was closed. Indictment and rebuttal were read. The first to take the stand for the prosecution was Meletus. This youthful and fairly insignificant poet spoke for his whole craft, which was aggrieved as one man. Socrates had no great esteem for poets; according to him, they were rather fortune-tellers than sages. He was not fond of persons who got their livelihood by producing mists; and, anyway, poets were liars on a scale.

Well, the day had come when this man's effronteries could be brought home to him. There was no special difficulty about that. Stage comedies provided the general outline; common gossip yielded a handful of additional points that had become household words. The sum total being still not quite sufficient, Meletus eked it out the way bad poets do when creating characters insufficiently studied: that is, by rounding out the uncomprehended individual with the conventional attributes of his type. Upon his victim, Socrates, he loaded all the sins that the whole tribe of educators had committed or was supposed to have com-

mitted from time out of mind. In that way this colorless person put a certain amount of color into the indictment, even if the color was misapplied—for, after all, it was dead Anaxagoras, not living Socrates, who had said that the sun is a white-hot stone and the moon another earth. But a heretic by any other name is still a heretic. Anaxagoras himself had once been summoned before the jury: was there any virtue in splitting hairs about which of the two had committed a particular transgression ?

It was, after all, a mistake to try to make sharp individual distinctions among such fellows. All of them were dangerous as a class. One of them maintained that the gods were neither more nor less than personifications of the necessities of life—that Demeter was the apotheosis of bread, Dionysus of wine, Poseidon of water. Another, a devil of a fellow by his own account, boasted of having once traveled to Olympia with nothing on his person that was not the work of his own hands, from the seal ring on his finger and his scrubbing brush and oil flask to his belt and the shoes on his feet; and at the same time his knapsack contained epics, tragedies, and dithyrambs of his own composing, all of them embellished with identifying numbers. As for Socrates, he was just such another godless alley Jack-of-all-trades who loved to loaf around the money-changers' booths in the market place and talk twaddle about his daemon.

Meletus did not succeed in swaying the judges. He had no great prestige—and any argument is less decisive than the reputation of the man who adduces it. Indeed, the business might have turned out very unfortunately for Meletus, for the plaintiff who failed to capture at least a fifth of the votes cast was not only fined a thousand drachmas, but also lost his right to enter a temple again at any time or to bring another lawsuit. He was saved that humiliation by his im-

portant co-plaintiff Anytus, idol of every artisan. The leather merchant was known as one who had fought the aristocracy and suffered exile. He was a man to be depended on.

Certainly his attack on Socrates was not disinterested. Anytus had formerly doted on young Alcibiades. The beautiful youth had later sat under Socrates' instruction, and he had turned into a little monster. Anytus blamed Socrates the archseducer for the deterioration of the most lovable of men. Was his present suit a belated revenge for the loss of his favorite? There was talk, too, of another sharp clash between the pair. The elderly idler, who lived for shoving his nose into everything that was none of his business, was said once to have counseled the leather merchant not to take his son into the paternal establishment, but rather to have him given a thorough education. Were there, then, ulterior motives behind Anytus' accusations?

People are always ready to regard every consideration that a man does not include among the stated reasons for his acts as being more probable than his professed motives; and idealistic motives, especially, are under suspicion. They ought not to be: the public man is guided, as a rule, more by this or that catchword of the mob and the moment than by his personal vagaries. The present mischievous catchword of this petty bourgeoisie of which Anytus was the narrow-minded if upright leader was "wrecker of the good old order." Discontented folk—and many were discontent in conquered Athens—first try to remove the cause; failing that, they insist on at least getting their hands on the miscreant who is responsible. The underlying logic of this public appetite for retribution is this: Life used to be an untroubled Elysium, but wicked men rose up and ruined it. Where are those men? Well, there is one of them, their

ringleader—Socrates. Why he particularly? Because the man who uses words to prove that a state of affairs is bad is readily seized upon as the source of its badness. If this Socrates had not been spending all of every day sticking knives into the scheme of things to show how flimsy it was, it would not be anything like so flimsy.

There stood Anytus, then—an honorable and assuredly not a bloodthirsty man; and as far as his personal feelings were concerned this elderly human being named Socrates might have lived another twenty years and then died of old age in his own shabby bed. Anytus had merely used his name as one calls a mountain range by the name of its highest peak. In the man as a person he had not the least interest. The man as a person was only making trouble through his trial. Why did he have to get his insignificant self mixed up in this momentous business at all? Anaxagoras and Protagoras had fled when complaints had been filed against them in their day, and had been comfortably executed in absentia without the shedding of blood. Why did just this Socrates have to stay for trial? Why was he not behaving according to the normal pattern? Officious persons only involve others in a lot of unnecessary extra bother. It was too late now to withdraw the indictment. Anyone who constitutes himself an advocate of the public interest has then no right to arrest the processes of justice.

Thus, Anytus was in the position of having to demand the head that he did not really want. Also, he was particularly exasperated with his antagonist for appearing at all and thereby forcing him into a path he did not at all wish to follow. The unexpected presence of the accused drove the honest and by no means fanatical accuser to unintended lengths of implacableness; for if he were to practice forbearance now, it would only give fresh encouragement to

the whole burrowing tribe of moles. The general attitude was certainly not uncompromising. Four years earlier a general amnesty had been declared, and the defeated aristocrats had been forgiven wholesale on their return from exile. But how could any covenant be made with an incorrigible who turned everything upside down? There were two offenses in which the Athenians could perceive nothing amusing. One was profanation of the mysteries; the other, any sort of affront to democracy.

The five hundred and one were deserving of profound sympathy: they were dealing with a malefactor whose crime was to them indefinable. Even after the speeches of Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon they still did not really understand what was at issue. Socrates, they were told, was not an orthodox believer in the official gods. But did the accusers themselves have such a circumstantial knowledge of what went on up there on the heights of Olympus and down there in the depths of Hades? All that was really the province of the poets; and since theirs were highly imaginative creations, a fine confusion had come to prevail touching those distant regions, and people could no longer find their way about in them. How were people in general to feel acquainted with those realms, when even the law did not provide a man with any definite point of departure? What did it tolerate, what prohibit? It was extremely noncommittal. It prohibited the desecration of sacred buildings and chambers dedicated to the service of the gods. This prohibition the defendant had in no wise transgressed. The law prohibited the uprooting of sacred olive trees. No such act could be imputed to him. It prohibited carnal intercourse with a blood-guilty person. That was irrelevant. Nor was Socrates a functionary in any fellowship that violated the traditional usages in offering its sacrifices. Such a case there had once

been in connection with the wife of the high priest, who herself had religious duties to perform, when it was discovered that she had been a courtesan and, what was even more incriminating, that she was the daughter of an alien woman. Socrates' case was far more baffling than that.

It was, in a very real sense, a case without precedent. To be sure, illustrious predecessors of the accused had sat in this very dock. Aeschylus had once been brought to trial because his tragedies contained sundry passages that could be construed as revealing the sacred mysteries. Anaxagoras, friend of Pericles himself, had been prosecuted for transforming Zeus's avenging thunderbolt into a meaningless natural phenomenon. Phidias had been harshly dealt with because, in his depiction of the battle of the Amazons, he had put the counterfeit presentments of Pericles and himself on Athene's shield. Protagoras had set down this proposition in writing: "I can neither affirm nor deny the existence of the gods; for the obstacles to our apprehension of them—the obscurity of the subject itself and the brevity of human life—are immense." But what had Socrates himself done? He had written no plays. He had drawn up no system of philosophy. He had chiseled out no sculptures. Of what was he guilty?

He was, indeed, no man of the old conservative mold. But were his accusers themselves? Did they, for example, believe that the origin of their own modes of life was supernatural and hence not subject to further inquiry? Every one of them had often enough been present at the birth of a new law, and there was nothing so very sublime about that. Many of them had participated in the founding of a new colony, and everything connected with it was on an extremely earthy plane and highly incompatible with a belief in the old mythological accounts of creation. They might

continue to recite the old myths to their children with a tacit veneration; they might even still experience a touch of reverent constraint about making too free with the names of the gods. But they were living, after all, in a much widened world, one canopied with many a heaven. Egypt had its own pantheon, Palestine its own; there were gods of the African jungle, gods of the Transcaucasian steppes.

As a rule they dwelt amiably enough together—Zeus and the Ionian natural philosophy, the tiny world with Delphi for its navel and the many vaster worlds. Athens had not locked itself up inside the narrow sphere of its founding fathers, as Sparta had done. The Athenian was a cosmopolitan—a world citizen. For the antiquated ways of the Peloponnesians he had only an indulgent smile. He rejoiced in the wideness of his own horizon. The very children of the Athenians began to lisp words a month younger than children in the rest of Greece; every Hellene knew that. Nowhere else was there a comparable freedom of speech; the fact was universally recognized. How had they ever got to the point of silencing one of their own ? Serene old Socrates and they were made of one blood.

Even so, their forefathers' gods and the commandments of the gods had still to be reckoned with. If they were to suffer everything to be undermined, would it not all end by precipitating them into an abyss ? If they were to believe that the galaxy of heaven was so many lumps of molten metal and the sun a fiery cinder gyrating in the propulsion of a whirlwind, what was to guarantee that the flaming thing might not some day come crashing down on their heads ? The sun god with his chariot was really a much more comfortable notion. It would not do for them to leap to all manner of inferences in the manner of that rootless man, Socrates, who stuck to the city and its environs be-

cause he had to argue and could not very well do it with woodlands and watercourses. A man who took pride in, say, the purity of his race and his descent from freemen would not dream of opening the portals of civic rights to slaves and aliens. No one was deemed an Athenian whose veins held any but Attic blood on either side; and if logic and its devotee Socrates had anything to urge against that definition and failed to distinguish between slave and freeman, barbarian and Hellene, woman and man, then logic and Socrates were extremely dangerous seducers.

What commonly destroys democracies is their failure to be democratic.

The jury had listened gravely while being told how dangerous this Socrates was; and having often felt unsettled about things in their own minds, they became very angry with him. For all that, his friends had no real occasion to be alarmed. Twenty-four years earlier the Athenians had merely turned a cold shoulder on Aristophanes' stage homily: they would decline now to take the life of a senile transgressor. Only the lower orders are given to fanaticism. The five hundred and one were a cross section of a people that bore itself proudly and had no need to wreak resentment of its own submissiveness on such of its fellow creatures as had cast off the yoke. And because they were exceedingly baffled by the whole affair, which, to begin with, they could not get the hang of, and which, to go on with, did not strike them as terribly urgent, they threw on unhonored Socrates himself the burden of bringing the painful business to a reasonably sensible conclusion.

One third of the day had gone by when Socrates took the stand. Its second third was his. His life hung in the balance.

They were staring at him with an expression not exactly

amiable, but for all that not really vindictive. What they wanted was to be rid of him with decency. His assignment was to assist them with this delicate operation. If he could only have drawn the magic hood of invisibility over those protruding eyes, those nostrils into which the rain could fall, that enormous thick-lipped mouth, or if he could have vanished from their ken for the next thousand years, they would have loved and lionized him.

For seventy years now, Socrates had been just Socrates—a not exactly handsome man who had divided his life between a short time as a stonecutter and a short eternity as a logic-chopper. Now, at long last, let him show himself to his fellow Athenians, not indeed as a pink-cheeked and winsome youth like the Alcibiades of aforetime, but at least—and it would be difficult enough—as something other than the basilisk they had made him out to be.

It was customary for a man who did not feel qualified to undertake his own defense to resort to a professional, have a speech prepared for him, and memorize it. Socrates had himself for a lawyer, and he could not have found a worse. Even the most incompetent one would scarcely have lost sight of the fact that his client's life was at stake; but that trifling circumstance had obviously quite escaped Socrates' attention.

Maybe he fancied himself in some barbershop on the market place, with one man getting his beard trimmed, a second his nails clipped, a third his hair dyed, and himself taking advantage of their leisure to favor them with a little monologue. But the present circumstances were possibly a shade different from the former ones. The countless enemies whom he had publicly scolded in bygone decades were but ghostly presences here; with that kind of incorporeal and unanswering ones he could not play his inveterate, his be-

loved game of question-and-answer. He did in the end, however, advance upon someone who was there in the flesh: to wit, Meletus. He could be reached; there he sat. Socrates was in form again, and not for an instant did it cross his mind that this place would be subject to other regulations than those of the market place. That brief, inexorable scuffle gave him back his self-assurance. Alas for Socrates ! Even if he were to entangle Meletus a thousand times over in every imaginable self-contradiction, this was still an executive session of the sovereign people of Athens, not some tribunal of immortal logic.

The young poet is excessively proud of his laurels. He is already savoring the victory he has not won; for it he credits his own charm and a strong case. He whispers importantly to the man beside him. He looks airily about. He wastes time on fooleries in the way of a man denied a resounding ovation merely because some curious requirement of punctilio excludes it. He must confine himself to the most subdued and tactful bluster, worse luck.

And suddenly Socrates has him in a vise. Hitherto he has fastened his victims with nothing more than the sharp claws of his dialectic. Today for the first time he is in the happy position of bringing the force of the law to bear on an apprehensive youngster who would like to dodge the issue. Meletus, the accuser, has to bandy words with Socrates, the accused. The younger man is naturally not overeager to hazard once more the victory already in his clutch. Who is unaware of Socrates' prowess ? He himself has long been used to others' avoidance of him. He magnanimously hands the poor fellow the present of an answer to his own question. And his magnanimity is not unfruitful. No one can hold out against the beguilements of his reasoning, not even Meletus. Presently the youngster himself is caught by

the fascination of the contest of words. His own eagerness drives him straight into the other's clutches, and with a sardonic benevolence Socrates embraces his victim. What a priceless spectacle for a people enamored of comedy! This cat-and-mouse game is incomparably more diverting than the frigid pomp of professional oratory.

But why is there only muttering among the hearers? Here and there resentment becomes articulate as a small-scale disturbance. The wiseacre's dogmatic insistence repels them. They are now cordially in sympathy with the hard-pressed youngster. The eternal charlatan is doing as he always does: demolishing every answer, but vouchsafing none himself. He is being extremely brutal. He seizes on the worst possible construction of every word his opponent says, and in a twinkling, by dint of all manner of verbal tricks, he has put into the mouth of an honest fellow the shocking sentiment that sodomy is not loathsome. Everyone's sympathy is with the victim. He wriggles to escape; his face reddens; his forehead is beaded. More than once he nerves himself up to the point of undertaking a little speech of his own. Hopelessly entrapped, he plays the Triton among the minnows and says condescendingly: "All right, my dear Socrates, I will say Yes, yes, and nod my head as if you were some old woman telling me a fairy tale. You take a childish delight in it when, just for the sake of argument, one concedes you this or that point." But this desperate resort to irony by no means delivers him from the forceps of the master ironist. Which of the two is actually in the right? That is more than the hearers can answer. But Socrates is not to be trusted. Has he no shame, that at his time of life he should be quibbling about words and hailing it as a great revelation when another man trips over the use of one?

Even now, Socrates has not got used to the idea that on this occasion he is no longer the teacher, but simply the criminal. As the teacher, he admonishes his refractory pupils to control themselves, to give him their best attention, to pay heed rather to the matter than to the style of his argument. But what is the matter of his argument to them? The charge against him is not that his polemics fail to hang together, is it? It is precisely that provocative style of his that has brought him before the bar of justice. That is the thing that cannot be overlooked.

His courteous and frigid remoteness kills every impulse of human interest. The gulf between him and his judges steadily widens. He does not even grant them the title that is their due. "You men"—that is the chill vocative he uses. "You men, he that would do battle for justice must live the life of a private citizen." Well, from that they must tacitly infer that in their present public capacity they are practicing injustice. Doubtless all of them are thinking of one occasion in the assembly when he was supposed to collect the votes and did not know how to go about it, thereby incurring no end of derision. Was he now pluming himself on his own incapability?

Thus, as he spoke on, the ones he was really able to address were Plato and his brother Adeimantus, side by side behind him, Crito over yonder, and Crito's son Critobulus. If these had been sitting up there on the platform and the five hundred and one back on the audience's benches, all would have been well. As it was, Socrates and his judges were being deaf to each other. What they were really demanding was that he should stop being Socrates. What he was really demanding was that they should stop being Athenians—that is to say, highly susceptible creatures swayed by the most evanescent impressions. When they

had come here a few hours before, they had been feeling offish toward him on general principles. Now they had had their own experience of him. He had proved the charge against him more brilliantly than Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon put together.

But what exactly was the charge? That he was a blasphemer? Well, what god had he blasphemed? That shining motley with whom the poets toyed, and whom the philosophers had had under inquisition this long time? The gods were hardly at issue. Downright atheism was to be had any day at any bookstall for one drachma, and when the comic dramatists made divinities hop across the stage the whole republic guffawed without a qualm. Critias had once gone so far as to say: "Gods are a mere invention of wily politicians seeking to buttress the laws against infringement through fear of unseen avengers." And Critias had been a potentate of the government. But there was one article of faith that was not to be trifled with. It was this: "I, as a free-born Athenian citizen, have an opinion and a voice about everything that concerns this city of ours." Socrates had not been able to commandeer this voice. The issue had, then, nothing to do with Olympus, with Hades; nothing to do, even, with the scrap of influence that the cheerful bigot exerted on a handful of rich young men and some other idlers. Socrates did not talk the language of the man in the street: that was his offense, his trespass against Athenian democracy. On this point, too, there were witnesses both for and against the letter of the indictment. But, after all, what was there to be said in extenuation, when his own mouth had already furnished such crushing evidence against him?

The presiding officer conducted the balloting. Each judge was given two small bronze tablets bearing the owl, insigne

of the Athenian state. The five hundred and one came forward. They had taken an oath to pronounce judgment according to the laws of the people of Athens, or, in matters of which the law had not taken cognizance, to the best of their knowledge and their conscience. They had sworn in the names of Zeus, Apollo, and Demeter that they would listen without prejudice to both accuser and accused. They had solemnly invoked destruction upon themselves and their households if they should pronounce inconsistently with their oaths. What they had solemnly promised, they adhered to. They were as just as mere man can be. Anytus had won them over; Socrates had failed to win them. A man's conscience cannot go beyond his cognizance. These men combined good consciences with brains befogged, and the resultant sum was injustice.

Plato, Crito, and Aeschines could not make out, though they watched with painful intentness, which sort of ballot was being cast. Each judge took hold of the little wand that was to pierce the tablet for Yea or Nay. (Was it the hollow wand or the solid one?) He held it between thumb and forefinger and thrust it through the narrow slot in the bronze urn. The unused ones were thrown into a wooden receptacle. The votes were counted up on a stone table.

Three more of the bronze tablets with solid wands would have acquitted Socrates and freed him, so nervous was Athens about inflicting punishment on the pertinacious old fellow, so faint the fanaticism of this easygoing people.

And now the trial began all over again. The issue this time was no longer that of guilt or innocence: it was death or— But it was for the condemned himself to propose an alternative.

Socrates was a man of reason, actuated by none but ra-

tional considerations. If now he were to stipulate a punishment for himself, would the fact not be an admission of guilt?

Nevertheless he suffered himself so far to yield to a mood of complaisance as to propose a fine of a hundred drachmas. In this he was prompted by a fresh rational consideration: namely, that the sum named was commensurate with his means.

Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus called out to him that he should not hesitate to draw on them; whereupon he raised his offer to three hundred drachmas.

The Athenians, however, did not want the condemned man's pittance: they wanted his repentance—and, more than anything else, his disappearance. The last would have been the golden mean between the glorification that his friends planned for him and the annihilation that the indictment bespoke. But he had not suggested exile; and the law said that they had to choose between proposal and counterproposal. There was no third option.

Socrates could not have done anything more to ensure the death sentence if he had resolved upon it. There still remained one slender if exiguous chance: it was possible for him, better late than never, to invest his proposal with an ingratiating atmosphere. There were all manner of tested dramatic prescriptions for the performance of this closing act. One could mount the dais bearing the staff of the formal supplicant. The most effective auxiliaries were a wife and children. The prospective widow and the orphans-to-be were uniquely calculated to exert a powerful leverage on the judges' imagination and to intimidate even the most uncompromising. But Socrates was unhappily no special pleader. He could never see human beings as taking precedence over truth.

The result of the secret balloting was sonorously announced. Socrates had been condemned to death by a sizable majority; and even many of those who had not voted against him were apparently persuaded against him. He had managed to bring even the wavering ones to the point of knowing their own minds; he had reduced a motley of varicolored sentiments to a single hue. Socrates had maneuvered five hundred Athenians—men not too well disposed toward him, but still far from eager to do him mortal harm—into the position of sentencing him to die.

Had this sapient man been not sapient enough to perceive that it was more important to incline the mass toward goodness than uncompromisingly to die? He remained completely stolid when he heard what the Athenians had decreed under his aegis. Nor did it in any wise occur to him, by reason of this witless verdict, to modify his ways. After it was promulgated he conducted himself exactly as he had been doing all his life: he appealed to rational considerations.

There he stood, then, in the utter innocence of a wise man upon whom a supreme stupidity had been perpetrated, waiting for the lackeys of the state who, in the name of the Eleven, would presently put him under lock and key, and comforting his friends the while. He was, after all, a man far gone in years and had in any event but little more to expect from life. Socrates was no slave to fastidious scruples. Assuredly he would have been glad to linger on for a season, strolling about in that beloved landscape between the Piraeus and the Acropolis. And there were a thousand questions about which he had still come nowhere near finality. But all that was no justification for refusing to put his trust in fate. Socrates patently did not for a moment imagine that for his future—unlike that of his Athenian fellow

citizens—there had already been provided an immortal resplendence.

Could Dionysius himself have pronounced a more bloody-minded judgment?

In Syracuse, not thirty years but a bare thirty minutes would have sufficed for the disposal of this case. And in that city there would have been no five hundred vacillating men tacitly begging to be deflected toward goodness, but only one implacable judge. The liberty-loving Athenians, to be sure, were not liberty-loving enough to refrain from cursing the memory of tyrants and proscribing an atheist, both on the selfsame monument. Even a democracy cannot be, at the very best, any better than its demos.

CHAPTER III

PLATO SOLD INTO SLAVERY

THE VICTORS were exultant. Theirs had been a victory, not over a man, but over an age. To be sure, there were still the philosophy of Anaxagoras and the tragedies of Euripides. These could not be wiped out of existence, and still less could the dire war of all against all. But at least this Socrates was out of the way. The reactionaries had achieved two things, whether or no: a sentence of death and universal infamy.

The young men who were under a cloud because of their connection with the seducer fled eastward a few miles to the neighbor city of Megara. It had certainly not been prophesied over Plato's cradle that at thirty its occupant would have to go into hiding; he had been born rather to a life of self-display. One uncle, Charmides, had been at the head of the police system, and the other, Critias, a high state official. Now their patrician nephew was languishing in exile, his young existence stripped down to one supreme memory and a total lack of anything to look forward to.

The more a man's past dominates him at the expense of his present, the less hold upon him the future can assert. What Plato had lost was his own future; what he had gained was the life of dead Socrates. What, actually, were the ideas that had taken possession of this young man ? A teacher is more than his teachings. A proposition is true or it is false;

one's real loyalty is not to it, but to the persons who were its incarnation. Plato's adherence was not to this or that dogma, but to Socrates himself; and Socrates' last hours had become part of his very being. He himself had been ill in his own house at the time, to be sure; but the function of human memory is to preserve, not merely what the eyes have seen, but what is unforgettable. And that death had been unforgettable.

When his friends arrived that morning Socrates was lying on his pallet. By him sat Xanthippe with their infant son in her arms. To the woman the sight of the strangers brought home the solemnity of the occasion, and with it the prominence of her own position as wife of the central figure. At this pregnant moment it was unthinkable that she should say nothing, and yet she had nothing to say. The remark that she made in all gravity was one that could not very well be gainsaid: "Oh, Socrates, this is the last time your friends will be talking with you, or you with them." Xanthippe's husband was a patient man and a kind one, but he could not endure even the maunderings of the tragic poets, let alone this banality. With ungracious curtness he asked his friend Crito to take that woman home. ("That woman is my wife and the mother of my children.") It did not go off very smoothly. His wife resisted. First she clamored for this hour with him, and afterward she asked if he could not be a little kinder to her in these last moments. By this time Socrates had regained his equanimity, and he was sitting on his bed with one leg drawn up, assiduously massaging his ankle. In respect to the occasion they had removed his shackles, which had bitten deep into his flesh, and now he felt like a young god and laid down the dictum that pleasure consists in nought but surcease from pain.

(Plato, the man now without country or family or preceptor, was drawing sustenance from that blithe saint whom none could ever take from him.)

The cell was now as full as it could hold. Apollodorus was there, and Critobulus with Crito his father, and Antisthenes, and Aeschines, and a number of acquaintances had arrived from outside the city. It is hard to be dejected when the person for whom one is grieving is so full of cheer. They both wept and laughed, then, and did not rightly know whether they ought to be gay because he was or dismal because they were themselves bereft. Socrates, for his part, was thinking of nought but how once more, at the end, he could pour himself out to them to his heart's content.

But for that the circumstances did not seem too opportune. No sooner had Socrates' wife gone than there came another interruption. The prisoner was here, after all, not for chitchat, but for a drastic medication. The warder whose duty it was to provide the fatal draft was considerably worried. If the patient were to talk to such excess, would the poison work at all? This endless palaver would fever the body and reduce the efficacy of the potation, and it might be necessary to administer two or even three cups. Death's accessory was unable to conceive that the more swiftly and smoothly this old man's mind worked, the cooler and quieter would be his body. Socrates, for all his own frugality, retorted that he did not understand the stinginess of the prison administration. Let them give him a threefold dose, then! And he was a man of modesty. That the women might not be obliged to wash his dead body, he quickly bathed it now while it was still warm, though he would assuredly rather have spent those few minutes in converse. The only immodesty he permitted himself was

the desire that there should be no stinting of the hemlock.

(Plato, in his exile, had Socrates perpetually with him and did not go uncomforted.)

The prison warder had no lack of experience of persons for whom he had to perform his present office. They were given to bemoaning their fate, and, there being no longer anyone else at hand whom they could hold responsible for it, they would rail at him when he came to tell them the hour had come. But, lo ! here was this Socrates being kindly and affable to the very end. It was enough to unman a mere lowly executioner, and he wept unrestrainedly over this first of his victims to treat him as other than an enemy.

Nor was he the only one to be disconcerted by the old magician at the last. Crito was utterly unable to comprehend why his beloved friend was determined to take the poison thus early, with one small patch of sunshine still lingering up there on the crest of Hymettus. Others had spent their corresponding hour benumbing themselves with sweet wine and wantoning with girls. What an earthling this Crito was, even though he could glory in his having been there !

(Plato had an unsleeping jealousy of anyone whose nearness to Socrates exceeded his own.)

And now, the cupbearer with the fatal potion. Socrates had had a lifelong detestation of amateurishness. If there were nothing for it but to die, let it at least be done in observance of all the fine points of the art of dying. He questioned the expert painstakingly as to the manner of drinking the hemlock. The expositor was unspeakably flattered: Socrates was certainly the first man who could appreciate him. Nevertheless the insatiable old man asked him several more ticklish questions of an uncomfortable sort. Might he, for example, before he put the cup to his own lips, pour out

a portion of the draft as a libation to the gods? The custodian of the poison extricated himself neatly from this dilemma, accosting the problem not from its theological side, but from its economic. The authorities, he declared, supplied no more than enough to make sure that it would do its work; there was no surplus for the gods. The frugality of the Athenian state prison administration was beyond all praise.

Socrates, as soon as he had drunk the cup, was a dying man, although he paced back and forth with his former vigor. His friends were now making no effort to check the tears that coursed down their cheeks. (What was the real reason why he had sent the women from his presence?) Following the counsel of death's official courier, he continued to pace until his legs grew heavy. Then he lay down on his back. From time to time he was expertly palpated. First his feet were prodded. They were, as was expected, numb and felt nothing. The numbness crept upward to his knees. Death's journeyman followed the progress of his dissolution and was satisfied with it. When half of Socrates was chill, his other half was apprised that it would now soon be over. His face had been already covered, but he now uncovered it once more. Because he was rejoiced that the drug had done its office so punctually, he bade his friend Crito sacrifice a cock to Aesculapius the father of medicine.

The stricken spectators had desired the protagonist of their tragedy to vouchsafe them one last illuminating utterance. But Socrates was an unpretentious and unaffected man, and he did not slam the door behind him with a crash. All at once he was merely lying there quite without motion, his mouth slightly open—the mouth that no man had been capable of closing while there was life in him.

In alliance with the buoyant martyr—who had never had any part in guerrilla warfare—the prominent young emigrant now inaugurated his private campaign against Athens. It was Socrates that marched in the van. By dint of many a small exorcism Plato conjured him back from his Hades. He was, in sooth, no more a writer than his preceptor, who had never practiced a sedentary occupation until, immobilized in prison and no longer able to invite his soul in rambles, he took to versifying Aesop's fables. In his earlier years Plato had, indeed, admired the tragedies of Euripides and had composed poems himself. But after that he had resorted to Socrates in order to fit himself for governing men, and the upshot had been his giving both his political plans and his poetry to the flames as so much frivolity.

He now suddenly took to writing again. But this time it was not because the great Agathon had done it. Plato was manufacturing prose because he was passionately resolved on a particular end: the reform of Athens. Was there, for the scion of a ruling family, no more distinguished means available? Political pamphleteering is, after all, but a modest and slightly risky makeshift; for there are inherent limitations to the ruler's use of imagination, whereas the scribbler's submits to none. But how is a man to be a ruler when the universal farce is making his head swim and when everything is so abandoned to confusion that trivial and piecemeal improvements are no longer of any avail? Thus Plato, marked for governance from his birth, turned into a radical intellectual.

He sent to Athens a violent pamphlet, ostensibly on behalf of the Socratic group of exiles, though it bore the intensely personal stamp of the inflamed young nobleman himself. In it he reminded all his former fellow citizens what Socrates himself had said to the five hundred and one.

It was no protocol of diplomacy that he shoved under Athenian eyes. Into it Plato had wrought the entire sum of his young man's anger. More than anything else it was one long tumultuous threat. The Socrates of his pages was by turns a high-spirited bigot and an overbearing young cavalry officer with no mean knack of stirring up his men. The old man wore a somber frown—an expression probably quite foreign to him in life—and he ranted like some youthful censor of morals. "As soon as I am dead you are going to suffer an infinitely severer punishment than the one you have meted out to me. Think you that by pronouncing sentence on me you have escaped the inevitable accounting for your own lives? You are wrong! In lieu of one accuser, a multitude will bring you to the reckoning. I have been hard put to it to restrain them hitherto. They are young, and they will one day spell your doom!" Thus the pen of retribution.

Athens received it without a quiver. The ones who bought this portrait of Socrates were apparently in full sympathy with poor Crito, who had gone to the prison to prevail on his dear friend to flee to Thessaly, only to fall between the stones of the inexorable rhetoric mill and be ground so fine that he could do no more than mumble Yea and Amen to everything Socrates said. Maybe readers actually laughed at the imprisoned master of declamation because in his ticklish, not to say agonizing, fix, which was really not quite cut out for oratorical display, he persisted in tall talk: "We must do whatever the state bids us do. Wrongdoing, in whatever circumstances, is disaster and disgrace." With these peculiar postulates poor Crito had been quite unable to cope. All he knew was this: that the conclusion of the whole matter was bound to be Socrates' acceptance of the unjust judgment. Did Crito actually never stumble on the obvious thought that there is no wrongdoing im-

plied in the attempt to get a nonsensical judgment slightly amended? Was it truly better to give in to wrong than to stand out against it for the sake of right? It was quite certain that his friend's renown as a mighty logician had left the poor fellow hopelessly intimidated before his master. Just the same, Socrates was nothing but a fanatic who could argue—and Plato was his half-baked prophet.

Let him write all the pamphlets he had a fancy for. Nobody was going to take them overseriously. The dead sage had been, whatever anyone said, a celebrity to whom people were drawn from every corner of creation. His young disciple was not imagining that he himself stood in any appreciable danger, even if the excitable were to nominate him for the hemlock. He was a member of an important family, and—*praeterea nihil*. Maybe it had not even been necessary for him to run away. In any event he would soon be able to return. His literary activities while in exile had patently done him no damage. The molten slag that he had vindictively poured on the heads of his fellow Athenians had not even singed anybody.

The fact was, he had not even attained recognition as Socrates' intellectual heir. That status belonged rather to his associate Antisthenes, who, being the son of a Thracian woman, was a mere foreigner. The sunny Athenian temper was foreign to him, too. Better dementia than delight, was the drift of his preaching. He was said to have wanted to put an arrow through Aphrodite, once when he had had an opportunity to possess her. This solemn and straitlaced plebeian, a decade older than Plato, looked down with contempt on his eminent junior. What had that overeducated sprig of the aristocracy to do with the uncouth and ascetic commoner who had walked this earth under the name Socrates?

Plato was living in very thorough eclipse in the shadow of unhonored Antisthenes. He did not, however, stay there.

For he was both highly articulate and irrepressible. Democracy is, indeed, not especially touchy, but Plato's dialogue the *Gorgias* is certainly one of the most resounding thwacks ever dealt it. It was quite a venture to attack, not merely the lazy, cowardly, garrulous, and greedy mob, but also the greatest men the republic of Athens had produced for a century past—Miltiades, Cimon, Themistocles, Pericles himself. Plato reproached them with their failure to have improved the people. They had overthrown enemies, built forts and ships, commissioned works of art—granted. But what was all that worth ? The ruler's prime function is to raise the level of the people he rules. And that was precisely what these illustrious masters had shirked. Consider, for example, the victor of Marathon. They had tried to push him into obscurity; Themistocles and Cimon had been banished, Pericles prosecuted for embezzlement. Well, did not those facts speak volumes against the purblind mob and exonerate their unlucky leaders ? No ! If a herdsman took over the management of mules, horses, and cattle that did not balk or bite or kick, and they became completely unmanageable after a term under his care, would you not pronounce him a bad herdsman ? Harbors, dockyards, forts—those things are frivolity where there is not justice.

Both Plato's obscurity as a writer and the tolerance that prevailed in the city of Athens are to be measured by the fact that even this attack on all that Athenians held most precious was suffered to pass without objection.

Travel abroad was by no means without its dangers. The brigands found in one's own country were tolerably well

known. As soon as one passed the border one was in quite unknown expanses of wilderness, and the foreigners who inhabited them did nothing to safeguard a man in his rights. Perhaps he had some friends scattered through the wilderness, but the wilderness itself was anything but hospitably inclined. Plato, an unpromising candidate for plundering, nevertheless had to experience it. Ten years after the fatal trial he took ship aboard one of the short, broad-beamed, fat-bellied vessels of the regular Egyptian run; and it fell into the hands of a major pirate. The pirate must have been out for something more considerable than the cashbox that lay beside his victim, disguised as part of a shipment of olive oil.

It was curious that Plato should suddenly decide to spend most of his substance on an exhausting and by no means maturely considered undertaking. Hitherto he had been in no hurry whatever to gain knowledge of the world at large —not even of the important city states in Greece and on the seaboard of Asia Minor. In all likelihood he would have ended his days, as his teacher Socrates had done, still a dyed-in-the-wool Athenian who had never deserted his birthplace save for brief unavoidable trips, had not his birthplace deserted him.

He no longer had a country. Whatever party might come into power was not going to be his party. What was there to attach him, for example, to those of his social equals who called themselves the beautiful and the good, and who were actually nothing but a gang of ranting young noblemen and rootless scribblers wise in their own conceit? Their repulsive gentlemen's agreement amounted to this: "I mean to be ill disposed toward the people and to give them all the bad counsel I can put my mind to." On the gravestones of his uncles Critias and Charmides their nephew could read

this inscription: "This is the tomb of upright men who briefly held in check the frowardness of the abandoned Athenian people." Once upon a time those estimable uncles had invited him to give them his political collaboration, and with the inexperience of youth he had actually let himself be taken in. He had been credulous enough to believe that they were going to wrench the state out of its disorganization and institute a rational and virtuous order. And what had these noblemen's reforms actually looked like? They had made the preceding period resemble paradise by contrast. A secret tribunal judged its victims without a word given out, and none knew who the perpetrators were. In the Piraeus, the radical quarter of Athens, a particularly ruthless dictatorship made provision for law and order. If anyone laid an information against a man, that man was presently garroted in the prisonhouse. Anyone who showed sympathy for the victims was himself suspect. "Political upheavals must have blood," Plato's uncle Critias had said. "One must be man enough to master one's qualms." Plato's peers had mastered theirs so triumphantly that in eight months more Athenian lives were taken by them than by the nation's enemies in the last ten years of the great war. It was good to be taking his leave of that sort of kindred.

Was he more in sympathy with the "abandoned" people? Ah yes, the people! Even under the dictatorship they had been convoked as previously to cast their ballots—and had never passed a measure that was not agreeable to the conspirers against them. Anyone who demanded the floor became an outsider. Anything he said was discounted by them in advance. And almost no one raised his voice against them, because everyone was afraid. And if anyone raised his hand against them, he simply disappeared. Ah yes, the people! They had been happy to be suffered to hold their

peace; and as soon as they were finally allowed a voice again, they condemned their best man to death. Truly, this governing of people was no very sublime matter. Even Lysias, glowing apologist of the mob, had to make this admission: "When there is ample money for the purposes of government the member of the council cannot bring himself to appropriate it for anything, but as soon as there is a shortage of funds he thinks he has to resort to denouncing commitments, undertaking confiscations, and following the spellbinders that suggest the very worst proposals." Plato was just as content to be turning his back on the people of Athens as on their rulers.

Was he, then, traveling through far countries in order to find himself a new homeland? That he had already found, without even having sought it; and it was so fair a one that it actually had the power to console him for the great bereavement he had suffered. He was now sailing forth into the wider world in order to make acquaintance with his new fellow citizens, who were scattered all over creation. Plato was going to visit these new kinsmen of his; for example, his fellow pundits Theodorus of Cyrene, with whom he wanted to discuss geometry, and Archytas of Tarentum, who had caused a wooden dove to fly. Plato was going on his travels because there were as yet no libraries in which the tribe of researchers could congregate. He intended carefully to avoid all theaters of war, for he was bent on none but intellectual adventure. And then, after all, he fell into the hands of the most powerful enemy of all. For there are times of peace infinitely worse than any war, in that they have legalized murder.

The idealist differs from other human beings in this: that when he sails into hell, he does it all unsuspecting. The beginning of Plato's voyage was unremarkable enough. At

Tarentum his itinerary was given a sudden and unexpected addition. His fellow scholar Archytas gave him an impressive invitation to visit Lubberland. Every Greek was acquainted, if but by hearsay, with that Island of the Blest—with its couches, its carriages, its comedies, its marvelous cook Mithaikos, under whose ministrations it was possible so to gorge oneself on ragout of cuttlefish and the native cheese that one had occasion to scrape prompt acquaintance with the famed physicians of Syracuse. And the island women were so far from coy that none of them was allowed to go for a walk without the permission of the proctor of women, or allowed to go out at all after sunset. Well, the young Athenian nobleman set no great store nowadays by the habit of ingesting two gluttonous repasts a day and of not spending his nights alone. Besides, was not that Dion who had been the author of the invitation brother-in-law to the notorious Dionysius ?

There was many a barrier between Plato and his fellow Athenians, but in one particular he and they felt and thought as one: they hated tyrants. It was with enormous gusto that he made these foul fiends the target in various of his dialogues; for example, that northern monster Archelaus, a stench in the nostrils on the throne of Macedonia. His mother had been his uncle's maidservant, and in the normal course of events His Omnipotence would have ended his days in serfdom. But he had laid his plan with craft. He invited his uncle and his uncle's son, the legitimate heir to the throne, to dinner, entertained them lavishly, got them besotted with drink, loaded them on to a cart, and made away with them in the dead of night; and no man had ever found out in what pit they were rotting. The story had had another chapter, too. There had also been another legitimate successor: a seven-year-old brother, son of the same

parents. This innocent was drowned one day in some mudhole, and his mother, Cleopatra, was informed that he had been chasing a goose and had had the bad luck to tumble into the water. Plato abominated these power-hungry murderers from the bottom of his soul, and the more passionately because purblind humanity accepted them as sublime gods and crawled into their presence on its knees.

Was it really a very good idea to set sail for Dionysius' realm before the wind provided by such a mood? What was his reason for not steering clear of it? A great predecessor of his, Xenophanes of Colophon, had once brought a salutary truth home with him from the court of Hiero, who was a great predecessor of Dionysius': "You have either to keep your distance from the fraternity of tyrants or to do their bidding." But not even philosophers are given to learning from one another.

He was accorded a brilliant reception. The aristocratic, slightly stooped Athenian captivated everybody. All Syracuse had was power: the world's capital city had true prestige even now. Plato came from it, and that counted for a great deal; it was considered the smart thing to be an Athenian. Moreover, he was not the ordinary peripatetic intellectual come to round off a starring engagement in Syracuse, but a distinguished foreigner in the confidence of the highest government circles, here to admire the sights of Sicily—the lava flow that Aetna had lately spewed forth, the temples and gymnasiums along the river Anapus, the charming numismatic designs of Syracusan engravers, the robust popular farces of Sophron, and the famous gastronomic course in hexameters, a sort of culinary geography in the form of a world tour with special reference to the choicest dishes. The illustrious guest presently found, however, a treasure trove of his own not listed in the inventory: to wit, a pupil pre-

eminently gifted and insatiably eager. This Dion, Aristomache's brother and the nearest of all men to the throne, had been reared as befitted a brother-in-law of the most powerful of rulers. He enjoyed everything, and everyone extolled him. And now this Athenian stranger had come and shattered one glittering mode of existence for him, only to bestow on him another of unimagined luster.

There was now nothing that Dion more longed for than to share his new-found good fortune with his brother-in-law. Plato and Dionysius had to be friends ! But when a man is at home in a fortress with a threefold wall and a fivefold gateway, any visit to him becomes an audience. To be sure, they were professional equals, both being writers; they could express themselves without constraint about their common occupation, if nothing else. But the one was incidentally the most powerful ruler in the world; and the other, who controlled not a single catapult, was incidentally laying down claims to a species of world rule that Dionysius himself had never yet permitted himself even to dream of. The fact was, Plato had latterly quite made up his mind that he was going to impose virtue on mankind by fiat and thereafter stop time in its tracks.

Dionysius had already had information by way of his proprietary philosophers. A bulky warrant had preceded the foreigner who had now suddenly dropped in on him: namely, that vicious document that had been published shortly before his departure from Athens. A fine recommendation, that ! There were, to be sure, passages in it that caressed Dionysius' ear. The baker, the publican—those gentry could not possibly be reminded often enough that they were not the lords of creation, but simply purveyors of bread and of wine. But the same pages contained sundry horrifying intellectual's catchwords that were enough to drive a man of

power to sheer fury. "Do you say that those who are the stronger are the greater in merit?" "Are the weaker in duty bound to obey the stronger?" "Is it equitable that the larger states should assail the smaller as a matter of natural right?" What nauseating ingenuousness! Or was it pure hypocrisy?

All these intellectuals with their pitiful structures built of nothing but words must look pretty paltry to themselves when they contemplated the fortifications and engines and armies of their mighty contemporaries. That was what accounted for all their righteous zeal in conjuring up a day of judgment on which the masters of the world would fare as ill as in this life they fared well. Down in yonder meadows where the road to the isles of the blest and the road to Tartarus intersect, there sit Zeus's sons, Aeacus, Rhadamanthus, and Minos, the first two bearing their staves of judgment, the third, as their superior, a golden scepter. They are waiting for the souls that, delivered by death from the flesh and stripped of all temporal adornments, present themselves as it were in transparent nakedness. Just as we recognize a person's form and all his characteristics, even to the scars, in his corpse, so these judges read the intrinsic nature of souls. All of them that are deformed by deeds of brazen violence or by perjury are dispatched to the Tartarean dungeon. There they are either redeemed by their torments or held in durance forever as warning exemplars. The worst torments of all will be suffered by Archelaus and his kind; for it is the power of tyrants that begets the most appalling outrages.

Well, Plato had envisaged this very fate as being in store for him—Dionysius the Great.

For hard on twenty years he had been toiling to build up a kingdom the like of which was not to be found on this

earth. At Marathon there had fought but five thousand Athenians, and in the Peloponnesian war there had been such a lack of siege machinery as to render a siege of Athens out of the question. He himself had mobilized against Himilco the Carthaginian not fewer than eighty thousand men, three thousand horses, two hundred vessels of war, and five hundred ships for the transport of men and the most overwhelming machines. And now along comes some nondescript aristocratic idler—he is not a day younger than Dionysius himself, but what has he ever accomplished?—and has the gall to launch bumptious phrases for his benefit, and to despise all the great because they have merely created solid masonry and towering ships instead of a lot of words that are neither solid nor towering, but completely vaporous. Such a fellow sets up this stuffed figure labeled "Tyrant" on the scene of his noisy mental acrobatics by way of making sure that his own importance is not overlooked. The performance makes a fine show in the market place. He executes a few passes with his toy dagger, and, behold, the blue-blooded tyrant-baiter has flattened his lay figure into the dust to the accompaniment of the lugubrious words: "Blessed is he that is righteous and good." What does that sort of windbag know about blessedness? Now, it was a blessed enough experience to overpower the enemy in Italy last year. Dionysius stood on a slope counting the prisoners as they filed past him. Every man of them was tapped with a stick: it was as if a herd of cattle were being inventoried. That had been blessedness enough for him.

Neither son nor brother was admitted to the ruler's presence without first having been searched at the entrance. Plato, when he went through the fivefold portal into the

enormous cavern, was not searched—possibly because he was an Athenian of patrician birth, but also possibly because he was nothing but a writer.

He stood, then, face to face with the most powerful man of his time. It was a striking opportunity for a research student whose special province was the genus man of power. He might have got his host to tell him how power is attained and retained, as well as how the man who wields it can believe that all is well with him when, in the estimation of the wise, all must be painfully ill with him. The young scholar posed no such questions. Not overreceptive to individual divergences, he promptly slipped the unknown new phenomenon into its place in the old familiar category. Dionysius was a tyrant. Plato had drawn his portrait of the collective monster long ago—had long ago committed to writing the ideas of his present interlocutor. The man who sat down to talk with him was in his eyes no living human being, but a shadow thrown by his own generalization of the classic tyrant as long since promulgated through the book trade. What could this supreme despot have in his mind over and above what Plato had put there long before they ever met? Something after this order: "This writing man who is now paying me a visit is always writing about justice. Well, where was the justice of Xerxes' making war against the Hellenes? Where was the justice of his father's making war against the Scythians? The laws are made by the weak—by the multitude. They make the laws for their own advantage, according to which they mete out credit and punishment. They want to intimidate the stronger, those who are in a position to possess more, in order that these may possess no more than the many themselves possess; and accordingly they assert that to wish to possess more is odious and unjust. But only let a man appear who possesses the

necessary energy, and he will cast off all these shackles, shatter them to bits, emancipate himself, and set his heel on our paper laws with all their extenuations and appeasements, their denial of nature in the name of convention; he will lift himself on high and, slave that he was, be revealed as master. And there is your dawn of natural justice—Nature's justice." Plato, however, was not dazzled by this dawn as vested in the man before him, tricked out with catapults and triremes. What did Dionysius amount to in the eyes of this pupil of Socrates, who had demonstrated with razor-sharp logic that tyrants are strangers to valor, unjust men strangers to joy?

The butt of this demonstration, the overlord of Syracuse, was a man who had so thoroughly sampled the realities of power that he could hardly fail to be nauseated by the visionary impalpability of this freakish ethic. Plato's mawkish catechism disgusted him; he found it intolerably tedious. Unmoral practicalities are always more entertaining than moral generalizations. When a world ruler is amiable enough to give an audience to an impotent theorist whose known composition is such that he cannot be counted on for any favorable advertising, that ruler anticipates at the least a stimulating interview. But all these sophisters were unabashed children, vainglorious and obstinate worshippers of their own charlatanry. As Pindar had once observed: "To aim at an intermediate station in life, to acquire those virtues and possessions on which envy cannot fasten, means greater security and permanence; and for that reason I reprehend the tyrant's lot." And now here was his successor echoing precisely the same sentiment while being formally received. As for himself, Dionysius the Great, he had reared the most overwhelming military machine in the world on a solid foundation of injustice. Having done so, he had chris-

tened his three daughters with the lovely names Virtue, Justice, and Prudence, and on one of his coins he had stamped the equally lovely sentiment, "Tyranny is the mother of all injustice." The cynic and the moralist were not understanding each other. There is no mutual understanding between fanatics.

Neither of these men felt even the slightest inclination to see the other in a favorable light. Thus, instead of sidestepping each other for purposes of conciliation they met in a head-on collision. Plato indulged his inveterate mania for holding his banner high, and Dionysius imperturbably followed his habitual practice, which was to thunder and dart lightnings. They were not alone in the chamber—a circumstance that heightened the din of battle. Plato was obliged to show his pupil Dion how things celestial have to be fought for, though the lord of Syracuse himself were to take sides against them, and he could therefore not have permitted himself a single amiable ambiguity, even if he had not been a stiff-necked scion of the patriciate. And Dionysius was a good deal exacerbated to observe that not only his brother-in-law Dion, but also a number of other gentlemen of his entourage, were fastening their attention on the foreigner rather than on him. For the first precept of the code that every one of heaven's anointed bestows on his liegemen reads: "Thou shalt have no other god before me; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." These Syracusans that let themselves succumb to Plato's spell under the very eyes of their master—were not the whole lot of them renegades? Quinqueremes begin to founder, masonry to crumble, and the constabulary to lose their eyesight, at the moment of the first subject's turning his gaze on some new luminary. Dionysius did not begin to suspect how

genial the new luminary really was. Despots are quite as poor judges of personality as apostles of justice.

The ruler was, in fine, out of temper; and rulers have no need to disguise their anger. He asked his guest with the undiplomatic bluntness that is another prerogative of demigods: "Just what is your design in coming here, my lord Plato?" To the hazardous question itself any other listener would have subjoined the scowl and the harshness with which it was asked, and have answered with due regard to the way the distribution of power was arranged in this chamber. Socrates' disciple, however, had learned never really to see, never really to hear, and to reinforce the unjust in their injustice by his own rigidity. Plato the just hounded Dionysius the unjust into an evil act, as Socrates his teacher had hounded the republic of Athens. Instead of handling the overlord of Sicily with tact he met the irritated question with an insolent answer abruptly given. He had come, he said, in search of a good man. Dionysius might still have dealt with this person according to his own unexcelled formula of putting on the fox's skin when the lion's failed him. Did this tough saint so exasperate him that merely to simulate the lion was no longer enough to content him? In a fury he took the Athenian's sententious little apothegm between his teeth and savagely tore it to bits. But that, however satisfying it might have been to a mere writer, was not enough for the wielder of absolute power. Dionysius was ravening for Plato bodily.

Dion was very young, very inexperienced, and excessively enthusiastic, as young converts are wont to be. After his reading of that powerful tractate against tyranny, the *Gorgias*, he might have reminded himself that fire and water had better not be mixed. Now that he had mixed them he

was gravely disturbed. He lost no time about getting his new friend aboard the vessel that was to speed the Spartan envoy, Polis, to Aegina.

That small island off the Piraeus, now engaged in a savage piratic war against the Attic coast and its harbor towns conjointly with Sparta, had lately decreed, out of its traditionary hatred of the Athenian oppressor, that any Athenian arriving there was to be publicly auctioned into slavery. To Dion, as to Plato, the fact was patently unknown; but Dionysius and Polis knew it. And the Syracusan ruler, who was a longstanding enemy of the republic of Athens and a close associate of militaristic Sparta—it had already helped him through a number of scrapes—may well have given the friendly power's ambassador the suspicion of a wink.

The envoy's parting audience went smoothly. Dionysius and Polis had arrived at an excellent understanding. The tyrant, in the exhilaration of the feeling that he had hit on exactly the right retort to the scribbler's impudence, however belatedly, grew almost facetious. The honorable envoy had but to see to it that the impudent Athenian actually got just what had been promised his countrymen in general. After all, as a just man he would even be happy in the status of a slave. So jested the exponent of injustice, savoring the triumph that he had been unable to achieve by his own efforts.

Slave auctions were of frequent occurrence; they took place mostly at the new moon and whenever a fair provided an opportunity. The slaves put up for sale were exhibited on a platform, and naked, so that people could see what they were bidding on; the seller was held to account for hidden defects. The price of the individual offering depended on his comeliness, vigor, and particular abilities; the range was from two to a hundred talents. The forty-year-old dialec-

tician was scarcely vendible as a vernal amoroso. No more would he do for a farm laborer, muleteer, or galley slave. Certainly he was out of the question as a constable or mercenary or public executioner. He was bellicose enough, to be sure, but all his fighting was in causes that were incomprehensible, not to say embarrassing or ridiculous. The only accomplishment he had acquired from his inordinately inquisitive teacher was the asking of questions. They had caught themselves a gabbler—a piece of booty that hardly promised a heavy contribution to the war chest of Aegina.

What befell was a brilliant stroke of luck—a boon to the dealer as well as to the commodity. A certain Anniceris, from Cyrene, turned up on his way to the Olympic games—a man who knew who Plato was. He bought him his freedom for twenty talents.

There was nothing gratifying to Dionysius in the news of this transaction. The wretched fellow would now have the run of Athens, and pretty soon no one would believe any more that Syracuse was a sanctuary of the Muses.

Even without that mishap the Syracusan Muses had fallen into disrepute and become the subject of more unfavorable comment than their patron relished. There was, for example, Philoxenus, whose special knack was the interpolation of solo passages in the choral dithyrambs. This inventor of the aria had once been sold into slavery himself and, presently becoming the property of a poet, had taken to poesy and eventually got to be one of Dionysius' cronies in the twin domains of wine and song. There came an occasion on which he was obliged to make answer to the question what he thought of his royal fellow practitioner's verses. The upshot was his enforced retirement to the quarries. After he had been pardoned, the same ghastly question

reared its head again. Philoxenus could easily enough have extricated himself, for dictators, being less thorough than the inquisitors of less visible deities, are generally well enough satisfied with lip service. The musician, alas, could not forgo a brilliant opportunity to be witty in public, even though it were attended with danger. Instead of answering he turned to the bodyguard and told them to take him away again. Dionysius, having a sense of humor, laughed. Nevertheless he had still not had enough to refrain from putting the parlous question a third time. The verses in question were extremely deplorable, and Philoxenus assured Dionysius that he found them so. That was how the Muses fared at the Syracusan court, and people in the world's capital city knew it.

Dionysius hated Athens, and he also courted her. He was determined that her people should regard him as a connoisseur of the arts. What would they not have to say when they heard the crude tales that Plato had to tell? A letter was dispatched to the happily delivered late court guest, requesting him to be so good as to spread no mistimed slanders. Plato answered with pained dignity that he had no leisure to bother his head about tyrants. (Actually, he bothered his head more about them than about any other one subject.)

Anyway, his unpleasant memories were overgrown a little more with every passing year by those of another journey —this time to Egypt. A man learns to know himself only with the greatest difficulty. Inward self-knowledge develops by equivocal processes, often so subtle as to be almost unperceived. There came the day when Plato set foot on a foreign shore to walk about among the monuments of a thousand years and study the temple sites and steep himself in the immemorial wisdom of the priests, dominant

today as of old; and on a sudden his steadfast dream took solid shape before his eyes. Others had anticipated his discovery of Egypt—Hecataeus, Herodotus. Plato discovered in it the country of his inmost visions. It said to him: "Behold, time is nought, and change is nought. The eternal is all that is—life under the rule of reason, being immune from all becoming."

The All is vast, the mind tightly circumscribed. The mind has capacity, not to encompass the great world, but only to master one tiny encompassable world. And every century of time produces a few beings so mad as to attempt the substitution of the great world for the tiny one. One such being bore the name Plato; and his madness left a deeper imprint on the tablet of human thought than the madness of Dionysius.

CHAPTER IV

DIONYSIUS COMES TO GRIEF AT OLYMPIA

OLYMPIA WAS a venerated sanctuary of the Grecian world, and in every fifth year it was the goal of the world's athletes. The priests of Zeus at Elis proclaimed a sacred truce, and merchants snatched at the opportunity to make shipments without risk. Olympia was, moreover, a favorite place for fairs and a celebrated resort generally.

Festivals have a way of being exhausting affairs, and the five days of the Olympic games were hardly approached in this respect. Nor were their rigors confined to the participants. They began far back on the sacred highway. It ran along the coast, and at the season of the games it was a burning desert on a small scale. The sacrificial cattle destined for sixty altars plodded along it through clouds of dust, together with heavily laden beasts of burden headed for a vastly greater number of stalls. At the scene of the contests the sweating visitors were packed into cramped barracks where they gasped for air to breathe. The sluggish Alpheus, festally crowded with gay-colored shipping strewn with leafage and comestibles, was muddy and malodorous—nothing for parched gullets. There seems once to have been a profound significance in this arduous journey to the remote and comfortless lair, made just before the July full moon; and in later times people felt obliged to cling the more tena-

ciously to the observance as they felt its ancient significance evaporating. The Olympic magic was now all but extinct. Famous thinkers and poets had made repeated references to the festival in terms anything but complimentary. There were indeed any number of altars to any number of gods, but the number of worshippers was now small to vanishing.

And so was the number of Greek contestants. The athletic gentlemen in the palaestra originated along the Asiatic seaboard and in Egypt. They did not compete, but rather staged a show—an international exhibition. Professional wrestlers confronted each other, legs apart, torsos bent back, heads pulled in like a turtle's, upper arms clamped to their chests, bodies smeared with olive oil and artfully roughened with sand. They were looking for an opening to grapple the opponent's leg and thus bring him down, or suddenly to leap on his back and scissor his body with the ankles, or, pressed head to head with him, to twist his limbs, or break his fingers, or topple him by sheer weight. Men held pomegranates in their fists and challenged anyone to get the fruit away from them or so much as pry open a little finger. Or they planted themselves on a greased discus and defied anyone to pull them off. Men with overgrown skulls tied gut strings around their foreheads, pressed their lips tight together, and held their breath, and presently their veins swelled to the point of snapping the toughest cord. There were also specialties not so bloodless. Forearms and hands were taped with soft oxhide except for certain areas, particularly the ball of the hand, which were covered with strips of ridged leather studded with lumps of lead. The fists so armored were aimed at the region between brow and chin. The combatants pounded each other into unrecognizableness, keeping up the butchery, awash with their own blood, until one of them was fordone. The enlarged and

flattened ear was a hallmark of beauty in the statues of victorious boxers at Olympia. These were erected beside temples that could not have been more serenely suspended in that limpid air if the beings who erected them had been composed exclusively of birds' wings.

The race of priests invariably outlasts any number of generations of pious souls. No man knows, at the dedication of an altar, to what god its sacrifices may some day be offered up. The present festival fell in the year of jubilee of Plutus, god of wealth. Many of those in attendance were fresh from seeing Opulence reverenced as the most powerful of the gods on Aristophanes' stage. At Olympia, too, he was paid the most obsequious homage, though he had not a single altar of his own there. The poorer ones had come to marvel, the not so poor to be marveled at. They drove about in resplendent chariots accoutered in glitter, spent the warm, rainless, moonlit nights in sumptuous purple tents, and had their aspersoria and incense-burners borne before them in processions as tokens of their prestige. The greatest deference was accorded to the deputation that outspent all the rest. Even it could not preen itself in blazing weapons: as long as the festival lasted even the powerful must wear the habiliments of peace. But the golden fillets and the gold-embroidered tents of the lord Thearides were a sufficiently readable advertisement of the weapons in their owner's arsenals.

Dionysius had contented himself with sending his brother. But the people at Olympia recognized the man of power in his mere reflection. What gods in common had this great and varicolored throng of folk from Persia and Sicily, Egypt and Macedonia? And what dreams had it in common, bred of the warm and silent summer nights filled with the gentle murmur of the Alpheus, in those too few

hours before the dawn sent the dreamers faring eastward to the stadium to make sure of acceptable seats? Even to Hellenes Zeus's household had grown decidedly confused and its scandals a weariness. There was but a single being who reigned from a throne so exalted and at the same time so near at hand that all eyes could see him, in west and east alike; and of him everyone was speaking. Spartans and Cyprian kings and satraps of Asia Minor were seeking his favor; the freedom-loving Athenians themselves had passed a resolution doing him honor. It was Dionysius the Great whom all these people had in common.

He was the moralists' horrible example, the comedists' butt—the biggest spook in their little world of fantasy, the masterpiece in their private chamber of horrors. The powerful supply the sustenance for the most extravagant dreams of the powerless; for the man who has power has no need to hide anything, and his brazenness captivates everyone who has a great deal to hide. Thus, a world of simpletons and learned men not much more canny than simpletons was taking the acutest interest in every breath that heaven's anointed drew. Among the athletes distant Dionysius passed for the most potent as well as the bloodiest of the gods. The scandal of which he was the focus was what gave the festival its character.

There was living, then, in the midst of this civilized era, a prodigy of nature whom no mortal was suffered to approach with scissors; his daughters burned off his hair with red-hot nutshells. A deep trench surrounded his sleeping place, and when he went to bed he removed the plank that did duty as bridge, whereupon he felt that he was secure on a minute island. When he visited one of his wives for a little interlude of love he had her bedroom thoroughly searched beforehand for traitors and weapons. In the presence of

friends he redoubled his caution, because they had intelligence—would they be his friends otherwise?—and their cleverness took the form of a natural preference for being rulers themselves. Even his approaches to the people were distant approaches. Twenty years earlier an obscure clerk speaking from an ordinary rostrum had won the people's hearts. Today, the people's tribune, he would appear in public on nothing less than a specially constructed tower. His affection for the Syracusan people expressed itself with no less caution than his love for Doris and Aristomache.

A man who is violent himself detects violence in every corner. The oppressor's tacit thought is, Why should the oppressed be any more docile than I am? Dionysius had long since forgotten that such realities as trust and fidelity exist. The most powerful of kingdoms had been built on a solid foundation of distrust and infidelity, the vivid stars by which he had steered so admirable a course. There was, for example, that unfortunate matter of his brother. Leptines, wanting to show him graphically the precise location of a place, borrowed the guardsman's spear and drew it in the sand. Could not such a thing be used, say, also to run his brother Dionysius through? Therefore the guardsman who carried it had to die. An officer, Marsyas, on the basis of a similar reflection, was graduated from life to death. He had had the ill luck to be compelled to murder his master, albeit only in a dream. How did the knowledge of that dream get to Dionysius? Had the soldier talked in his sleep? Or had he imagined he was being particularly provident when he vouchsafed his master a glimpse into the most dubious recesses of his mind? All that is certain is that the man he had killed in his dream was of the opinion that he would not have had so reprehensible a dream if his mind had not previously been busy with equally reprehensible thoughts of his

master. An arresting personage, this Syracusan demigod! The man who shrinks from nothing makes a profound impression on all those who are obliged to shrink from everything. Dionysius was a great subject for a great epic poet; and that was enough to make even his enemies call him great.

Indeed, the man himself, astute though he was, so far misjudged his role as to take himself for the poet instead of the poet's subject. He did not stop to reflect that it is a deal easier to hold a huge city in thrall by means of a strong fortress than it is to do the same by means of a bad poem to an audience not consisting of his own subjects. And so it came to pass that the unbeatable one was beaten at Olympia. Tyrants ought to beware of making trips abroad, even in the form of books; and they ought especially to steer clear of countries not ruled by their own kind. Dionysius overlooked that principle.

Olympia had no contests in the musical arts. At the games before the last there had, indeed, been a trumpet-playing contest, held on a raised platform at the entrance to the stadium. But the quality of the performance had not been taken into account; it had been a mere contest of lungs, the winner the trumpeter with the most swollen cheeks. Olympia was, however, graced with certain of the fine flowers of culture. An astronomer from Chios had set up a bronze tablet synchronizing the courses of sun and moon and introducing a new calendar. Herodotus had given readings from portions of his historical works. From the time of Pindar to that of Hippias recitation, improvisation, and debate had been used to fill the interludes between feats of brawn. It was here that aged Thales had closed his eyes on the world, the journey from Miletus having been too great a tax on his remnant of strength. Here, too, an-

other sage had died an equally splendid death when his joy at seeing his son crowned with the olive wreath had proved greater than he could support.

And here Dionysius was determined to immortalize himself. He might, indeed, have said in his omnipotence: "I am not acquainted with Homer or with Euripides. My catapults have spoken, and there is no arbiter to compare with them." He could have created a Syracusan Olympia where he could himself have been at once judge and laureate. He could have had whole robes plaited for himself out of twigs of the wild olive. But he had besought Plato not to give him too bad a name; and now he had actually sent his poetry to this unpredictable Olympia. Here he was no tyrant of an autarchy, but an irrelevance. He committed the error of submitting himself to a verdict not handed down by his own court. It was an error that cost him dear.

One of the treasure houses of the sacred grove contained impressive trophies won at the Battle of Himera. There was a large bronze statue of Zeus, and beside it were three examples, bequeathed by Gelon, of the linen cuirass, the light tunic worn by the African soldiery. Dionysius was, however, more than the peer by birth and the actual successor of the great victor over Carthage: he was also the legitimate heir of Greek tragedy. He had composed his *Adonis*, his *Leda*, and a third piece in which mad Hercules is given a clyster by Silenus, all with the stylus of Euripides. At the same time, he had the prudence not to rely solely on either the trophies or the illustrious poetic tools. On what, then, did he rely?

Like every wielder of power, he was astounded at the malleability of the victims of power. Thus, by a very natural process, he arrived at the absolutist's theory of propaganda, which is this: that everything depends on displaying any matter in such a light that it will lose its native hue and

take on for a fleeting interval a cloak of whatever color the displayer has a fancy for throwing around it. That Athenian highbrow might prove to a nicety that you ought to persuade people by reason and not overwhelm them by surprise, but he, Dionysius, in the course of building up the strongest power in the world, had had plenty of opportunity to unmask the trifling distinction between persuasion and surprise as a figment of unemployed minds. The literary gentry might, at their banquets, scorn the rhapsodists as the stupidest sodality possible, and do it ever so wittily, but he, Dionysius, had included in his impressive delegation, as additional insurance, the pre-eminent elocutionary artists of Syracuse, in order that even the most recalcitrant should be convinced of the merits of his poems. And actually these virtuosos played such beguiling tunes on their vocal cords that the enraptured audience was quite unable to come to close quarters with the text itself—for the first few minutes. Then, of a sudden, when they had had enough of the thundering and sibilating, the purse-lipped simpering and the wide-open gullets of these imitators of the human voice, the pitiful dwarfed mind of the man Dionysius lay stark naked before them. And they set more store by the dramatic poetry of Euripides than by the stylus that had written it, as they proved by bursting into a chorus of rude guffaws at the expense of the high and mighty dilettante.

When a god is plunged from his high station he is made to pay a double price, and it is spread over every obeisance that has ever been made before him. A seventy-two-year-old personage of energetic spirit took over the leadership of the hostile jeering, thereby launching a minute insurrection against the world dominion of the great Dionysius. Lysias was the son of a wealthy Syracusan merchant, and thus he had had personal experience of the tyrant. At fifteen he had

joined the founders of the colony of Thurii, where he put in the next thirty-two years. Then he had gone clandestinely to Athens, acquired a residence in the Piraeus, and become one of the class of the privileged underprivileged; that is to say, of half-enfranchised aliens. When the Thirty came to power his property was confiscated. He had then gone into exile. Returning with others under the amnesty, he had found himself denied full citizenship even in democratic Athens.

Those who have suffered setbacks have a peculiar impulsion to win through. Lysias had inherited the Syracusan nimbleness in retort, acquired in addition the Syracusan art of public speaking together with a sound general education, and made himself a brilliant advocate. The addresses that he prepared to order were very subtly attuned to the personalties of his clients, and he was equally effective as a bourgeois conservative and as a radical vulgarian. If he had undertaken the vindication of Socrates before his death instead of after, his client would assuredly have remained alive. Many an Athenian who had helped make it impossible for aliens to take root reproached him for being rootless. But this man had at least one deep-rooted passion in an eminent degree, and a long career as second-class citizen had brought it to white heat. He hated slavery and its world-renowned gladiator.

Lysias had an impressive pulpit: the western portal of the temple of Zeus. The holiday crowd sat perspiring in front of the orator. There was not very much staring up at the pediment, for people deeply stirred to anger are not given to studying reliefs on mythological subjects. Facing this creation of the sculptor Alcamenes, the guides would, on demand, reel off something about the mythical battle of the Lapithae and the Centaurs; but there was certainly no such

demand from Lysias' audience. Its gaze was directed, not at the strange monsters abandoned to their grossness high overhead, but at the angry old man who was fighting their own fight down there in the shadow of the temple roof. It was not in the people's minds that their living wrath had long ago been turned into dead stone up there. Ah, what a sameness runs through all human history! How few its themes, compared with what the participants flatter themselves! Perhaps, indeed, there are but variations on a single motif, each variation labeled with its own proper noun. Yesterday it may be called the battle of the Lapithae against the Centaurs, today it may be the battle of Lysias against Dionysius, and what it may be tomorrow—who knows?

Had Lysias' auditors but raised their eyes aloft, they could have seen with those very eyes the substance of what was being thundered into their ears from the rostrum. The area of that pediment was one dedication to horrors. Eurypt ion the Centaur had just carried off gentle Deidameia, robbing the bridegroom of his bride; the hideous abortion held his lovely booty in an iron grip with left arm and both forehoofs. Next to that a grimacing monstrosity flushed with wine was pinning a maiden with both arms and one forehoof. An exquisite young boy was writhing in the clutch of a third misshapen creature whose teeth were clamped together deep in his tender flesh. Oppression, oppression, and again oppression—single theme of universal history! If the episodes of the frieze up there were no longer very communicative to the contemporaries of Dionysius, it was surely the fault of nothing but nature's modern improvements, which allowed the uncivilized centaurs of these latter days but two legs apiece and no animal hide, so that those four-footed creatures had become hardly distinguishable from the good Lapithae.

Lysias' paean to freedom was nothing but an echo of the ancient evangel that had been frozen into stone below the temple roof. "Greeks of every country, join hands! From the eastward you are menaced by the King of Susa; he has already overrun more than one Hellenic city state. To the westward lurks the master of Syracuse, waiting to pounce on his prey. Suppose these two brigands unite and crush the rest of the world between them? We must make an end of them both! Long live Athenian democracy! Long live liberty!" Lysias was well aware of the unfreedoms to be found among the free people with whom he made his home; his own experience had taught them to him. But, living in the age of Dionysius, he could but extol this people. As for him, he was already an old man. There was not the least likelihood that anyone would get him confused with the handsome god up there—the manly beardless youth with his great eyes, his rounded lips, his dilated nostrils, his luxuriant curling locks with the narrow circlet around them. Nevertheless, serene Apollo and raging Lysias were pledged to one and the same victory.

The issue of the battle depicted in the frieze is not in any wise dubious. The marble bride has her left hand clenched in the monster's beard, her right in his hair; her bridegroom is plunging to her aid; and the god himself is turning toward her with benevolence in his mien. The other maiden's situation is even more encouraging, for Theseus has already attacked the beast who has seized her and given him a gaping head wound. Behind the contorted limbs, behind the blood-stained faces, behind all the agonies of the innocent, the sky is lightening to a new dawn. And Lysias concentrated all the griefs of his long life as a half-citizen in this one vitriolic attack on the protagonist of unfreedom; and the crowd followed his lead with exultation. They had

known so many surges of enthusiasm in the past! (It is so easy to experience enthusiasm over feats of muscle and suchlike small beer! and every moment of enthusiasm is a grave of affliction.) Now for the first time they were experiencing the full happiness of intoxication in this surge of hatred of the Centaur of Syracuse, all unknowing, perhaps, that this was a wondrous, an altogether human, an all but divine intoxication.

They swarmed upon the regal tents that represented the tyrant in this place. They wanted to sweep these abodes of mischief from this ground, for it was holy ground. In the way of all powerless folk, they were striking out with their bare hands at mere symbols. This little flame of freedom was quickly and thoroughly extinguished by the festival police force. After all, it would not do to appraise that great overseer of catapults and triremes, whose power extended to the ends of the earth, merely according to the number of subjects he had had put to death every year. Even the upstanding Athenian democrats had to apply other standards of measurement. True, the Sicilian autocrat had never been a friend to Athens; he had even been hand in glove with Sparta throughout. But supreme power is supreme power, and when had any one man ever had so much of it? That was why the Athenian council—and on the motion of a lyric poet at that—had voted a resolution doing honor to the archon of Sicily and his kinsmen. Three ambassadors had even posted to Syracuse on purpose to consummate a family alliance between its ruler and the friendly Prince of Cyprus. And of course the smaller powers had danced attendance on the great man with even greater assiduity. Only these windy apologists of liberty and their following had been recusant, pitiful visionaries that they were!

The visionaries were disposed of with the most irrefutable

proofs. Once a man has become a god, proofs of his godhead are always on tap without stint or limit. Was not Dionysius the bulwark that safeguarded Hellenism against Carthage? Had Dionysius accomplished less for Syracuse than Pericles had for his Athens of the mighty walls? The great fortifications, the harbors, the arsenals—did those count for nothing? The temples, the gymnasiums, the spacious avenues, the colonnades—did those count for nothing? Plato averred that they counted for nothing—that what mattered was the moral integrity of the builder, not the size of the things built. But who was Plato? The Italians were paying homage to the despot's magnanimity with chaplets of solid gold, and those would always screen any number of graves. The graves contained the corpses of massacred Greek city states; because the bulwark of Hellenism needed a lot of room for the accommodation of his barbarian mercenaries. They also contained the late inmates of labor camps in the stone quarries. What did a Lysias or two weigh against the solid gold chaplets of defeated enemies who understood that the only way to make terms with a tyrant was by unlimited acquiescence?

The little banner of protest raised by noisy weaklings received a curious form of support. It was supplied by pure chance—the only agency that could venture to take the offensive against Dionysius.

Once upon a time when the tyrant Hieron of Syracuse refused to join the war of liberation against the Persians, Themistocles had persuaded the Greeks of his day to penalize him by excluding him from competition in the Olympic games. Was it not possible to apply this illustrious precedent to the teams that Dionysius had entered in the chariot race? According to the letter of the regulations, it was, for they disqualified anyone charged with either bloodguilt or

blasphemy, and Dionysius' blasphemy, too, had achieved universal notoriety. On one occasion he had professed to have received Demeter's command to enjoin all women to take their adornments to the goddess's temple, and then he had had their pious offerings melted down. Another time, he had relieved a Zeus of its heavy golden robe, worth eighty-five talents; he said it left the wearer chilly in winter and uncomfortably warm in summer, and he had the god provided with a woolen robe that would give him better protection. He had removed the golden beard from an Aesculapius on the plea that it was unseemly for the son to be wearing a beard when Apollo his father had none. Pretty high-handed treatment of his divine colleagues ! Earthly divinities not infrequently look upon the heavenly ones as dangerous rivals, and for that reason they are not content to stop at merely stealing from them. Dionysius, having plundered them, added insult to injury, saying: "Why do you hold out your golden trophies and your silver chalices so temptingly to us if you don't want us to help ourselves to them ?" Socrates was condemned to death for his shortage of catapults. Dionysius had such a plenitude of them that no one dared so much as to exclude him from a chariot race at Olympia. The judges administered the oath to the contestants in the council house in front of a statue of Zeus the guardian of oaths, whose awful mien was supposed to deter the lightminded from perjuring themselves. And Dionysius' representatives solemnly swore to the irreproachableness of their lord, conformably to a motto of his own: "You gull boys with dice, men with oaths."

Persons of distinction disdained the less expensive contests. Nor did they personally exert themselves; they merely condescended to accept the glory that their horses and charioteers had struggled for. And if they were very distinguished

indeed, they did even this from a certain remove. Dionysius, being determined to add to the title of great poet the wreath of an Olympic victor, stalked on to the course (if the expression is allowable in connection with one not there in the flesh) in the shape of chariots that other men had built, horses that other men had trained, and charioteers in whom there was nothing of him except their complete awareness that what they had at stake was not their glory, but their heads. They stood erect in the open springless chariots, their minds not so much on the sprig of wild olive as on the wild man back on Ortygia. On the parched summer turf whose matted roots kept the slope from eroding under the winter rains a throng of spectators sat or squatted. Some of them were waiting for justice to be done.

There is a trumpet blast. From an altar a proud bronze eagle with spread pinions moves aloft, and simultaneously a dolphin, likewise of bronze, sinks humbly to the ground. The tapes are let down in front of the compartments. And there beside one another in an irregular line are the two-wheeled battle chariots of Homer, each drawn by four horses abreast. Obelisks along the course admonish them: "Play fair ! Speed up !" The young charioteers are playing as fair as can be, and how they are speeding up ! They talk pleadingly to their steeds, needle their ambition with jeers, threaten to kill them if they fail to give a good account of themselves—exactly the devices with which they were once broken in themselves.

At the far end of the hippodrome there is a circular altar known as Horse's Nightmare. Is it some malicious divinity that so often makes chariots crash just here ? Is it the sharpening of the curve, at this point where the obelisk marking the turn has to be rounded with hub just grazing it ? Is it this stand reserved for foreign legates and other august per-

sonages, with the presiding officer's robe gleaming like bright blood among them, that plunges a lance of fear into the drivers' hearts? Maybe Dionysius' charioteers detected a fleeting prescience of their fate in the eyes of Dionysius' ambassador, and thereby lost the race. One of them let go his clutch on the whip that held his horses to their pace. The yoke of the other chariot snapped, and the maddened horses piled up, hurling their driver from the chariot. It may be that dictatorship had no manner of bearing on this two-fold calamity. It may be that the whole thing was only pure chance.

Only ? Chance is the most benevolent of all the forces in history, for it alone asserts itself without respect of persons. Chance is, to be sure, inveterately blind. Nevertheless it happens oftentimes that the witless clouds of heaven will draw together to compose an image that has meaning—the precise image that has something to convey to us at that precise moment. And oftentimes the melted lead that we drop into water will harden into the shape of a faithful augury. Yes, it happens again and again, by virtue of the operation of chance, that God Himself acts as if He existed. "Lord, even if Thou art not, let me be given, if but this once, a decent chance !"—how many men have prayed that prayer ! And now the prayer was answered. There lay the chariots of Dionysius, so much splintered wreckage. Chance had consummated what justice could not have. And was it, perchance, again chance that chanced to give the victory to Anniceris—the same who, on his way to Olympia, had delivered Plato from slavery at Aegina ?

Dionysius, in his island fastness, was able to savor his triumph in advance with perfect realism, for victory was celebrated according to an ancient and inviolable pattern. The time was the closing day of the festival. A young boy both of

whose parents must be living took a golden knife and with it cut an ample branch from a wild olive tree in the southwest portion of the sacred grove, near the back of the temple of Zeus. The presiding officer, wearing now a white headband, presented this chaplet to the fortunate victor. A herald solemnly and loudly intoned his glorified name, the name of his father, and the name of his fortunate city. There was then a processional to the altars to the music of flutes, citharas, and choral singing. In the council chamber a banquet was held, prepared by the people of Elis at state expense. The wine was supplied by the people of Lesbos, the horses' fodder by those of Chios, the banqueting pavilion by those of Ephesus. The festal hymns went back to Pindar and Simonides. And the lyric poets of the day had collaborated to produce an occasional poem. All of it that dealt with generalities had been composed beforehand; it only remained to work in the victor's name and consanguinity. The new laureate's fame was spread abroad equally by the peddlers of triumphal ballads and the trade in statues of him. To be the cynosure of all eyes while living and exalted to the skies when dead—what more than that could heart desire ? So Dionysius was ruminating. And, after such a consummation, who was going to lend an ear to the spiteful inventions bruited about by one isolated malcontent in an isolated Athenian grove ?

The unhappy Syracusan commission, which embarked on the homeward passage bearing its burden of two abject humiliations, ran into its everlasting salvation on the way. The ship that bore it foundered off Tarentum. Possibly the passengers' hearts were too leaden a cargo for it to keep afloat; possibly those of the seamen who survived the shipwreck were right when they said that no such misfortune would

have overtaken them if the verses of Dionysius had not been so bad.

Plato, when he heard what manner of reception his tyrant had been vouchsafed at Olympia, by no means rejoiced. In spite of everything there was one intimate bond between the two men: both of them had an equal detestation of Lysias and all his kind. Neither Dionysius nor Plato had any use for the notion of letting mankind grow wild in God's broad meadows, putting forth whatever bright flowerage it listed.

They were merely dictatorial in different ways. Plato sat in his small cell in a grove of nightingales outside the gates of the city of Athens and busied himself with locking people up, for protection from themselves and one another, in a cage of tight abstractions. Dionysius was simultaneously taking his revenge on his old enemy, Rhegium, by placing Phyton its governor on the rack and, while he was in that posture of unease, saying to him: "Yesterday, at my orders, your son was drowned."

Such was the difference between their respective rigors.

II. *Perfect State, Imperfect Man*

CHAPTER V

AN UNCHARTED COUNTRY

PLATO LIVED in country surroundings just outside the city, directly behind the potters' quarter and by the pleasure garden of Academus with its altar to Eros. He was well content to be out of the noisy city.

He had spent the years of his youth on his father's estate well up the valley of the Cephissus, companioned by plane trees, springs, the chorus of crickets, and the washerwomen along the banks of the Callirrhoe. He was now a man of fifty, but the landscape of his boyhood had not greatly altered. The principal change was that sundry strange new growths were flourishing in this fertile hollow between the memorial to the hero Academus and the Hill of Poseidon—such things as mathematical models and charts of the heavens. Plato was fond of these fragrant meadows and his books and the silvery trees and his surveyor's instruments and the temple to the Muses that he had had put up in the fore part of his garden.

He really owed all this luxury to Dionysius. Anniceris had refused to accept repayment of the money with which he had purchased the freedom of the distinguished slave at Aegina, and that was how this idyllic research laboratory came to be bestowed on his friends and pupils. All of them taught and learned together, as they ate together. They were a single family; it owed its existence to the pursuit of

knowledge, and scholarship was its very breath of life. Its members did not go in for holding public office: what existing government could commend itself to a rational being? They did not take part in the public assemblies: they had better things to do than get mixed up in public cat-and-dog fights.

A certain amount of outcry did intrude even into this cloister. The excellent Anniceris, who plumed himself on his prowess as a charioteer, set great store by being admired here, too. He drove back and forth through the Academy pleasance, so accurately holding to his course that his wheels never once left their original ruts. The performance was highly gratifying to the gentlemen of the Academy. Plato, though, did not attach much importance to that sort of child's play. If people were to pay so much attention to meaningless affairs, how were they to have enough left over for what was really of some importance? He had other matters on his mind.

He had, for instance, this problem of the doubled cube. Apollo of Delos had an altar in the form of a cube, and he wanted it made twice its present size. The priests appealed to the Academy. Its arithmeticians went to work and blocked out a model. But was it the actual altar that the god was concerned about, or was it by any chance the solution of the mathematical problem? Man is a reasoning animal to the end that he may do his building with reason, not with matter. Plato was very severe with his associates; they were supposed to provide a rigorous demonstration, and they had let it go at a mere rough approximation. Had they come here merely to engage in a more refined form of bricklaying?

The task of the investigators in this Athenian grove was to re-create—albeit not quite in seven days—the cosmos,

from the organization of its celestial machinery down to that of the individual living organism, and to do it without benefit of the aboriginal clod. How hard it was to get the nature of the task into their heads ! People had not been pursuing astronomy for any great length of time. It was not until a little before the Peloponnesian War that the first real observations had been made at Athens, on the Cyclades, and in Macedonia and Thrace. And they had been a mere hodgepodge of fortuitous discoveries, amounting to nothing. The universe was a materialization of mind, and the function of scholars was to prove that it was. The miniature god who ruled the Academy was pointing the road to truth, and his assistants were paving it. Thus order was being brought into the world. The sun was now setting and rising by a pattern of law. The moon was waxing and waning at the behest of its number. Even the lowly pumpkin could demonstrate that in the vast scheme of things it had its little appointed place. The All put itself submissively at the disposal of these clever men in the valley of the Cephissus and suddenly took to speaking in the vocabulary of natural science.

Plato needed a large number of perspicacious friends to help him dissipate the mists of transiency that enveloped the world and to reveal the everlasting logic that was its core. He was very fortunate, and pre-eminently so in having Eudoxus, who commanded mathematics, astronomy, geography, and medicine. This great expert, returning from his Egyptian journey, had betaken himself with all his pupils to the grove of reason and there proclaimed the glad tidings that even the planets were not just wandering around aimlessly. What a beautiful revelation ! If the dream of universal harmony were indeed a reality, it would have to manifest itself above all in the movements of those gods made

visible, the stars. Plato had hitherto been deeply troubled. The ideally perfect curve was the circle, and yet, as had been shown by observation, the orbits of the heavenly bodies departed from it. That could not be so; it must not be so. And now his Eudoxus was rescuing the reality of the universal harmony by explaining that the apparent irregularities were due to the interrelations of the whole galaxy, which subjected the individual orbits to compensating distortions. Plato was happy now; he was repelled by all irregularity. Now he could stare up through the darkness at that shining symmetry and feel safe. The millions of stars were moving sedately along the infinite avenues of heaven, never getting in one another's way, conforming with rigorous exactitude to a timetable created by sublime reason and set down on a cosmographic chart by sapient Eudoxus. But—why must mankind alone be so utterly at sixes and sevens?

Plato was sitting by his little solitary lamp. There was a rustling in the trees. In the shrubbery back there on the hill the nightingale was singing. But he had to be plucked out of his studious paradise. The disturbing buzz of the distant city penetrated to his ear. The protean anarchic horde of mercenaries, exiles, bandits, proletarians—wholesalers and retailers of unrealities—was pressing in on him. The outcry of the market place was drowning out the harmony of the spheres; the quiet cell was inundated with disturbing images. Paso and Phormio, the bankers, are piling up mountains of gold and of silver. Drab figures numbed with cold flit to the stoves at the public baths and steal embers. It costs more to stage *Orestes* today than it once cost to build the Propylaea, and Helen, who ought to make her entry in darkness, comes on in a resplendent triumphal procession with trophies and slave women. The unemployed sing in the chorus wearing gold-embroidered robes. Lais is paid ten

thousand drachmas for a single night. Up on the solitary and shadowy Pnyx, that weird hill with its tumbledown houses, youths with painted faces are waiting for their purchasers. And where now is the mood for working out the two middle terms of a proportion and a definition of the life force? The irrational has crashed into the sanctuary of reason.

The chorus of gloomy prophets was numerous. From the stage those bickering brethren of the craft, Euripides and Aristophanes, were wailing: "The rich are never sated, and the poor go hungry." From the speakers' rostrum the great Isocrates was wailing: "No longer do they sacrifice animals: men are butchering one another on the altars." And in this poet's cloister Plato himself was wailing: "Such a society as ours is devoid of unity. It is really made up of two nations superposed—the one consisting of those who have, the other of those who have not. Well, then, with the frenzy of the sovereign rabble vitiating everything, is it not well for a man to hold himself aloof? What can one person accomplish among wild beasts? He cannot withstand their pressure: he has to share their misdoing, and to no profit." Here once again was the audacity that demanded something beyond a mere refuge through the hurricane; and this audacity was driving the happy man forth from his heaven of harmony. As he privately admitted, he had not been born for whisperings in a corner with a handful of associates. He launched out, then. And what he discovered was his unique prize. It was in 374, twenty-five years after the death of Socrates and fifteen after the Syracusan adventure, that Plato gave the world the news of the wondrous country that he and his friends had sought and at last found. If his report was to be believed, they had surrounded it as hunters surround a copse containing some rarity that must not be permitted to elude

them. Ever since the moment when Plato laid hands on it, it has remained a living reality in the memory of mankind. The name of this reality is the Perfect State.

In what, to say truth, did its perfection consist? Not in the folk who tilled its fields, cobbled its footgear, and chaffered in its market places. They were folk like those everywhere else, imperfect and deserving of compassion. They bought and they sold under iron laws that they did not comprehend. They loved and they hated as Nature's dictates asserted themselves. They never worried about anything except the things that could not be fended off. Moreover, they, like others of their kind, had a thin upper stratum to support. (What was conspicuously different was that they had only a moderate and limited responsibility to their masters.) These peasants and artisans made up an overwhelming majority of the state; and there was really nothing left to discover about *them*. The Perfect State was nineteen twentieths imperfection.

The remaining twentieth—that was manufactured out of a quite different substance. It possessed power, but did not enjoy possessing it. The rulers lived more unostentatiously than the ruled. Those having authority were slaves to the most inflexible discipline. They had no gold, no silver—in fine, nothing of their own, not even husband or wife or child. They lived together in a camp, ate at a common table, and had no personality except a collective and composite one. To graduate into this ruling class was no very enticing prospect. All it could bring anybody was toil and deprivation.

This extraordinary governing stratum was divided into two categories, one of so-called regents and the other of aides known as guardians. Now, guardianship is really no very illustrious calling. A guardian is someone who stands

watch to see that something of value is not stolen. Dogs and slaves are given this task; they stand watch over farmyards and small children. When guardians have things of superior consequence to mind they are commonly called soldiers, and then they enjoy special privileges, because special privileges are what they are defending. But the guardians of the Perfect State were not defending any special privileges, and therefore they were not even elevated to military status. Here there were no colorful parades, no inspiring uniforms, and hence no envious civilians choked with awe. The guardians of the Perfect State had to be less prominent than its very cobblers; for, according to the lawgiver who presided over this perfection, no great damage is done when cobblers scamp their work, whereas defective guardians wreck everything.

This army with neither gonfalons nor glory was, after all, not the apex of the state. And in this topsy-turvy scheme of things that fact meant that it might have been worse off, and that it could continue to congratulate itself mildly on various favorable appearances. The individual guardian did not need to be told, for example, that the lottery whereby he got his wife was actually no lottery at all—that he had been deliberately mated with a view to raising the level of the whole class of guardians, on the system used by cattle-breeders. This knowledge was graciously withheld from him.

The manipulator behind this and many another seeming operation of chance, the man on whom it devolved to put an amiable mask on ugly realities for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Perfect State, was one of an extremely small band. In his class, if anywhere, must reside the mysterious perfection. It was a class of truly extraordinary rulers. It possessed no crowns, no royal robes, no strong fortresses, no spies. It had come to power by neither inheritance nor

conquest. Rather, it had attained its position only after a most amazing course of preparation. Its prospective member was watched and tested from childhood. Was he able to fight, to endure pain? Was there a trace of cowardice in him? He must steer clear of all effeminacy. Later, he was drilled in mathematical science to the age of thirty and nurtured in love of general knowledge for five years more. For it is certainly dangerous to expose unripe striplings to dialectic: they will play with it as a puppy does with any knickknack, and oftentimes they turn defiant in the process. The prospective regents were ripe enough not to play and not to turn defiant. In all sobriety and self-discipline they climbed down the long ladders of dialectic method until they were standing on the foundation of all foundations. There was now nothing below their feet that was not steadfast and indestructible. They were planted on the established bedrock of eternal and changeless being.

At this point the initiates naturally asked for nothing better than to spend the rest of their lives lapped in this wondrous security. But there were other plans for them. The author and lawgiver of this perfection held that the man who had once been blessed with a vision of the eternal order had an obligation to reshape the world out of its pattern of disorder. To this end the unfortunates had to take over the administration of state offices until they were fifty years of age—dictators against their desire, men of power devoid of fondness for power. Such was the strange career of these absolute masters of the Perfect State. They had not, like Dionysius, clambered to the topmost rung by means of countless deviltries. What they had carried to their apex of power was the desire to introduce the harmony of the spheres into a world of men all at disharmony.

Is this, then, that inestimable perfection?—that the tailor should live for his own pleasure and the chosen one by an inhumanly self-denying regimen? Why, all this is nothing but an unimaginable horror! The common people have gold, silver, houses, real estate. The common people go traveling and entertain guests and give their sweethearts all sorts of presents. And meanwhile the good, the beautiful, the wise may not even pursue the quiet existence of the sage! The good, the beautiful, the wise must dedicate themselves might and main to the well-being of the governed! The good, the beautiful, the wise must maintain eternal vigilance day and night, that the state may remain exempt from the fate of all things transitory, that it may grow neither larger nor smaller, that it may suffer the intrusion of no innovations in the arts—for there is no tinkering with their practices without a concomitant disruption of all the most important laws of the state. Is this insane order that stands everything on its head, that excludes the noblest of mankind from all the sweets of life and bestows them on the callous mob—is this truly Perfection? What sort of *monstrum horrendum* is this that Plato has conjured up?

It is the thing of great price toward which he had been working these many years. What it amounted to was not human perfection, but only the most perfect possible coordination of imperfections. Another name for it is justice. The whole world had been continually crying: "Justice there is none!" It had jeered: "Justice is nothing but a subterfuge of the weak, the aged, or a fine mask for knaves." Well, Plato had picked up this "Justice there is none!" and brandished it aloft with proud defiance. This justice did actually exist, and where it existed you had, not one class of men pre-eminently happy, but all men as happy as pos-

sible. As happy as possible! Wisely spoken; for perfect happiness is for no man, and we have to leave it to Nature to allot to each his due portion.

There was nothing so very sublime about it all. This Plato was a man of discretion; there was nothing overweening about his expectations. What he had revealed was no pattern for archangels, but merely an ideal for inadequate human beings. The best of states was nothing better than a mundane sort of perfection put together out of endless inadequacies. Plato would certainly have been anything but displeased to see all human beings living as beatific gods, with the peasants as prudent as philosophers and the philosophers in turn as untroubled of soul as peasants. But, taking men as they were, as they showed themselves to be under their appalling forms of government, one could be satisfied with merely getting them to the stage of no longer rending one another as the animals did. And how was that to be attained? This frightful animal, man, could be circumvented only in a society in which those who lusted after power had no voice and those who had power bore it as a burden. The master must exist like a beggar, so that he would not become, like another Dionysius, infatuated with existence. The elite must deny themselves, because there was no form of enjoyment that might not lie at the root of an abuse of power.

In what atlas was this Perfect State to be found delineated? The seaboard on which its discoverers first set foot had been given no name; no one had determined that country's length or breadth. Was it, then, nothing but the golden figment of a daydreaming aristocrat's mind? There is a midregion in which all that exists today as a mere vapor may tomorrow strike roots into solid earth. Tomorrow the island of Sicily could become the birthplace of the Perfect State.

Why not ? Once upon a time a young Athenian gentleman, a brilliant fellow surcharged with zeal for justice, had been in Syracuse and there had stood one day in the presence of the most powerful ruler in the world; and there and then it had been possible to measure the insignificance of the gap that separated the two men. The gap had not actually been measured then. But why might it not one day come to pass that a bridge should be thrown across that negligible fissure ?—that Plato should seek out Dionysius, and that Dionysius should govern his people according to the portrait that Plato had limned of the perfect ruler ?

Was this portrait of the perfect ruler, by any chance, a love letter addressed to an elderly ruler in Syracuse ?

The elderly ruler continued to sit tight in his enormous cavern, contented and indestructible. According to a consoling proverb of his contemporaries, a tyrant advanced in years is a rare sight. Unfortunately these golden sayings of the people originate very seldom in their experience and very often in their wishful thinking. A tyrant advanced in years *had* to be a rare sight ! But the world is not made to man's measure. Much that is good is ephemeral, much that is evil imperishable; longevity is no seal of merit, and many a tyrant lingers on this earth a thought too long. The space about Dionysius had possibly come to disclose a certain emptiness. Philistus, the defrauded midwife, was in exile in Hatria composing a lengthy historical work in praise of the onetime protégé who had presently cast him out. Dionysius' brother Leptines, the admiral, had had to go, too. His brother-in-law Polyxenes wanted to get away and took to flight. But what matter ? Tyrants never have any lack of recourses. Wherever there is anything to be looted, they are there, be it in Epirus or Illyria, the Etrurian coast or Corsica.

This tyrant had everything his heart desired, with no need to wait for any seventh son of a seventh son to bestow salvation on him. He felt at home in the lion's skin, he felt at home in the fox's skin, and he wore them turn and turn about as exigencies demanded.

The first installment of the Perfect State presently arrived in Syracuse, to be followed by other installments until the book was complete. Its publisher and consigner was the Academy in Athens. There can hardly have been any lack of amiable persons to delight in starting the lion off on this fascinating excursion. He certainly went through it, chapter by chapter, and there suddenly took shape before him a turbulent human figure—that of its hero. Now, where had he ever encountered that turbulent fellow before ? What a life he had lived ! Dionysius settled down to immerse himself in this engaging biography.

Once upon a time, he read, there was a country that resembled a salesroom for the display of different kinds of government; it was crammed full of them, lying about higgledy-piggledy. Its citizens were extremely proud of their diversity. A healthy commonwealth, in their view, had to be like a gay cloak embroidered with every species of flower. Every citizen was his own species of flower and spoke his peculiar flower language; and it got to be so that no one understood anyone else. A passionate love of freedom made them so sensitive to every form of compulsion that the last thing on earth they would put up with was a master. They would collect in big crowds, venting uproarious applause, hissing like red-hot metal in water, and the echoes of their assent and dissent came reverberating back from the faces of cliffs.

Enter now the hero. He had been, before the belated discovery of his proper calling, a people's advocate. Inasmuch

as he made a lot of noise, he was a good deal sought after; and inasmuch as he now had a following, he demanded a bodyguard to safeguard his life for his followers' benefit. What he demanded, they conceded; and they felt no more concern about freedom's tribune than they did about freedom itself. The honeymoon was short and sweet. He smiled on them; he assured them that he was no tyrant; he built up his faction. Also, he provoked such acute hostilities with other countries that even the most stubborn of his opponents had to perceive that the only hope was a strong man.

When a man who has never seen himself as he is, because he has nothing but a collection of lying mirrors around him, suddenly confronts himself face to face, what is the actual effect on him ? This daredevil of Plato's creation must have struck Dionysius as strangely familiar: now, where had he ever run into him before ? The fellow must have pleased him no end, for he both acted and reflected in Dionysius' own way, and that is always gratifying.

Meanwhile the ebullient fellow was transforming himself from a spokesman for people into a dictator to people. He helped himself to other people's property, not piecemeal in the way of petty bandits, but wholesale. From the victims of his thefts he stole away their very identities. And he buried himself in his hiding place like a venomous snake, for he no longer dared to travel about. Sundry of the bigwigs who had placed him at the helm offered resistance: he disposed of them with dispatch, for such dispatch is the quintessence of his kind of regime. He had a keen sense of smell, and wherever there was to be found a man with any political power, or any money, or any mettle, or any originality he was smelled out and put out of the way. Eventually the scales fell from the eyes of even the sovereign people. Surely, they were muttering now, it was not the will of the

gods that a fully mature son should batten on his father. Had they made this whelp great in order that he might lord it over them? "Dionysius, you were going to start a campaign against the moneybags, against all those that called themselves good and were actually bad; and all you have done is to get the better of your own people. We are through with you!" So screamed the people. "Away with you!" screamed the people. How Dionysius in his greatness must have chuckled over the pathetic simpletons that had so tamely let themselves be led by the nose! And he may conceivably never have experienced the full glory of his triumph over his own people until the moment when that victory shone forth at him from Plato's portrait.

Pathetic Plato! A genuine lover of mathematical science and a man who took more pleasure in spheres and circles and lines than in the Aphrodite of Praxiteles, he had figured it out precisely that the model ruler was seven hundred and twenty-nine times as happy as any such rascally wholesale dealer in injustice. A genuine lover of justice, he flung these words in Dionysius' face: "The day will come when you shall be bound hand and foot by men with rage in their faces. They will lay you low, they will flay you, they will drag you in the dust, they will make you ride on a throne of thorns, and at last they will hurl you down into Tartarus." A singular love letter! Evidently the suitor had not overmuch confidence in his powers of attraction, and that was why he ranted so uncouthly.

The object of his suit, however, was so gratified that he was totally unable to conceive of any man's being seven hundred and twenty-nine times as gratified. And his good fortune mounted with every year. To be sure, he could not, in spite of the most tremendous rearmament, get the Carthaginian business properly settled. But his kingdom was,

as he often proudly remarked, held together with chains of steel, and it could not get away from him. The great Isocrates was at work on a memoir in which he assigned to Dionysius the central role in the decisive struggle with that hereditary enemy, Persia. The city of Athens granted his entire household honorary citizenships; and that was legitimization without waiting a millennium for it, because a tyrant who is a friend of all the world, including its most conspicuous tyrant-hater, is no longer a tyrant at all. And, as if to give the lie as emphatically as possible to the ravings of its citizen Plato—an excellent and admirable man whom people praised without reading him—the doomed republic even elevated its new honorary citizen to the very topmost pinnacle of beatitude. In all poetic competitions hitherto, he had carried off only second and third awards; but at the Lenaea of 367 his play *Hector Unbound* was given the first prize. That set the seal on the alliance that had at last been concluded between the ostensible democracy, Athens, and the slightly less ostensible tyranny, Syracuse.

A little while after that, in the thirty-eighth year of his reign, the happy man died, and in his own bed—a not infrequent occurrence among tyrants. It had been all in vain that Plato spent thirty long years trying to argue his happiness away from him. He had found life extremely pleasant. He had, to be sure, suffered the embarrassment of occasional narrow escapes from assassination; but on the heels of them, thanks to his omnipotence, he had been able to refurbish his armor against many an enemy that shortens the lives of ordinary mortals. His subjects, who had had to undergo a good deal of suffering under his reign, would doubtless have been cordially in favor of a fervent purgatory to purify their tormentor's beggarly soul with fire in its last hour, and incidentally to inflict appropriate discomfort on the body

attached to it. The mighty sinner took himself off, however, with the same clear conscience with which for sixty-three years he had lived in despite of every pious wish to the contrary. It is impossible to shed any tears over the tyrant's fate, however salutary the tears might be to him who shed them.

An oracle had foretold that Dionysius would take his leave of the world as soon as he had triumphed over a superior opponent. The oracle had been right after all, Dionysius' contemporaries averred, pointing to his late literary success: a bad poet had triumphed over good ones.

Had he triumphed, too, over the poet of the Perfect State ?

CHAPTER VI

SOVEREIGN AND SAGE

THERE WAS a considerable press of spectators at the deathbed. Present in the palace, besides the heir to the throne, were his brother, his sister, two stepbrothers, two stepsisters, and their father's widows, Doris and Aristomache. This small clan was intricately intermarried, and its members were related to one another in various ways. And all the relatives had hung on Dionysius' last breath; for what departed from his body with it was not a soul, but a force.

His brother-in-law Dion had wanted toward the end to speak to him once more about his sister Aristomache's children, but at that point the physicians intervened. In the interest of the heir apparent they administered a sedative to their exalted patient. From the resultant coma Dionysius I never awoke. Where priests fall short, the men of medicine are ready and willing to supplement their efforts. They had effectually superintended the transfer of power to Dionysius II.

The inheritance into which he entered consisted of Sicily, the southwestern tip of Italy, a hundred thousand foot soldiers, nine thousand cavalrymen, four hundred triremes, five hundred transports, fortresses, harbors, catapults, suits of armor, greaves, swords, lances, shields, a million and a half bushels of wheat, and a colossal prestige. The exalted

testator had wrought mightily for the sake of all this. He had omitted nothing but to reflect adequately that his heir would some day have to know what use he was going to make of all this magnificence.

His heir was to begin as a nonentity and subsequently become, as Dionysius II, a strong man like himself: such had been the fatuous program of Dionysius the Great. He had not dared overtly educate his successor to his intended destiny. It was too easy for so unformed a youngster to become involved in a conspiracy against his father. It was a lot safer to have him carving little chariots and graceful candlesticks. "I was brought into the world for nothing but to inherit," the son had said to himself in his princely studio; and as an inheritor he had so far lived, hangdog and undisciplined.

That had not suited the paternal potentate, either. Once when it was reported to him that his offspring was having a liaison with a married woman he had said angrily to the young scamp: "Did you ever hear anything of that sort about me?" His son retorted: "Well, your father wasn't a king." "No more will your son be one, if you go on this way," his father promptly assured him. Both of them were right—the Syracusan government clerk who had amassed everything in the first place and the effete scion who had been reared for no end but passively to accept it. Now an empire had dropped into his lap. And inasmuch as he did not have it in him to be what his father had been, he made up his mind to be at least as unlike him as possible. Make the rigid courtiers take to frolicking. Grant a three years' abatement of taxes. Heedlessly squander with a free hand what had been extorted with toil and strain. There was a ninety-day interlude of uninterrupted revelry. It gave the populace unbounded satisfaction.

One item of the lavish bequest was Dion—that Dion who had married young Dionysius' stepsister Arete and who was a brother of the Syracusan one of the two widows. (There were other degrees of relationship, too.) This blunt and far from engaging man had been closer to the father's throne than any other. He was the kind of servitor that bad princes need in a world that values the outward aspect of nobility. Dion was handsome, blameless, cultivated: how, then, could any cause he sponsored be vicious? Thus he had made exhaustive use of all the vicious causes in Syracuse. For twenty years, ever since his head had been completely turned by the young Athenian aristocrat called Plato, he had kept himself haughtily aloof from his crude social equals, and he was always thinking of the Master—and working indefatigably for his other master, Dionysius. The tyrant had been much attached to this rigid idealist who abetted his dirty work with a clean heart. He had issued an order that his beloved brother-in-law was to be paid any sum he might at any time demand—though the old fox did, just to be on the safe side, require that the amount of the draft be confided to him the same day.

This expensive ornament of the palace guard passed into the new sovereign's possession along with the fortresses and catapults. He immediately bespoke fifty fully armed triremes. The Carthaginians might be rearming, he said; but at the same time he was prepared to sail over to Africa and conclude an alliance with them. Dion was not exactly cherished in court circles, for moralists were not highly regarded among them, especially by his social peers. The populace did not care for him, either. Though he was admittedly a strange bedfellow to the rest of the tyrant species, gradations of that sort were over the heads of the common herd. But neither Dionysius was able to make shift without

him. The great one found in him his most impressive advertisement, the little one his most reliable prop.

Poor youth ! His own aspirations were withering in the fortress with the fivefold portal. What could his future be ? Hardly more than a colorless reign in the shadow cast by the great departed. At this point an acidulous enthusiast pointed out the way he must follow if he were to have a life of his own. He could escape the ill fate of being a mere postscript. He could rear a kingdom of his own. He could even outsoar his father. His father had ruled by virtue of force, intimidation, a navy, and a bodyguard of ten thousand barbarians. There were other auxiliaries than these. There was fidelity; there was devotion; there was the affection of the subject. An impregnable fortress and a gorgeous costume are not what make the sovereign: to be a king, a man must have a kingly soul. Dionysius came to life. He was not made for haranguing crowds and plundering cities. But if all that sort of thing was neither here nor there, might he not yet become greater than his father ?

Dion had kept back an even more potent spark with which to enkindle this desiccated, parching spirit. It was a book; it was a particular passage in a book. This passage seemed, if read aright, almost like a private appeal to the young occupant of the powerful Syracusan throne. "Young man, there is no hope for the deliverance of governments from evil—indeed, in my belief, for that of humanity—until"—so the book said, word for word—"either philosophers become kings or those who now pass for kings and rulers become genuine and profound philosophers; until the two realities, governmental power and philosophy, become part and parcel of each other." Very likely Dion further confided to Dionysius that Plato, in formulating his

definition of the perfect ruler, was thinking in especial of the son and heir of a ruling dynasty. Then the father had not, after all, pre-empted everything? The greatest opportunity of all had been reserved for him, the son? Irresistibly seductive words found lodgment in his brain. "A single man, the only one of his kind in the whole world, is enough, if only a pliant nation be put into his hands, to convert into realities all the things that have hitherto seemed unattainable." This sentence Dionysius never forgot. The pliant nation had been put into his own hands. The Dionysian dynasty was firmly established; his father had seen to that. The son would crown his labors by attaining the unattainable. A single man in the whole world was enough. He was that man. He, Dionysius II, was going to impose goodness on his subjects by fiat.

There was derision from the grave. The living were derisive, too. The old man had been more than right to keep the little whippersnapper at a good remove from the literati. How could any young man possibly avoid being unsettled by them? But Plato was holding him firmly by the hand. "Excellent one, they will show you a different countenance if you do not approach them in a contentious spirit, but instruct them with kindly words." With Plato's help he would bring it off. People sought out Plato from all over the world—from Elis and Arcady, from Thasos and Macedonia —beseeching him for laws. The same Plato must now come to him and turn him from a wretched mediocrity into the perfect ruler. The current Dionysius had been a little lad of eight when his father sent the Athenian philosopher to the slave market at Aegina. The time had come when that father's son could not carry on without Plato; for the mediocrity had determined to do his ruling, not with catapults,

but with philosophers. Dion, too, was insistent on Plato's visit. He must come soon, lest the susceptible sovereign fall under some different influence in the meantime.

There was an end of tranquillity in the garden of scholarship. There came a letter from Dion. There came a letter from Dionysius. There came a third letter from common friends in lower Italy. Their collective effect was that of a storming party bursting into the Academy and shouting: "Arise ! To Syracuse !" The strongest impression was produced by Dion's message. He was taking his old friend's philosophy at its face value—and what can assert a stronger claim on a thinker than the very thought that he has made the foundation of his own philosophic structure ? Things had, then, got to the point at which it was possible to lift the Sicilian kingdom to the plane of true blessedness without the usual horrors of transition. Plato's hour had arrived. Had he not desired above all things else the susceptible heart of a youthful potentate ? Ah, but a man makes a wish for something in his youth, and when, after long, long years, it comes to him, he finds the fulfillment nothing but a burden that he no longer has the strength to carry. This had happened a trifle late. It ought to have come to pass that other time—the time when Plato was forty. He was sixty-two now—an old man who had got out of the habit of great expectations. He had made his peace with life; he had become perfectly adjusted to self-denial; he had, in fact, but lately intoned his valedictory to the world, that characteristic hymn of the true philosopher.

The true philosopher, even in his youth, knows nothing of the thousand routes leading to the market place, the hall of judgment, the council chamber. What business of his are ballots, secret societies, banquets, ballet girls ? The true philosopher is a resident of his city in none but the corporeal

sense; *he* lives everywhere and nowhere in the wide world, pursuing geometry, observing the constellations, exploring the quintessence of things. He is in very much the same predicament as dead-and-gone Thales in the familiar anecdote, who, while gazing up into the heavens, plunged into a cistern, causing his bright Thracian maidservant to laugh until her sides ached. "The man must find out what is going on up there, and he can't even see the pit in the ground under his own nose!"

No, the true philosopher's acquaintance with what is under his own nose is nil. It is only what is most remote that engages him; and that is why he is derided, not only by Thracian maidservants, but by the rest of mankind, too. Such a true philosopher does not even bother his head about the most important matters of all. He has not the faintest idea whether a given citizen comes of good stock. He reflects: "People fawn so on a man with seven quarterings! As if all of us did not have them in bushels and bales, whether beggars or plutocrats, serfs or kings, barbarians or Greeks!" He reflects: "They sing paeans to the powerful despot, but what is he? Nothing but a cowherd with a lot of milking on his hands, and just as boorish and benighted as the rest of the cowherds, only he lives in a castle instead of a hut." Ten years before, the book of the Perfect State had come out. Dionysius had triumphed. The Thracian maidservant had triumphed. Plato, however, had spun himself into a cocoon in one tiny cell of his nightingale bower, and there he was living on his pride. It was not Nature's intention, he said to himself, that the physician should go around beseeching sick people to let him treat them, and no more were the wise to bow and scrape around the doorways of the great. He had not besought: he had demanded. And then he had betaken himself back to the true philoso-

pher's retreat when they had slammed the door in his face.

A man who is thoroughly resigned does not like to let himself be enticed back on to the tempestuous seas of hope. Moreover, Plato put little trust in these young princes who had grown up amid luxury and always been surrounded with flatterers. No man was of so admirable a composition that he could not be spoiled. How fickle such lordlings generally were ! Their predilections appeared and vanished, flatly contradicted one another, and were totally unusable as something to build on. Was he now to intermit his analysis of the philosophical systems of his predecessors, which he had got but half finished, in the interest of that giddy Syracusan Arcadia ?

But at this point there came before his inner eye, given form there by a desperately imaginative yearning, the most winsome suppliant of all, his own old disciple, Dion. "Have you forgotten, beloved Plato, that time when you opened one young man's eyes, more than twenty years ago ?" And as if he had anticipated that Plato, despite this ingratiating memory, would continue to hang back, Dion represented himself as being in exile, in order that he might bring graphically before the Master's vision the consequences of a refusal to go to Syracuse. "I approach you as a banished man," said the master of practical expedients, "not because I did not have enough horsemen to ward off my enemies, but because I had a deficit of the words that persuade—and you would not help me out."

In this secret cross-examination that pitted Plato against Plato, he was taking sides more and more emphatically against himself, until in the end he was putting only the most contemptuous speeches into Dion's mouth. "Vainglorious babbler that you are, all you have at your command is a certain degree of prowess in the province of pure theory.

When it comes to the practical application of a theory, you are utterly helpless. Do not excuse yourself by pleading the length of the journey, or the troublesomeness of a passage by sea, or the hardships of such a trip: there is no way for you to escape the imputation of spinelessness." And on the heels of this closing summation, tailored by Plato to an exact fit for Plato, he sentenced himself to the journey, turned the school over to Eudoxus, and took ship. He did it out of a sense of duty, he calmly maintained. He was an austere man, and he let none but austere motives count with him.

Actually, his prompting was a shade different from that. Despite all his rhapsodies on the true philosopher his longing for the Perfect State had never been quite extinguished; and the ardent letters that had just reached him from across the sea had blown its small and secret embers into a new incandescence. Now or never, my dear Plato, is the time for the test of whether your ideas can be made to take root ! Although he was sixty-two and had already settled all his accounts with life, although it meant being torn away from his most cherished labors and no amiable thoughts drew him toward Syracuse, nevertheless he embarked on the mad venture with the exuberance that scoffs at age.

It was a dear delight to sit in the security of his nightingale bower probing the mysteries of the cosmos. But in Syracuse it was going to be possible for him to create a paradise on this earth.

Dionysius was waiting for him at the landing stage. In person he escorted the illustrious visitor to his castle. The gaudily decorated chariot that bore them swept behind its four white horses into the heaven they were to share. There the young sovereign immediately made a thank offering to

the gods, for it was a stroke of fortune that he had just been granted.

And of what manner of creatures may this sacrifice have consisted? The courtyard suddenly took on an aspect suggesting that a hecatomb of the most entertaining persons in Syracuse had been slain—prestidigitators, animal-tamers, conjurers, and the celebrated music-loving (and notoriously expensive) girl birdcatchers. As lately as yesterday these little fillies of Venus, with their gossamer tresses shining like the nymphs of the sacred waters of Eridanus, had still been slipping blithely back and forth through the palace halls. And today?

Who, today, is able to conceive what any morrow may bring forth? This place had always been a haunt of pleasure. A small basin would be floated in a pan of water, and someone would squirt a thin jet of wine from his mouth into it in a long, graceful arc until he had it sunk, to a mounting roar of plaudits. But now? "My anchovy," "My candlewick," "My goldfinch," "My little grapevine"—these and all the other pet names were being heard no more. The little wantons had painted their lips with sea fucus; their eyes were duskily undershadowed, their bangs drawn down almost to the eyebrows so that only the narrowest band of forehead showed, their tresses hanging snakelike down the back. What an unamiable transformation this foreign sorcerer had wrought in everything! It seemed there were academicians still left in the world to corrugate their brows and aspire to enter heaven through the gateway of geometry.

A new master had arrived, and with him a new set of furniture. The tables of carousal and their overflowing goblets had vanished. The floors were now covered with nothing but sand—and not that "my little leveret" or "my little amphora" might leave her footprints in it to say to

the pursuing gallant: "Follow me." On the contrary, it was by way of honoring the foreign guest, whose god, it seemed, had patched the world together out of geometrical diagrams. In this sand were triangles and quadrilaterals and octagons and icosagons, and their effect today was quite as potent as that of yesterday's wine. The same old troop of maenads rioted along in the wake of Bacchus' successor, and a new kind of intoxication was flushing all the familiar faces. The girls had laid aside their olisbas—proxies for men, supplied from the trading center of Miletus. The men were no longer brooding on their impotence, and their minds were not on the marrow of pomegranate and the donkey's right testis that they were wont to carry in their bracelets. Their Dionysius was reeling down a side track, and they were following him. He had been made tipsy by Plato's magic symbols. It is doubtful whether the elder Dionysius had ever been quite so elevated as this by anything short of enemy warships going up in flames and prisoners being herded like cattle before him.

There was a dinner of the household. The herald uttered the time-honored grace, "May your stable reign endure unbroken!" So they in Syracuse had been imploring the gods for half a century. But this was the dawn of a new era. "Stop that calling down curses on me!" roared Dionysius the son. He was working in collaboration with the foreign magician to undermine the foundation of this stable reign and blow it sky-high. Dionysius the freebooter was dead. Dionysius the perfect ruler was in the market for a new grace before meat. Old servants are always a little behind the times; their chronic danger is that of being too loyal. The herald had not yet got his Platonic schooling.

Anyway, after all these years, the bridge had now been laid. Plato and Dionysius had come together. The man of

wisdom was already feeling his power, and the man of power was already being irradiated with the light of wisdom. Even the subjects were well enough pleased to think that behind those massive walls there was now dwelling someone who was more preoccupied with quadrilaterals and circles than with endungeoned citizens. It was only the old guard that grumbled. What on earth was going to come of it if things went on this way, with hoary mathematicians running the kingdom? They felt themselves to be in such straits that they fetched Philistus back from his exile.

Forty years had gone by since that day when the market place of Syracuse had been as full as it could hold of hustle and outcry and fear, and the rich and prominent young Philistus had boldly thrust to the forefront an undersized clerk with an oversized mouth. It had been a dreadful mistake, as the sequel proved. But the kingmaker had subsequently buried his major folly under a thick layer of superstition: he had come to believe in the new god whom he had himself created by inadvertence. Unfortunately that fact availed him little; submission is not necessarily protection. When he took to wife the tyrant's niece without asking if he might, he had to leave the country. The twenty long years of banishment had not been long enough to dissipate the banished man's faith in the virtue of autocracy. The victim chanted from afar the praises of his executioner. With tireless industry Philistus the historian inscribed the deeds and misdeeds of his surly master on the bronze tablet of history and thereby gave them a measure of immortality. Now, near the end of his days, the obstinate exile was returning to his stepfatherly native land in order to vindicate autocracy even more effectually—this time against the dangerous enemy who had wormed his way into its inmost citadel.

The old guard was planting seeds of distrust in the young tyrant's mind. What was that Dion really after ? Power for his own nephews, Aristomache's sons ! What was this Plato really after ? Nothing in the world. Not even Dion took the crackpot professor seriously. He was nothing but an unsuspecting tool. It was only in the hands of the dangerous man that the idealist himself was an appreciable danger. The time had been—it was during the Peloponnesian War—when the Athenians had been sent packing home from here with bloodied heads. Was one lone Athenian sophist now going to be allowed to gabble this whole mighty kingdom into ruins ? All this was insinuated into the sovereign's mind, here a little and there a little.

Dionysius I, the strong man, distrusted the rest of humanity, because he was well aware what he was doing to it. His weak heir distrusted himself—and consequently everyone against whom anything whatsoever was alleged. There was whispering against Plato in every quarter. He had only to say to the king: "But give up your bodyguard ! Give your horsemen the slip ! What do you want of triremes ?" He had only to entice him with: "But come to the Academy, and there we will unriddle the secret of the most profound well-being, and geometry shall make you blessed." He had only to condole with poor Dion and his circle because they had nothing left but power and wealth and good living. And Dionysius' head was turned with no more than that ! "However," the disaffected ones said with great conviction, "we always have our Philistus. *He* will turn that head back in the right direction."

Meanwhile the austere enthusiast Dion, whom they were denouncing as a conspirator, and the eminent stargazer from the nightingale bower at Athens, whom they were deriding as a fool, were walking very softly with their exalted

pupil. Anything not to startle him ! That most neglected of human beings must at first be shown himself only as through a veil. Anything not to force him ! Bodily exercise performed under compulsion does not harm the body, but no amount of knowledge beaten into anybody with the rod is of value. He must be spared ! Thus the two teachers went on ahead with cautious little beckoning motions. Would he follow their lead ? He did not follow it.

He had really not presented that thank offering to the gods for nothing better than to drudge away at mathematics. What had become of that revelation that he had been given to understand was forthcoming ? "Seek to attain harmony within thyself !" they admonished him—most gently, lest he take offense. "Become the ruler over thine own spirit !" He was waiting impatiently for a trumpet blast, and all he could hear was litanies of tedious words. Had not Plato already been there several months, and in all that time failed to turn him into the perfect ruler ? His own impatience and the slanderous insinuations that were being whispered to him made an admirable harmony. He did not, however, dare go any farther than being surly. He could not play his father's ace and send the far-famed pundit packing as if he were any ordinary trouble-making pamphleteer. Nor did he wish to. The world was expecting great things of him. He had to reconstitute the Grecian city states that had been destroyed, and Plato was to draw up their code of laws. The second Dionysius' empire depended on him.

At the end of four months the first Dionysius' plowshare had got its furrow turned, and the old man could sleep untroubled. Dion, who for a diplomat was remarkably ingenuous, had written to the Carthaginian ambassador in Syracuse: "Do not negotiate without me. I shall shortly have everything arranged." The spies of whom even the perfect

ruler made use intercepted this imprudent letter. As an exhaustive confutation of all the Platonic doctrines collectively, it was more than ample. Philistus had won the day.

Dionysius sent for his Dion, conducted him down to the seashore, talking excitedly, paced back and forth with him there, and finally showed him the confiscated letter. "Is this anything other than high treason, my dear Dion?" The accused man was preparing to defend himself. It was a wasted effort. Judgment was pronounced and executed on the spot. A shipmaster who was ready and waiting with his vessel was summoned, and in no time Dion was on his way to Italy. Dictators are no dawdlers.

Subjects are not given to drawing broad distinctions between more and less noble tyrants. Did it really make a lot of difference which formula was used to enslave them, Dionysius' or Dion's? The Syracusans were covertly delighted because their masters were at loggerheads. When the oppressors are fighting one another, the oppressed can lift up their heads and sniff the airs of freedom; a zephyr of hope springs up. Up on the windless heights where rulers are at home, such a zephyr has all the effect of a gale. Even the family connections of the elder Dionysius were considerably vexed. Dion, after all, was not just any citizen of Syracuse: he was brother to the widow Aristomache, and, besides, Dionysius and Dion had wedded two sisters—the tyrant's stepsisters. This deportation, then, would have to be made to look, at least in retrospect, a little more urbane.

They prettified the situation and themselves thus: The associates of the deported man learned that their friend Dion had been obliged to make a hurried change of residence in the interest of his own safety, because that arrogant behavior of his might very easily have got him into serious

trouble. It was only for that reason that he had been conveyed to a place of safety. But there was no occasion to do any worrying about him. He would be living in the Peloponnesus on a scale worthy of his rank, with his slaves and his revenues and his native land's best wishes. And his wife and friends were actually permitted to send after him two shiploads of the many things that he requested.

This magnanimity was extremely adroit. In the role of a martyred fugitive the rich and respected prince could easily have got his contemporaries' sympathy up in arms against the vindictiveness of Syracuse. It was much more salutary for dictatorship to have him living abroad in pompous luxury and so bearing witness to the splendors of his country —an ambassador whether he would or no. He could not make himself dangerous. He would take excellent care to watch his step: his valuables and his family were still in the secure fortress as hostages.

So was his Academician. The sovereign received Plato and his group with all graciousness. Their feeling was that of woebegone derelicts, terribly isolated and terribly endangered. Presently Dionysius in turn began to be afraid of them: it is impossible to say to what lengths men may not be driven by fear. Sinister rumors cast a pall over the city. Plato, the story ran, was the prime instigator of all the plots against the royal family. Plato, another version had it, had been merely one of the plotters. Plato—only the real insiders knew this—had already been put to death. The little group of scholars was utterly dejected. Dire rumors are no less dire merely because they may be the shadow that coming events cast before.

Plato had always been aware that people did not take philosophers seriously. They were regarded as nothing but clowns in a somewhat more tedious guise. Philosophy is

all very well as long as a man has his youth, but overlong dalliance with it means discovering eventually that he is nothing but an impractical old man. This impractical old man was very far from overestimating the part he was playing, and it was perfectly clear to him that he was not even particularly exasperating the beasts of prey. But he did feel, all of a sudden, desperately lonely. Dion had been his only pledge that the desert could in the end be made to blossom. There was nothing around him now but its glittering sand. Disquiet had possession of his spirit.

There was one other even more desolated than he: the master of Syracuse. In his abandonment he clung with desperate tenacity to his esteemed Athenian guests. On no account must they be suffered to go away from him. His need of Plato had become even more insistent since Dion's departure. To be sure, the magician had disappointed him: his was but a feeble magic, and he was never going to convert Dionysius into the perfect ruler. But at least Plato must stand by him; at least Plato must be at his beck and call; at least Plato's presence must say to the people: "Look you, this Dionysius of yours is a man who keeps a sage to be his counselor." Plato, who had no one to be *his* counselor, reminded himself that the requests of exalted personages contain a harsh tincture of command. He valiantly swallowed the harsh medicine and stayed on in the place to which he ought never to have gone.

He continued his residence within the fivefold gateway, and he was treated with the utmost deference. No shipmaster would have dared put a vessel at his disposal without orders from on high, for all Syracuse was aware how excessively the sovereign depended on this foreigner. The mischance involving Dion had made both teacher and pupil even more constrained with each other. They courted each

other stiffly, gradually warming to the courtship. The zealous pedagogue sought to guide his difficult pupil into the glorious path that the regents of the Perfect State must travel. Even the most skittish animals will eventually suffer themselves to be handled. This skittish animal fell in love with his master and said so by putting an entire kingdom at his disposal. Was not this the very golden fortune that Plato had conjured up aforetime beside a solitary lamp, amid nightingale's song and rustle of plane trees?

The present reality differed from the splendid dream in just one important particular. Absolute power should be Plato's, the ruler resolved—*if* he would gratify the ruler's dearest desire. "Take *me* to be your friend," begged Dionysius. "Forget that Dion," besought Dionysius. There is love without jealousy, there is also jealousy without love; and it was the second of these chances that befell the young lord of Syracuse. Thus, with much tenacity and more frustration, they wrought upon each other. Plato was determined to make the perfect regent out of an extremely imperfect human being. Dionysius was determined to make an all-powerful favorite out of a powerless metaphysician. In the end both of them began to lose heart. Plato saw his hopes passing under a cloud. They had never been too radiant, anyway; all he had ever entertained was a faint, tremulous expectancy akin to resignation. As for Dionysius, he could grasp only the single fact that Plato would not relinquish Dion; that he was rebuffing every plea; that ten thousand spearmen and four hundred triremes were powerless to break his will.

The elder Dionysius, on that other occasion, had made short work of a like impasse by sending his stiff-necked guest to the slave market. The son had not that degree of hardihood. He was a devourer, not of others, but only of

himself. Possessed and hounded by jealousy, he took it out in begging, beseeching, whining. His show of weakness failed to get him what he was trying to extort. Thereupon he took to pugnacity and flung away from Plato in a rage, only to come back and resume his cajoleries all over again. The true philosopher was back in the midst of untruth. He still had a modicum of hope; he was still undertaking a modicum of experiment; he still felt a modicum of fear of his own despair. And he was still helplessly in honorable custody. He could have guided his young charge to much that was good and much that was bad—apparently even to renunciation of power—but never, never in this world, to insight and perspicacity.

Dionysius finally had to embark on an unimportant war. It was to this circumstance that Plato owed his temporary surcease from the royal jealousy. At their parting he was given the promise that Dion might in the near future return from his exile. When a year had gone by, the promise was renewed, with exaction of a counterpromise that Plato would use all his influence to keep the worthy Dion from working against Syracuse in any way. This undertaking was scrupulously fulfilled. Dion made no trouble for the tyrant. Dionysius, on the contrary, honored neither his original promise nor its renewal. Dion continued to be a banished man.

CHAPTER VII

PLATO THE KING

IT WAS summer's end, and the procession was wending along the sacred road toward Eleusis, a dozen miles from Athens. In the van was the god Iacchus, borne in a two-wheeled chariot. Behind him were all the asses of Athens laden with provender, rugs, blankets.

The sacred appurtenances had been conveyed across the market place in baskets, and thence through the potters' quarter to the gate, where they were awaited. The long varicolored procession was presently in motion along the avenue of fig trees. Less than a mile and a half brought it to the Cephissus. On the small bridge sat a man with veiled face, calling out ingenuous little comments to the passers-by. They tickled him in return, sung out ribaldries, and evoked immoderate laughter. The passage itself was ceremonious. The sacrosanct baskets had to be conveyed across with extreme care.

Behind the oxcart into which the sacred burden was reloaded on the other bank strode a majestic man of advanced years. His voice was resounding, his gait imposing, and his mantle of purple wool was trimmed with gold braid. His long hair had been shaped into a crown, and on that was enthroned a second crown of myrtle. This stately elder was the heart of this pious pilgrimage, and it paid him an obol a day for each participant—all told, no mean sum.

Arduous days lay behind him. He had had to send out over three hundred letters to various parts of the world, accrediting the sacred emissaries. In pursuance of his directions reports had been assembled from a vast number of cities of the goddess Demeter, covering the promise of the crops and the brilliance of the outlook for the Eleusinian Mysteries. After that the sacred truce had been proclaimed and representatives dispatched to the festival. They were now marching along with all dignity in the specially favored positions that were their due.

There were many degrees of sanctity represented between the head of the procession and its baggage train. Behind Iacchus, the sacred utensils, and the priests came the goddess's initiates of the curent year, each in freshly laundered apparel, crowned with myrtle, and with saffron-colored bands around the right hand, which bore the torch, and the left foot. After a many weeks' regimen of drastic purification they were now without spot or blemish. The process had begun with a formidable course of instruction that inculcated the properly receptive spirit. After that they fasted and thirsted during all the hours in which the sun was in the sky; for Demeter, during the search for her daughter, had gone nine days without food or drink. Finally the word had gone forth: "Down to the sea, ye initiates!" They had plunged their own bodies into the salt waters, and likewise those of the resisting animals that were now to be offered up that their fresh blood might attract the daemons. They were now proof against being led astray by false ideas. Their schooling, their abstinence, their immersion, and their blood offering had left them immaculate, soul and body. They were ready to be received by the goddess.

The procession made many a halt. It danced, sang, and offered up sacrifices before the dwellings of the gods. The

temples were thrown open. The priests performed the rites in full regalia. Behind the torchbearers danced the Athenians and their visitors, surcharged with religious ecstasy. What was it that so stirred them ? All longing is one, but the paths to its fulfillment are many. Some of these people were rejoiced because on the morrow they would have the goddess's assurance that they were not lost beings. Some of them were gratified because they felt securely panoplied in the resplendence of their own dignities. Some were on excellent terms with life because they were making a good profit out of this excursion—and is not that almost the definition of blessedness ? Some thought of hardly anything more to wish for, because it was summertime and they could be dancing. And some uncommonly audacious ones who danced merely out of longstanding habit were deliberately mocking the age-old ritual in the spirit of blasphemy, with an abandon at once sacred and profane; and that mood heightened their pleasure.

It was by torchlight that the road from Athens delivered them to the entrance to the sacred site. (Its walls were a section of the city's defenses.) Their last act of the day was to prostrate themselves before the sacred baskets, which would be opened on the morrow; they were to be housed overnight in a chapel. The weary dancers flourished their torches to and fro in one last dance, and then everything was at rest—the god, the priests, the initiates, the radiant women who had declined to be talked out of making the excursion in their handsome equipages, the foreigners who had had to plod behind; even the asses, which had nothing but their burdens.

On the next morning everyone carefully studied the movements of the sacrificial animals as they approached the altars, the condition of their entrails and particularly of the

liver, the eagerness of the altar fires, and the direction taken by the smoke. After that there was a reverential round of visits to the goddess's various memorial shrines, and by that time it was at last evening again. Those who desired to receive consecration had to repeat the sacred formula to the effect that they had fasted and also partaken of the draft compounded of water, meal, and wild peppermint. They were then admitted. Each wore about his brow a band with many smaller bands hanging from it.

The chamber of assembly was vast; however, seven rows of six pillars each made it seem narrow and bewildering to the sight. And the torches radiated no more than sufficient illumination to prevent its being either light enough or dark enough to find one's way about comfortably. The minds of the awed throng were bent on the story of Demeter and of her inconsolable vain wandering in search of her daughter. All terror, all dread, and all despair were concentrated in the old and lamentable fable. The aspirants shuddered with Demeter. With the goddess they were beside themselves. They abandoned themselves to their emotion. All their indwelling fears became one fundamental ecstasy, and their brows were beaded with it. And after that they made their ascent. For it was at Eleusis that Demeter's daughter, given up at last for lost, emerged with her white horses into the upper world.

They made their ascent by a stairway. High above, far back on the terrace hewn out of the cliff, stood the chapel in which the sacred paraphernalia had been bestowed the previous evening. The doors swung open. The majestic elder, now in a gorgeous ceremonial robe, stepped forth and revealed to their gaze the goddess mother and Persephone her daughter. The blinding light that streamed down from the dome enwrapped the bringer of salvation in purest

radiance. Thus they received their consecration, and they knew that they were redeemed.

The goddess had sought, and she had found. Outer darkness there had been; now there was radiant light. Yesterday, subterranean wanderings through labyrinths of error; today, supernal peace on a shining height. Salvation was, then, possible to man.

This moment was the crowning of analogy with a glory ineffable.

Every Hellene, provided only that he could find a sponsor for his consecration—and that was not difficult—could reassure himself in this place, as it were experimentally, that the way of salvation was open to him. Dion the Syracusan exile had as a traveling companion a prominent man, Cillippus, who was very closely associated with the Academy. Cillippus entertained him, played the *maître de plaisir* to him, and finally escorted his illustrious visitor to Eleusis; for that was a high point in the Athenian repertoire of entertainment.

There is something that drives every man to eschew darkness and seek light. It matters not if the man be barbarian or Greek, bond or free, toiler in the mines of Luria or prince of the blood; though the definitions of darkness and light may differ a trifle from this place to that. Even in darkness it is possible for a man to get along tolerably well when he happens to be the ambassador of a powerful country and a pretender to its throne. The peoples of Greece prized Dion in both capacities, and he collected the perquisites of both. The Athenians paid themselves the compliment of awarding an honorary citizenship to the distinguished exile, and thereupon their new fellow citizen purchased an estate and took up residence. The Spartans, ordinarily not very liberal

about the bestowal of citizenships, turned to and made the brother-in-law of their old friend Dionysius a Spartan. Thus the nobleman progressed from city to city, hailed ecstatically by all foes of tyranny and warmly welcomed by tyranny's friends. He graced popular festivals with his presence and upheld the idea of liberty. In more exclusive gatherings he was the embodiment and prototype of the strong man. Prestidigitators travel with a varicolored assortment of tricks in their programs, because not all of mankind is of the same hue. Dion was no court jester, but he was in the happy situation of being generally misunderstood and therefore extolled by all and sundry. Did he completely understand himself what game was being played?

His true home was not Syracuse, not Athens, not Sparta, nor was it to any consecration that he owed his great enlightenment. Perhaps he thought, with Diogenes of Sinope: "It is ridiculous that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, because they were not initiated into the Mysteries, should be sent down into the Lower World while meaningless vulgarians inhabit the Isles of the Blest solely because they became initiates." Dion was certainly not seeking regeneration in any baptismal fonts of the spirit. That capital of reason, the Academy, was his homeland and his Eleusis. His gaze was fixed, not on Athene and Persephone, but on an elderly and beloved preceptor. Twenty-five years had passed since Dion had been the first man at the court of Dionysius the Great and Plato's favorite pupil. Plato's teaching had not very greatly altered the course of his life. The disciple of justice had stayed on at the headquarters of injustice: no need for a man to rush headlong to extremes! The soul of the Academician had made itself comfortable in the bodily shell of the courtier. Dion was of the sort that does not find it necessary to go into tantrums about a trifle of reality at

loggerheads with a strong aspiration. Thus he had carried on his everyday life exactly according to the ancestral pattern —up to the moment of his being cast out. Now he was living both in exile and in his eternal homeland at one and the same time.

The prominent pupil was more of a drawing card at the Academy than its mathematics and astronomy. A princely splendor was suffusing the unostentatious nightingale grove. And the exalted patron took pleasure in permitting the world to see on what cozy terms with wisdom he really was. He would have been only too glad to take the numerous abstractions that materialized day by day in the garden of scholarship and trick them out as sumptuously as the personae of the great tragedies. The trouble was, however, that the dispassionate images that issued from the master's workshop were inherently incapable of being graced with any pretentious raiment or glittering attendants. In that workshop the content of a word would be sliced in two, one half set aside for future reference, the other half sliced in two again, one part to be put by and the other further subdivided, and so on until the concept of the statesman had been, with a most exquisite precision, sliced as thin as it could bear. The task of definition, so prosecuted, is singularly devoid of glamour. Now and again the tireless builder of highways to truth would himself develop a hankering for a touch of beauty, and at those times some charming myth would blossom forth by the roadside. But his creations could not put up with any princely pageantry.

No more could their creator. He, with his harrowing excursion behind him, was settled down once more in his cloister and pursuing his former agreeable habit of composing dialogues with evil—with confusion, injustice, transiency. Despite everything he had not become embittered.

Against everything that he abominated he could set up one felicitous symbol: his self-portrait. He was now old enough to depict himself without a trace of diffidence. "To know the science of ruling, whether a man actually rule or no, is to be a king." Never did Plato hit himself off more neatly than in that sentence.

Plato the king, a monarch without a kingdom, without ministers, without generals, lived in a placid garden a little over half a mile beyond the limits of the potters' quarter. The potters scarcely realized that he was living there, and other Athenians were nearly as oblivious. The plane trees murmured, and the nightingales sang their melancholy plaints—though assuredly not for disappointment about the Syracusan court; they merely happened to be making music for the most powerful ruler in the world, without suspecting how powerful he was. No one knew much about him, and absolutely no one in the world had the slightest fear of him; and yet he was more implacable than Dionysius the Great, the appalling Archelaus, or the emperor Artaxerxes, who were his avowed enemies. The highest ideal, Plato the king ordained, is that a state shall be ruled, not by laws, but by the will of its ruler. It matters not, Plato the king decreed, if the subjects refuse to bow to that will: you merely put some of them to death and expel others, and the nation is cleansed. But had the tyrant of Susa and of Syracuse not ruled according to those very principles ? They had indeed. Idealists subduing reality to their will have an awful resemblance to the most unreasoning wild beasts doing the same.

The secret dictator in the nightingale grove, unlike his colleagues on various thrones, reserved his highest disesteem for the poets and their auxiliaries—elocutionists, actors, dancers, lessees of theaters, women costumers. The bloated

commonwealths, as he liked to call the latterday democratic states, had incubated this rabble. Even he had once been young and infatuated. The glory of Euripides and of Agathon had been a constant incitement to him; he understood the spell of tragedy from his own experience. But presently he had gone to Socrates and learned to despise these imitations of shadows and burned up his own trumpery scribblings. The mimicries of art were but an incantation for simpletons. The accursed artists used dazzling color and tall talk to give their shadows such fascination that they seemed to be the actual substance of reality. He himself no longer had anything to do with these loafers who took life as a joke, accepted it without reflection, and turned it into a comic or a tragic spectacle; who breezed around the world singing and fifing like philosopher clowns, as if there were nothing better to do than be mildly buoyant one minute and mildly lachrymose the next and somehow or other hocus their fellow men. Anyone that made life pleasant for these vagabonds would naturally collect their loudest and most fervent adulation. On that principle they sang the praises of the tyrant as if he were very godhead, for he had golden rewards in store for those who hymned him, were their names Pindar or Aeschylus, Simonides or Anacreon or Bacchylides—or Euripides, who even in his old age danced attendance on Archelaus. Ah yes, art flowers luxuriantly in the meadows of dictatorship; the dictator stands in dire need of anything that smells sweet. Plato the king, quondam tragic poet, present archdictator, castigated the entire accumulation of his own country's Greek literature, with Homer at its apex.

His own Homer, whom he had loved from youth! A longstanding veneration did its best to restrain him from saying his say about Homer; but the precisians who deny

other men speech are generally incapable of bridling their own tongues. It must out at last, Plato said, and proceeded to a long and circumstantial analysis. My dear Homer! As a matter of fact, what nation were you ever instrumental in improving? Was any war ever fought under your auspices productive of salutary results? Did you ever contribute to the progress of mankind by perfecting its arts of living? Were any young people ever given an impetus toward the good life by you? Alas, that agreeable conjurer Homer, who could suffuse all the shining surfaces of reality with so fair a splendor, had guided no state, won no war, advanced no handicrafts, turned no contemporary of his into an honest citizen. Well, then, Plato the king decided he was no longer to be cherished as the supreme teacher of Greece. Plato's crowned colleagues in Sicily and Persia were a good deal more indulgent.

Their kinsman Plato never let that consideration make him pass his sentences in secret. Even for his own Homer he held a great public trial that anyone could attend. The prosecutor knew his Iliad and his Odyssey, and he heaped quotation on quotation. The catalogue of Homer's sins grew longer and longer, and all the charges tapered down to one: that this man had exerted a bad influence on the Greeks. Perpend: he gloated over Odysseus' grandfather, who outdid all others in thievery. He did not blush to make the grandson say that the finest thing in the world was to have the tables heaped high with food. He made citizens utter insolent speeches about governments, and his very heroes set the worst examples. Achilles was so avaricious that he would not give up a dead body except for cash. He had no manner of self-control, either. When so minded he would yammer pitifully, hurl himself down on his side or his back or his face, wander about dis-

traught on the barren foreshore, heap ashes on his head with either hand. What effect was that sort of thing bound to have on the minds of the young ? It taught them that heroes were no more steadfast than ordinary mortals. And then there were, above all, the Homeric gods. They were dispensers of good and of evil: well, then, they were dispensers of evil, and that was totally unmeet for divine beings. And they were bad gods—as fickle in their caprices as mortals, as venal, as lecherous. The father of the gods himself was so taken with lust on seeing his wife that he could not wait until they were within, but must possess her on the bare ground.

"My dear Homer, your gods and your heroes and your people furnish a lamentable pattern. It is our duty to bridle madness, not to render it even more unbridled. Once teach people self-pity through their sympathy with the sufferings depicted by the poet, once let them learn to echo the gods' immoderate laughter, and all discipline is done with. Poets ought to compose hymns to the gods and eulogies of virtuous men, not use lying fairy tales and reproductions of the most deplorable aspects of everyday existence to foster all those vicious propensities that are the ruination of every commonwealth." And Plato the king, solely answerable for the well-being of his subjects, enjoined his country's musicians to eschew the plaintive modes, such as the impure Lydian, and effeminate ones, such as the Ionian; rather, let them stick to the virile Dorian and the tranquil Phrygian. Also, there was no occasion for many-stringed instruments, or for endless orchestral variety. In the city the lyre and the cithara were quite enough; and for shepherds, the reed flute. If music were suffered to use the ears as funnels for drowning the soul in cloying, effeminate, and querulous tunes, the soul would soon become as if its sinews had been severed.

The world is not wont to bother its head excessively about kingdoms whose kings do not provide occupation for generals or bankers or executioners. Thus, the bloodless banishment of Homer and his coadjuvants failed to produce any very overwhelming effect on Plato's contemporaries. His intimate connection with the Syracusan court stuck in their craws a good deal more. Indeed, there were fellow philosophers who arched their brows and sputtered: "We never went back to the place where we had been sold into slavery, the way dogs do." And certain of Isocrates' pupils told wildly waggish anecdotes about a philosopher at the court of a tyrant. The two masters themselves were on excellent terms, but their pupils felt in duty bound to take a partisan stand in a rivalry that did not exist. There was also a motley horde of snappers-up of trifles always buzzing importunately around the lonely old man—some of them because, deplorably, he had become captivating to them by virtue of his residence at the brilliant court, and some because they were fishing for letters of introduction.

Plato the king became inexorable as soon as he sat down at his desk and took up the scepter. As a citizen of the bloated commonwealth of Athens he was amiable and accommodating, and in his exchanges with Dionysius he was the next thing to a diplomat. The secret sovereign had a subsidiary occupation, too: he was being the tyrant's special emissary. Absolute rulers do a good deal of tearing down, and that means that they need a good many carpenters and builders. Plato gave a pretty good account of himself in this capacity. While in his role of king he was building his own throne to more and more towering heights—out of adamantine and uncompromising words—he was blandly purchasing for the distant monarch whatever art works he desired. He was also sending him the plays of that imitator of shad-

ows, Aristophanes, by way of introducing him to Athenian authorship, and even good-naturedly recommending to him this, that, and the other such parasite.

In Syracuse, meanwhile, affairs were looking up. Commerce and philosophy were both flourishing. Grain was being exported, philosophers imported. (They could be had at no great cost.) Dionysius' emissaries had, in addition to their many other duties, the task of notifying the outside world that their master was the happiest human being on earth—a notification that made a profound impression on the Greek sages, because thinking is notably facilitated by proximity to happiness. Also, Plato's renown was a constant spur to everyone who earned his living by the manufacture of ideas.

Dionysius was pleased to see that the rulers of the spirit—meaning those of them that had their own spirits under firm rule—were flocking to him. Only one of them was so unlucky as to miss reaching the philosophers' paradise—a pity, because the nobleman's son called Xenophon was in dire need of a comfortable haven. The estate that Sparta had bestowed on the former military adventurer as a reward for years of faithful service had been lost through war. It had then been necessary for him to live by his pen; but that was, for one thing, disreputable and, for another, impracticable. Eventually he had attempted, following a famous example, to write his way into the tyrant's heart with that same pen. Unfortunately, this second postulant imitated the first too successfully by painting tyranny so black that the portrait was ill received by His Exalted Majesty. Tyrants are nothing if not thin-skinned folk.

Hieron, whose name furnished the title for Xenophon's clumsy piece of flattery, had been the brother and successor

of the famous Gelon and essentially by no means an evil person. He had not only lived harmoniously with three successive wives, but he had also gained the reputation of lavishing gifts on his friends faster than they could cope with them. Moreover, he had presented himself to posterity in the form of some signal tributes; for example, the stirring odes in which Pindar and Bacchylides had glowingly celebrated the triumph of his chestnut horse Pherenicus. Xenophon, as a former intimate of the Persian prince Cyrus, must have known the arts of conciliating the great. Knowing them, he ought to have exalted old Hieron as, for example, the poets' friend. Instead, this vainglorious author played the tyrant-baiter in the way that Plato had made fashionable, by exhibiting the dead predecessor to the living autocrat as a warning example. Hieron also lent himself to that use, to be sure, for he had not only patronized his poets, but he had also shut his people's mouths, thereby driving them to resort to sign language. But was it any recommendation of the seeker of favors that he should revive that memory? Plato had done likewise, and successfully; but Xenophon was no Plato. Xenophon's abysses were perhaps as murky as Plato's, but his heights were nothing like so radiant. He was not the man to point Dionysius' way to an ideal that would seem worth the swallowing of unpalatable truths. Xenophon's natural bent was toward soldiering and hunting, and he had slight regard for high-strung intellectuals. What was to his taste was a tidy monarchy with a jovial ruffian at its head. That sort of thing, however, was not at all to the liking of the soulful autocrat. He still carried in his secret bosom the portrait of the perfect ruler.

What was he to make of Xenophon's Hieron? This figure was really nothing more than the literary artifice of a pious governess. He was full of self-pitying complaints.

(Oh, we poor tyrants ! What splendid sufferings are ours ! We have not a friend in the world. There is not a soul in whom we can put our trust. We cannot even take the field with an army of brave subjects, but must depend on hireling rascals. We have to shove the most estimable citizens aside and show favor to riffraff. We have to loot temples of their treasures to scrape together the minimum expenses of our own security, because large rewards are offered for our assassination.) And to cap it all a dimwitted poet bearing the glorious name of Simonides offers this hero of melodrama the inane advice that he must delegate to others the transactions that get him so cordially hated and save his own energies for enjoyable tasks.

When Dionysius read this piece of servility decked out as boldness, he discovered in the depiction of Hieron nothing less than an offensive attack on his own father. He thereupon discovered in himself a pious son, and he waived his claim to a visit from the author. Now, Plato—that was not the same thing. Plato had shown him the way to immortalize tyranny. Xenophon was nothing more than a sort of milk-and-morality monarchist who permitted himself to criticize the ruling dynasty. For that kind of thing there was no room in Syracuse.

On the other hand, his friend Aeschines was most graciously received. In Athens his affairs had not gone too well. Now, at the court of the tyrant, he had the feeling of being in heaven. He was merely an honest partisan and not a great intellect; but his dialogues were gracefully written and pleasing, the man himself made no pronouncements and asserted no pretensions, and therefore he had the indulgence of his professional brethren. He was in no wise a substitute for the young king's great lost love; but there was, after all, another who partly filled that role—one addicted neither

to the thou-shalt formulas of Plato the king and of the rude legitimist Xenophon nor to the slightly fawning gratitude of Aeschines. Aristippus, too, was a product of the school of Socrates. The function of man was to think: on that point all these men were as one. But Aristippus was not seeking the eternal verities. It was enough for him if he could attain to a limited number of impermanent but practically useful deductions.

He thrust himself on no man, but there were many who sought him out. If others could get some good out of him, they were welcome to it. Thus his following grew, and it paid him well and knew what it was paying for. His philosophy armored a man against the fear of death and many another superstition; for example, the fantasy of the Perfect State. There were enough troubles in the world without adding any such hobgoblin, and, after all, the great thing was to get through one's handful of allotted years on the most painless terms. Some there were who persuaded themselves that life could be outwitted by deliberately going out of one's way to embrace all its afflictions. His colleague Antisthenes, for instance, said forthrightly: "Better madness than mirth." But wherein was he who renounced all joys out of fear of life's retaliations in better case than he who declined to face hunger and thirst and cold and every other ill until they had become unavoidable? Did it truly matter whether a man's hide was tanned with or without his consent? Anyone who cultivates affliction with the idea of thereby circumventing it is being not only wretched but also idiotic. This benignant gentleman was a good deal easier to get the hang of than Plato was.

Besides, Aristippus was an accomplished cosmopolitan. He had not, like these other two noblemen's sons, stuck tight to one provincial spot. He had not let himself be im-

prisoned in any so-called homeland as a taxpaying bourgeois. It was infinitely more agreeable to be a guest of all places than a resident of any. Political squabbles were barren, and what was the good of power? Where was the sense of racking one's brains in the interest of man in the mass? The individual had his work cut out for him if he were to make a good job of his own affairs: what leeway did he have to worry his head with matters that were, after all, none of his business? Take it all in all, this governing of people was a lamentable affair. It was a weariness and a torment, and when all was done you were hounded because something had gone awry. People badgered their leaders just the way they did their domestic servants. Both must produce on a lavish scale whatever was desired, and yet they must keep their hands off everything. A most engaging philosophy! The younger Dionysius had inherited on too great a scale to be intent on aggrandizing his power.

Once he had all but become a perfect ruler. Now it was clear as crystal what a ridiculous role had been wished on him. But fate had been merciful. He had been suffered to trade Plato for Aristippus. How dazzling this fellow was in learned discussion! He supplied a man with an easy conscience and the best of justifications of life's enjoyments, and he spiced these justifications with wit. Dionysius the father had once asked his guest Plato what was his real object in coming to Syracuse, whereupon the conversation had notoriously come to grief. Dionysius the son propounded the same question to Aristippus. How diverting the answer to such a question can be, just so the man who gives it is not a congenital bigot! Aristippus was in Syracuse to give what he had and to get what he had not: when he had been in want of wisdom, he had gone to Socrates, and now that he was in want of money he had come to Dionysius. The

young king's father would certainly never have sold this amusing fellow into slavery. Aristippus was not misemploying his intelligence to do verbal mayhem on his fellow men —a procedure that tyrants, of all persons, emphatically object to, possibly because they dislike competition.

Aristippus was proud, and he was also pliable. He let himself be put upon, maintained his charming audacity under it, and rose above the puerile tempers of the pitiful lord of the palace. Once in a fit of grandeur the royal heir went so far as to spit on his philosopher-in-ordinary, possibly for no better reason than to test whether that mythical attribute, human dignity, would not suddenly cower forth from some obscure cranny of his being. But Aristippus was not squeamish, and he was not shielding his dignity as if it were some frail woman. For a childish exhibition of that sort he had nothing but a casual epigram that ingeniously assumed the victor's role. "If fishermen get themselves drenched with sea water from head to foot just to catch one insignificant fish, why should I make an issue of a drop or two of spittle, when what I have in my net is a whale?" The tribe of Diogenes could scrub their own potherbs and tell him scornfully: "If you had taught yourself to live on these, you would not now be a slave at the courts of tyrants." He could always retort: "And if you had taught yourself to get along with people, you would not be having to prepare your own victuals." If a proprietor of quinqueremes and catapults with the power of this Dionysius had his ears on his feet, people would have to prostrate themselves when they addressed him.

Plato had been obliterated, and not merely by the great Aristippus. A hailstorm of witty aperçus and proliferating sophistries had buried his meager sowing. In competition with such things, what headway could be made by his new book, *The Statesman*, which had just reached Syracuse?

Collegium logicum ! No concession to the emotions ! And certainly no concession to a young man desirous of outshining the splendor of the paternal armories with philosophic dazzlements. And yet the young man could not forget Plato. All conversations had a way of working around to him. To talk with Archytas or other Platonists was suddenly to discover how very little one had profited by the great man's term of residence. On these occasions Dionysius blushed with mortification. He was embarrassed; and he was never one to take his own embarrassment in good part.

Was he never going to be done with that man ? He had provided this berth for Aristippus: it would be merely a mockery if that gaseous fool were to be the triumphant one in the end. But the whole world was aware that Plato had no golden opinion of the perfect ruler at Syracuse. The perfect ruler had had his revenge for that: he had refrained from recalling Dion. But was that enough to efface the grievance ? What, really, did these gentry—Polyxenes, Aeschines, Aristippus—mean to him ?

He wanted Plato.

The Academy was a kingdom more readily defensible than the powerful fortress of Syracuse; for well-founded ideas maintain themselves more unshakably than the thickest walls. Nevertheless Plato was even now haunted by his longing for the Perfect State, which was his besetting weakness. Dionysius was tempting him, and the sage was made a simpleton by his satisfaction. For all that, he did not this time succumb. He was almost seventy, and he could no longer conceal from himself that all his sacrifices had come to futility. Let the ruler rage. For that matter, let his friend Dion be aggrieved by his refusal. Plato had no stomach for a third sortie.

However, what does a logician's No weigh in the scales against a supreme war lord's I-have-to-have ? Dionysius summarily dispatched a three-decked war vessel to the Piraeus. (He could as easily have sent a whole fleet.) The munitions of war aboard consisted of letters and a whole posse of expert persuaders, headed by the most passionate Platonist in all Sicily. These gentlemen chanted almost choral assurances that the ruler of Syracuse had made tremendous progress. Plato must, if nothing more, pay a flying visit to admire the miracle and satisfy himself as to the harvest from his own planting. Simultaneously there was a letter from his friend Archytas to say that his position would be imperiled if, by reason of a clash between Plato and Dionysius, there should also be a breach between Syracuse and Tarentum. And at the same time Aristomache and Arete wrote to Dion to say that he must do everything in his power to persuade Plato to the journey. But the thing that hammered loudest at the door of the Academy was Dion's own letter. Dion would be permitted to return to Syracuse the following year if Plato went there forthwith; whereas otherwise—

By such devices they cajoled him across the sea with ravishing visions of hope; by such devices they hounded him across the sea with unconscionable threats. And his own associates amiably helped them out by bombarding him with pleas that were more than pleas, to the general effect that he must quit his idyllic lodge. They pulled and they hauled, they shoved and they pushed, and they coerced him into believing what he was able to believe no more. The plane trees ceased their rustling and the nightingales their singing, for the walls of the Academy were quaking. The secret king no longer knew which way to turn to rescue himself, and he was becoming a chronic prey to the reflection: "Still and all, it is no unprecedented thing for a young man

under the influence of salutary ideas to fall in love with the life of reason and virtue. Do I not, then, owe it to myself at least to have a look at what his present stage of development really is?" And this king without a country and citizen of an extremely poverty-stricken nation fared forth for the third time toward Sicily, there to lay the foundation of the Perfect State. He was accompanied by a handful of Academicians, Archytas's guarantee of his safety, and any number of forebodings.

The vessel of war conveyed its precious booty swiftly and smoothly across the sea. This prisoner of war cast into chains by his own mortally perilous aspiration was received as a veritable sovereign and established in the palace gardens. The ladies of the palace were altogether charming to him, for having Plato was halfway to having Dion back. The gentlemen gave resounding expression to their pleasure. They celebrated the illustrious guest's presence in a drinking bout, with a hundred tipplers drinking out of golden goblets on a wager. The victory was carried off by Plato's pupil Xenocrates; he was crowned with a massive crown of gold. The Academy was off to a brilliant start. The moment had arrived for Plato to be able to crow over Philistus.

Plato's fellow craftsmen were certainly none too happy, for the princely ovations that were organized for the master of the Academy turned them all into subaltern philosophers. Aristippus was jealous, and he veiled his indignation in a good many flashing little epigrams that were supposed somewhat to enhance his own reputation. "Dionysius," he jested, "plays safe: to us, who take what we can get, he gives driblets; to Plato, who takes nothing, he gives everything ever heard of." Aristippus need not have fretted for very long. Being a keen observer, he early spotted Plato's unlucky star, and as soon as he got a chance he maliciously

aired his great discovery. On May 12, 361 there was an eclipse of the sun. It had been correctly predicted by one of Eudoxus' pupils. Dionysius, enraptured to find that a scholar could be also a prophet, rewarded this feat of virtuosity with a pile of silver. Thereupon Aristippus put on a portentous air and proclaimed his big secret: he was able to make prophecies, too. And what he now predicted did in sooth presently come to pass. Being a subtle judge of men, he had calculated the orbit of Plato and the orbit of Dionysius as precisely as the astronomer does the paths of sun and moon. What Aristippus foretold was an eclipse of the royal sun.

Great moralists are oftentimes poor psychologists. They desire things too passionately, and for that reason the obstacles escape their scrutiny. They spread pinions of insistent eagerness and soar past the thing that can only be attained step by slow step. Plato had really never given any adequate study to this young occupant of his father's throne, nor had he soberly appraised the actual possibilities of instituting a terrestrial paradise. The beguiling picture of the ultimate goal had always filled his whole field of vision. Now there was absolutely no leeway left for longdrawn analysis. He was not forty any more. He must make all haste if he were to live to see results. This poor little cub for whom everything was too terribly difficult had to be transformed into a savior at one stroke. How accomplish it ? The thing was to embed a spark in his soul that would blaze up; the tyrant heir would vanish in flame; and the perfect ruler would arise from his ashes. The perfect ruler: that is to say, he who would rule according to directions issued by the secret king.

Plato accordingly made ready his spark. In the very first of his lessons he began by revealing the core of beauty at the heart of the universal ugliness, that his exalted pupil

might speedily acquire an appetite for it. Lift your eyes to the heavens, Dionysius ! Sun, moon, and stars are dancing together in a rhythm of everlasting beauty. Terrestrial change and terrestrial transiency are but a penetrable vapor drawn over this eternal sublimity. Thou, O Dionysius, hast been singled out as the first man since time began who can bring the affairs of men out of the disharmony into which they have degenerated and make them over in the pattern of the harmony above. This revelation would spur the weak and volatile young ruler to make himself over into the perfect statesman. Plato was confident of it.

Dionysius had very poor eyesight. He drank to excess. His courtiers compensated his defects of vision by pretending to be nearsighted themselves. Plato, on the contrary, put an excessive tax on merely human eyesight by demanding of the Sicilian ruler that he abandon his winebibbing and behold things with the eyes of a seer. Dionysius got no enjoyment out of putting that sort of overstrain on himself. What he was expecting from the renowned philosopher was a sequence of sensations—sensations being what the shortsighted use as a substitute for vision. And instead he was getting these copybook maxims of the good life. After all, he wasn't exactly a beginner any more ! He had stuffed himself as full as he could hold with ideas, syllogisms, hypotheses; in fact, that was why it was so hard to get at him. And why should a man have to modify his way of living when he was merely going to beat down verbal opponents with Platonic syllogisms ? Aristippus made no such demands, and he was a lot more amusing anyway. If Plato was really as remarkable as people said, he must have some one overwhelming secret in reserve. Let him produce it ! If, however, he had nothing of the sort—well, after all, his visit could not be called a total loss. Here he was, and that, for

the time being, was the main point. And here was not Dion —the fact that made Plato's presence, for the first time, as enjoyable as it ought to be. And, when all was said, Dionysius did not actually *need* instruction. A single lesson had been enough and to spare.

Unfortunately, the subject of Dion was not to be so easily thrust aside. Plato's importunities were becoming decidedly awkward; a man does not spend his life sitting at a desk with a pen in his hand for nothing. Dionysius evaded him in an ugly temper. The two had many a falling out. There were arguments, accusations, resentments. Plato the master of logic, mathematics, and astronomy had utterly miscalculated. His thought had been: Dionysius, enkindled at the hearth of philosophy, will suddenly turn into a different being, and this different being will have not the slightest difficulty in bringing about a reconciliation with Dion. But, against all his expectations, he found himself still dealing with the same old jealous, ambitious, and ill-tempered cub. All Dionysius was really looking for was a courtier bearing the name Plato. The king was becoming frantic with rage. The actual presence of the teacher he had so ardently longed for was half the battle, but only half. Why could the man not take sides with his prince with all promptness and enthusiasm ? Instead of doing that he prated about virtue and about that adversary, Dion. Dionysius did not know which way to turn; and Plato himself was little better off. Equally perplexed, they were going in circles around each other. How was either to get any hold on the other ? The idle bystanders, however, did a good deal of chuckling over this instructive apologue of the friendship between power and intellect.

Thus matters dragged on for a short time, until the situation became too vexatious to the host. This war of position

was getting on his nerves, and one day he launched a vigorous frontal assault. He forbade the steward of Dion's estate to remit any further funds to his master, on the ground that everything really belonged to Dion's son, whose next of kin had the responsibility of acting as his guardian, since he was a minor. That next of kin happened to be Dionysius. This time Plato managed to grasp that there was nothing more to be said, and he started saying his farewells. It was midsummer, and any number of vessels were sailing. They were mere trading vessels; but the parting guest set no store whatever by the dignity of one more passage under the navy's auspices.

This untoward outcome really matched nothing in the ruler's intention. The pig-headed Athenian was merely to have been browbeaten, not hounded out of Syracuse. He was simply to have been made to realize who it was that was courting his friendship. Maybe he had been badgered a little too impetuously and needed soothing. For Plato, too, had some weapons in his hand. For example, it was possible for him, taking his departure in a huff, to go home and tell tales about the repulsive barbarian who dwelt off there to the westward. His princely friend became, then, extremely conciliatory, addressed comforting words to his dear distressed Plato, and humbly begged him for a trifle of good will. And on the next day he went so far as to broach an impressive peace-making program.

"My dear Plato, this contention between you and me over Dion has got to be absolutely liquidated once for all. And for your sake I am ready to go to really inordinate lengths. Our friend is, to be sure, to stay on in the Peloponnesus for yet a little while; but everybody shall be informed at once that he is presently to come back to Syracuse with full honors. Meanwhile I will give orders that he is to have

full control over his property. He may have it transferred to him in Sparta, or even sent to Athens so far as I am concerned. I stipulate only one condition. He is extremely wealthy, and I really do not trust him any farther than I can see him. Therefore you are to be responsible to me for seeing to it that he does not touch his principal and make use of his vast means to proceed against me. You shall stay with me for the rest of this year and then set out next spring with Dion's funds in your charge."

Plato's true purpose in coming had been to initiate the Perfect State. Now he was inextricably involved in a matter that really concerned him hardly at all. The rock-bottom truth was, he had become at the Syracusan court merely one of the hostages—the most valuable one of them—who were to prevent Dion from making a nuisance of himself. And if at some future time he were really to be so fortunate as to be suffered to return to his homeland, he would be saddled with the distinguished task of superintending Dion's financial affairs. But it might be that Dionysius would not fulfill even this inconsiderable promise. Plato ought to be in a position to free himself from the whole business with one wrench. But if he were to take his departure now, the lord of Syracuse would have come off as the winner. Besides, Dion would never in the world understand his friend's refusal to accept so handsome an arrangement. And, over and above that, did a man really have the option of saying Yes or No when he was locked up in the most impregnable fastness in the world? He had bespoken one day for thinking it over, but that, it seemed, was much too much time: there was not so much as all that to think over. Plato, however, continued to behave—and after all there was nothing to be lost by so doing—as if a negotiated agreement were possible between a supreme war lord and a secret king. In-

deed, he went so far as to lay down a stipulation of his own, since his case was hopeless anyhow: to wit, that he should not be taken as Dion's authorized spokesman, but that rather they should write to Athens and obtain Dion's assent.

As the summer drew to its end, sea traffic dwindled. Plato was no longer able to play the trump card of "Tomorrow I take ship," thereby putting his royal host in the embarrassing position of having to clap his beloved guest into durance. And now Dionysius himself once more resumed the offensive; for between human beings at loggerheads the balance of power asserts itself just as automatically as it does between colliding boulders. Dion's estates were sold; that was the logic of the new situation as conceived by the more powerful participant. Half the proceeds went to Dion's son, and of this half Dionysius would assume the stewardship. Plato could convey the residue to his protégé in the spring. Plato was still demanding that Dion's answer to the great peace-making program be awaited, but Dionysius went ahead and liquidated. Plato held his peace, longing the while to be on his way to a distant and quiet grove. And Syracuse, the while, was retailing sundry marvelous particulars of the beautiful friendship between their overlord and the great Athenian sage.

There were others who looked decidedly askance at this love feast. There were, among others, the Campanian mercenaries who, despite the shoals of Academicians that surfaced in the cavern fortress between the great harbor and the small, continued to have their quarters at the rear of the fortress, quite as of old. Dionysius cut down their pay. Who could have put that cockeyed idea into his head? No one but that sinister Athenian—a man who valued brave and battle-tested mercenaries at a lower figure than he did such a bodiless figment as the Perfect State. This noxious vision-

ary had invented paper warriors that neither looted nor gluttonized and that let themselves be trampled underfoot. Let them be that way, but until their master Dionysius was able to keep the Carthaginians or the Italians at bay with that breed of painted soldiery, they, as men of brawn and guts, were going to demand respectable pay. The other Dionysius would have agreed with them fast enough!

But this younger one was neither fish nor flesh, neither the military martinet nor the perfect statesman. He could no more arrange his affairs with the king who had no kingdom than he could with the garrison on Ortygia. He was actually having the castle gates barricaded as if he meant to fight his own people. At that point the untamed ruffians burst into a terrifying battle song and swarmed forward to the charge. The fortress had overreached itself. It still had the same old masonry walls, celebrated for their thickness, but the giant who had raised them was not there inside any more. This dwarf who was his heir, now shaking in his boots, gave in and paid up.

A man who has been humiliated requires a scapegoat. If, in the present situation, some friend of Dion's could be singled out, the whole onus of the affair could be loaded on to one pair of shoulders. The man hit upon was Heraclides, commanding officer. Getting wind of the distinction that was in store for him, he simply disappeared. Plato would have given a good deal to follow suit; but he was an invited guest and thus obligated to keep on participating in the everyday domestic routine of the palace. And that was taxing enough. The castle grounds were a long way from being the garden of his own Academy. Just as surely as he set out on a placid stroll alone, thinking to spread the wings of thought and mount above this surrounding quagmire toward the empyrean, he would be pounced on and dragged

into another squabble of political bigwigs. Dionysius had Heraclides' uncle summoned, and the pair, taking a walk together, suddenly came on Plato and drew him into their dialogue. They were just on the verge of concluding a solemn agreement. Heraclides was to give himself up, and if, when he had done so, Dionysius were to decide that it was necessary for him to leave Sicily, he was to go abroad with his resources and his family, bearing no grudge against his country. The king in turn pledged himself not to harm Heraclides. It was a rather equivocal compact. The accused was a mere subordinate officer, the accuser his commander-in-chief—and the park lying between the islet of Ortygia and the city of Syracuse was no nightingale grove.

The situation came to a head the following day. The uncle, Theodotes, was considerably wrought up. Had not Dionysius given an undertaking no later than yesterday that he would not harm Heraclides? Why, Plato himself had been a witness to it. And now the whole vicinity was overrun with halberdiers and Heraclides was in mortal danger. Theodotes and Plato went to Dionysius together. The uncle was all but sobbing, and his knees were a-tremble. Plato launched into an uncompromisingly stern speech in which he brought up the compact of the day before, referring to it, with something less than consummate tact, as if it were now a dead letter. Dionysius changed color, and that fact recalled Plato to common prudence. In a belated resort to the circuitous method, he started addressing the uncle, though everything he said was still being aimed at Dionysius. "Take heart, Theodotes! Dionysius will discover that it is beneath his dignity to break his pledged word." Stating the case so baldly to His Majesty's face was adding a second mistake to the first.

After this the monarch really had no option but to break

his pledged word; and all his ire turned against the man who had deprived him of his freedom of action. The sovereign glared majestically at his moral taskmaster. Plato was supposed to comprehend that what was involved here was no frivolous matter of perfect rulers: it had to do with the head officer of the Campanian mercenaries. Plato merely said: "*I* did not promise you anything." At that point the irksome meddler was ungraciously dismissed.

Plato, being extremely punctilious, did not take his departure without an attempt to restate the case. The ruler of Syracuse had yesterday plighted his word, and today they were already having to beseech him to honor it. That was the situation in a nutshell, exactly as it might be summarized at the conclusion of a Socratic discussion—as if the lord of quinqueremes and catapults were nothing more than some disputant in a debating society! But Dionysius, if a little short of telling rejoinders, was the readier to fall back on his strong-arm squad. Plato's sententiousness had won the first round; but the second saw Dionysius' gendarmes closing in on poor Heraclides. Fortunately, though, he had received warning in the nick of time, and at the moment when the posse was mobilizing to seize his person he was just crossing over into Carthaginian territory. What is a hereditary enemy for if not to furnish asylum to wrongly persecuted refugees from the enemy country?

Dionysius and Plato next met in a garden grove, in the presence of one courtier and the palace major-domo. The ruler was excessively irked because his illustrious friend was always to be found on the side of his antagonists. Just why was it that he was stopping at nothing to save enemies of the state from their just punishment? Because they were affiliated with Dion! Everything came back to that Dion! There was no wrenching Plato away from him. Plato could

no longer be won over: he could only be outraged. The conversation got around to the advice that the teacher had formerly given his noble pupil about rebuilding the Greek city states that the barbarians had destroyed in Sicily. Dionysius laughed coarsely. Had his dear Master by any chance forgotten that it was he himself who had blocked the execution of that great design ? Plato did indeed remember. Labors not carried through in the proper spirit were nothing to him. Any man that commanded the necessary means could rear cities. But what was the sense of just strewing the earth to no end with a few more houses and streets and squares ? It was the purpose of it all that had to be grasped. There was no virtue in merely groping one's way forward without intelligence or insight.

Dionysius was in no temper for meditating on the philosopher's pronouncements. He was, in fact, obstinately bent on angering his famous guest, since he could by no means cow him. "Yes, yes, my dear Plato, I was not to approach even the most urgent concerns of my reign until I had valiantly hacked my way through all the departments of mathematical science. What I wanted was to restore the demolished cities, lift the yoke that lay so heavy on the Syracusan people, and convert a despotism into a rational monarchy. But along came a certain Athenian windbag and knocked it all into a cocked hat." The secret king made no reply. Not his to gainsay words that issued from lacerated feelings and were meant only to lacerate.

Dionysius did not venture on any overt measures against him. What he did continued to wear the thin disguise of correct procedure. For example, when Plato was ejected from his little garden cottage the explanation was that the palace ladies needed the grounds for ten days' religious ob-

servances. He was a prisoner vouchsafed the continued enjoyment of a few small liberties for no reason but that Dionysius had inherited everything from his father except his father's implacable determination. Theodotes invited Plato to be his guest. Plato accepted—and was presently badgered with such questions as whether it was true that he had been visiting the promoter of high treason. Inasmuch as Dionysius merely wanted confirmation of what he already knew, his emissary had at the same time a second commission to apprise the Athenian that that sort of conduct was decidedly not going to get him into high favor. Plato did not need any special emissary to tell him that. Maybe he merely lacked the imagination to envision what form disfavor might take; for his recollection of the slave market at Aegina was by this time a good deal dimmed. The venerable philosopher was now quartered in the mercenaries' barracks, though there was certainly little enough of the soldier in his make-up. Even the Campanians and their comrades were clear enough about that. Moreover, they had an old score to settle with their new lodger. At last they had got their hands on the man who had had the impudence to tell their commander-in-chief that Athenian philosophy was more powerful than Syracusan militarism. The soldiery had a notion that now would be a good time to extirpate so vexatious an error.

From Slave Market to Barracks; or, The Life of an Idealist who sees his distant goal clearly but moves toward it blindly! Plato had made three attempts to transform the human pandemonium into the harmony of the spheres. Could it, then, never be accomplished? Or was it just that he was not blessed with a lucky touch? Still, he had not yet finished his course. Fate had been so malicious as never yet

to have put the perfect ruler at his disposal. It was Plato's destiny to live on for some years yet, that he might be even more radically confuted.

While living in his barrack he bethought him of his friend Archytas and his guarantee. A thirty-oared ship arrived from Tarentum. The members of the legation, after chatting with Dionysius about one thing and another, finally said that they would be able to do him the favor of immediately conveying Plato home on their return passage. There was a lavish farewell banquet. Of Dion's money not a word was said. And, in spite of everything, Plato took his departure a far richer man than he had dared count on: the tyrant had, after all, made him a present of his life.

He had, to be sure, fallen something short of founding the Perfect State.

CHAPTER VIII

PLATO DEFEATED AT OLYMPIA

THE GRADUALLY shelving beach at Elis, an alluvial deposit from the low-lying coastal region, extended southward for twenty miles in long, gentle curves. Landings from the sea were made in a diminutive harbor where the Alpheus emptied.

Having reached the foreshore, one was still nearly ten miles from Olympia. The countryside round about was open—a countryside of flourishing olive orchards and vineyards, blown upon by none but bland and humid westerlies. The shrill north wind was cut off by the height of land of mountainous Arcadia, and to the southward mountains covered with the vivid green of the Aleppo pine made a barrier against the parching sirocco. Just short of the town the rushing Cladeus joined the Alpheus in an almost vertical plunge. This brisk little stream flashed noisily through the bright green of plane trees and the somberness of mastic shrub, smooth as glass over polished pebbles, churned to rage where huge boulders got in its way. Lordly Olympus held aloof in the background. The mountain was too grand for this idyllic landscape, and it satisfied itself with thrusting one mere outpost hillock forward into the flatland—a conical hillock four hundred feet high, named for the grandfather of the gods, Cronus. The Valley of Olympia was

quiet and placid on all days but the few in which the clamors of the outside world drowned out those of the Cladeus.

Plato had had a good deal of practice in cultivating obliviousness of the present, in conjuring the very remote past into his presence, and in extricating from this remote past the future of his dreams. Thus the impressive rectangle of the sacred shrine, with its two elongated eastward porticos, its huge treasure houses on the north, and the grandiose temple of Zeus as the nucleus of it all, converted itself for him into the mystic sanctuary of old. It had been, in its day, a mere simple, unpretentious altar of sacrifice without any ornate architecture or any international prestige. There had stood here then no show piece of an altar, so assiduously tended for reasons of state that its unremitting smoke kept off the flies, gnats, and goshawks. Trees that no man had planted grew wild, and the forest twilight under them was broken by small clearings given over to smoking sacrificial stones, also native to the place. At the bottom, unhewn rock slabs; above them, charred bone and ash; above that, more layers of charred bone and ash, generation upon generation of it—so this seat of the gods had been built up. But from the branches there had hung, by cords and ribbons, the gifts of reverent piety—bells and cymbals that swung gently in the breeze, and when they touched, the grove made music. Humanity had been, in its time, a harmony; in its time it would be so again. Plato had an acute ear for the past and likewise for the future. He was singularly contemptuous of his own age—the age he wanted to help.

Did the age take notice of his efforts? The contemporaries who swirled around him at Olympia in the year 360 —how aware were they of their casual momentary companion, this dweller in the grove of the hero Academus?

Philosophers did not count for very much at an athletic festival, among bruisers and jockeys. Some of them were, to be sure, amazing spectacles. They flitted about in sandals carrying oil flasks, bath brushes, and wooden bowls, preaching that man might learn from the lower animals how Nature endows every creature with the things indispensable to existence, and how man alone foolishly employs his inventive faculty to devise new necessities and make himself more and more of a slave. But Plato was no such startling apparition; and he certainly had no desire to thrust himself on anyone's attention.

He had stopped here, breaking his journey from Syracuse to Athens, in order to meet his unfortunate friend. Dion was now in a desperate plight. Even as early as the time of his enforced departure from his homeland, efforts had been made to disrupt the bonds of relationship that linked him with the reigning dynasty. He was to have relinquished his wife, Dionysius' stepsister; in fact, Plato had been saddled with the duty of getting his consent to the divorce. Then no more had been said on that subject, and the talk was all of reconciliation, with Plato's role that of the dove of peace. The dove of peace was presently interned in a soldiers' barrack, and Dion's wife Arete was compelled to marry a certain friend of her powerful stepbrother. Thus Dion the prince, born to be a plenipotentiary, was forced into rebellion. For a great part of his life he had served the Dionysii with all fidelity, as soldier, as diplomat, and above all as reputed Platonist and hater of tyranny. All that was over now. He had come to the end of his double life, divided as it had been between the realms of actuality and of ideals.

Fortune, wife, and native land had been taken from him; and his idealist's perception of reality had been sharpened thereby. He discovered—how many discoveries would never

have been made but for dire reverses!—that it was not enough merely to let the world run on in the old agreeable way while he toyed casually with a great ideal. He now had nothing more to lose and two kingdoms to win: the kingdom of Dionysius and that of Plato. By this route he attained the resolve to fight for the conception that he had hitherto merely ranted about. All of a sudden he was breathing fire and fury. He meant, too, to avenge the affront put upon the sacred idea of hospitality by the unphilosophic treatment of his beloved friend Plato. And in the end he was trying to enkindle his aggrieved Master at his own flame, though no one had robbed *him* of wife or fortune and he had been made a present of his life. Like all men who believe that human beings are made of flawed and cross-grained material, Plato held fast to one tenet: to wit, that of all evils the very worst is revolution. For that reason he was distinctly offish to his favorite disciple's project of resorting to fire and steel to bring the Perfect State into being. Was Plato so lukewarm to his own vision that he would sit in the seat of the scornful because the way to its realization was not quite to his taste?

What an anomaly among saints! The most radical of subverters, he was in deadly fear of subversion. He wanted to uproot the established order—without disturbing the soil. He was not going to leave one stone standing on another—but nothing must crumble. And from his position nothing could budge him. Xenocrates and Speusippus, who had sounded out some influential groups of the Syracusan citizenry and were in a position to give Dion encouragement, made the most unremitting efforts to win over Plato by means of valid arguments and no end of fervor. He did not yield an inch. "My dear friends, let no one try to persuade us that, either now or at any future time, a state can

be remade from the bottom up better than it can when its governors assume the leadership themselves." This pattern of revolution he blocked out for all time: "From the top down." And the most favorable opportunity would be in a state ruled by an absolute sovereign—a fearless and noble-minded young overlord armored with sound precedents and ready discernment. It would be an additional stroke of fortune if this emancipated sovereign were to find among his contemporaries one adviser with a natural endowment of the lawgiver's genius. Granted that, it could be said that God had seemingly left nothing undone to give that state a conspicuously blessed future. The one adviser—he was in evidence. But the young prince himself had been recalcitrant. Could not Dion now unseat him, and Plato leave no stone unturned to place Dion on the throne?

But that program meant fomenting discord, and discord was the fountainhead of confusion, bloodshed, and spoliation. Plato had small confidence in that not very sublime specimen of organic life, man—with rare and scattered exceptions. These dubious creatures should be left in peace, and on no account should their dregs be stirred up to the top, as was bound to happen in any revolutionary upheaval. Let such vacillating wretches be kept well out of that precarious transition stage in which the old order is dead and done with and the new as yet uncreated. But had not this same Plato, he who was now holding his disciples back from the realization of his own ideal, devoted his whole life to creating the conditions for the mighty leap from organized human misery to the Perfect State? He had indeed. But the leap had to be taken with prudence! The perilous transition from an intolerably bad order of things to an ideal one had to be accomplished without letting people suspect it! It would take some doing.

It was a fairly quaint inspiration that gave him the answer. His supreme enemy, the tyrant in person, should be made the focal point of salvation. The civil war should be transferred to his benighted soul and there fought to a finish. Dionysii did not have to begin by winning power at the price of hatred and bloodshed: they had it already. They had only to be made to deviate—under the guidance of a philosopher—from evil toward good. When they had done so, one strong, sure hand would take hold and, without any tumult, without any turmoil, shift everything from its present position to the diametrically opposite position, and one fine day the Perfect State would be there as if conjured out of the ground. Had Plato so soon forgotten his three forays to Syracuse, his pair of Dionysii? Had not this fantastic figment of the tyrant savior recently enough been brought to grief by reason of the instrument's inadequacy? The miscalculation remained hidden from its author. His threefold fiasco seemed to him to denote only some dereliction of his own. But some day a more teachable Dionysius was going to be brought by a more fortunate Plato to the crucial point of overthrowing tyranny within himself. And thereupon the entire machinery of government, without so much as the displacement of a single functionary, would pass tranquilly out of the control of the worst of rulers into that of the best.

Dion, Xenocrates, and Speusippus by no means slackened their efforts. They wrought mightily on the obstinate old man. And they had their labor for their pains. Plato, too, was angry with Dionysius; but he stood out against war with all the force he could muster. Now he cited this reason, and now that, but never the decisive and ultimate one. Sometimes he said that he was too old and past the age of bearing arms—as if they had ever dreamed of having him march

in the ranks. At other times he evaded them with a reminder that he had sat at the same table with Dionysius, slept under the same roof with him, made common sacrifice with him to the same gods—as if that were somehow a credit to Dionysius. In the end, by badgering him too obdurately, they had him actually taking Dionysius' part. Maybe the fellow, by reason of all the calumnies that had reached his ears, was nursing the dreadful suspicion that they meant to deprive him of both his throne and his life. "And yet he spared my life!"—as if Plato were deeply beholden to Dionysius for not having him murdered. "If you mean to reach an understanding with him," he summed up, "I am with you; but so long as it is an evil thing that you project, you will have to turn elsewhere." Then not only the capricious autocrat was evil, but likewise his Platonic antagonists? Yea, verily, for the way of bloodshed is always evil, though it be the way to perfection. The means profane the end. The upshot: Plato left his Dion in the lurch just as he was embarking on his attempt to turn into an actuality the mode of government that his teacher had revealed to him.

Was the old man really so certain of his certainties? He laid down his decision, not in the name of the Academy, but only in his own name. In other words, this strict exponent of regimentation left his own disciples complete freedom of dissent in opinion and action on a crucial issue, so doubtful was he of the course he had chosen. As for himself, he could do no otherwise. It was assuredly not that he was grateful to Dion for his life; men are moved by that sort of gratitude only when their lives are at stake. But Plato was on this earth to bind and not to loose; for he put no trust in humankind. He was afraid of the evil spirits that inhabit men—evil spirits that choose, of all occasions, a time of revolutionary upheaval to find vent and wreak them-

selves in hellish deeds. In his own lifetime he had seen enough of such things. They must be prevented forevermore. The all-powerful despot suddenly transformed into the docile pupil of a sage—that was apparently the decoy that he had conceived, to the end of decoying poor humanity, despite every obstacle, to its own salvation.

Arguments against a fear there are none: the most there can be is a rationalization of it. The sensation of vertigo is at its most intense in those who have grown up in a degree of security and then suddenly lost it. Plato the aristocrat, born in a stable environment, educated to be a defender of ancient values and ancient virtues, was not clinging to any outworn status quo, and he had long since become completely alienated from his own class: yet he did not dare to strike the chains from men in general. Men in general must be kept asleep while the tyrant's chains were removed from their limbs and the new chains of the perfect ruler substituted; for the danger of dangers is that short minute when they wear no chains at all.

The king without a kingdom, in the ripeness of his years, no longer had faith that he was ever going to see his kingdom. But Dion set forth to conquer it for him—by a road unauthorized.

III. *The Experiment*

CHAPTER IX

THE DISCIPLE COMES TO POWER

THE ARMY that took off from the island of Zacynthus three years later consisted of eight hundred soldiers in five vessels. In anticipation of further recruits, the vessels carried equipment sufficient to arm five thousand more. Of a thousand emigrants from Syracuse, but twenty-five were participating. The fraction of any such emigration with an appetite for fighting is always small to vanishing, because the overwhelming force is on the other side. Dionysius, whom they hoped to unseat, could boast a hundred thousand foot soldiers, ten thousand horsemen, four hundred warships, and the name of being invincible.

The little army of mercenaries had been enlisted without mention of any specific objective. As soon as it knew that it was to operate against powerful Syracuse it lost its enthusiasm for battle. Dion assured his command that the autocracy was thoroughly rotten and enfeebled, and he also said that his followers were to think of themselves, not as common soldiers, but rather as officers whose troops were waiting for them on the battlefield itself. That put the affair in a different light. There was also one other incident that replenished their morale. It was just at the full of the moon. A sumptuous sacrificial feast was going on to the glory of Apollo. The detachment was marched to the temple in full

battle regalia. It encamped on the racecourse. Arrayed before it were golden tables glittering with golden vessels. The men at once assured themselves that anyone with all that wealth at his command was certainly not going to get himself involved in a foolhardy venture. He was no longer young enough for that sort of thing.

Then something occurred that made them pretty sober again. There was an eclipse of the moon. To Dion and his friends there was nothing terrifying about that; they had learned in the Academy that this phenomenon always took place when the earth passed between sun and moon. The soldiers, however, who knew very little about the Academy and were brooding a good deal on the power of Dionysius the enemy, passed into eclipse themselves. Happily, Plato's pupil Miltas, who was officiating as soothsayer to the expedition, hit on a neat explication that not only robbed the untoward occurrence of its ominous import, but actually turned it to profit. What the gods meant to convey, Miltas declared, was that something hitherto radiant was now to be devoured by shadow. Well, what had hitherto been more radiant than that star of the first magnitude, Dionysius? Just the same, this ancestor of generations of official optimists does not appear to have had any overweening faith in the destiny of this expedition got up by his fellow pupil Dion. Privately he said to the perfect ruler-to-be: "Don't worry, my dear Dion: the moon will come back again."

Heaven's portents are attestations that man is right—that his desires, his fears, his theories, or whatever are well founded. In Syracuse, too, there was no lack of portents; and inasmuch as the ruler had a multitude of critics, the omens were not particularly favorable to him. An eagle wrenched the spear out of a halberdier's hands, bore it aloft,

and let it fall into the sea. According to the malcontents, the eagle was a minion of Zeus, the spear was a symbol of power, and the thing meant that Those Above were going to wipe out the autocracy. For one whole day the sea where it washed the shore under the fortress was fresh instead of salt—an unprecedented occurrence. That was interpreted by the anti-Dionysians to mean that the bitter afflictions of the Syracusan people were about to become less bitter. Litters of pigs were farrowed lacking ears, though otherwise normal; whereupon it was said exultantly that the subjects were going to be deaf to their ruler's future commands.

A gentle breeze wafted the group of philosophers and their mercenaries across the sea. On the thirteenth day they were off the high point of the southeastern promontory. Dion did not dare make his landing quite so near the lion's den, and anyway he was driven off by a violent blow from the north. The sea was running high. Autumn gales pounced on the liberators and almost dashed them against the rugged shore of the island of Cercina, off the Libyan Desert. Once they were groping for deep water and safety with sounding poles. But after that a prosperous south wind filled their sails and benevolently carried them to the Sicilian coast somewhat to the westward of Agrigentum. This area belonged to Carthage, the enemy—Dionysius' enemy. Our enemies' enemies are almost always our friends. The Carthaginian governor gave Dion a most friendly reception.

Dionysius himself was then in Italy with eighty ships. That fact made it obviously desirable to drive on for Syracuse; the expedition had no eagerness whatever to be welcomed by Dionysius in person. The army gained reinforcements as it proceeded. Two hundred horsemen joined it at Agrigentum; likewise men from Camarina. In the end many

came flocking to it from the countryside outside Syracuse. The little band that had set sail from Zacynthus had swelled very satisfactorily.

Men from Leontini and Campania were holding the defensive works at Epipolae. Dion had it noised abroad that he was going to attack their native cities first of all. They fled from their post. At the Anapus, a little over a mile outside the city, the force halted and made an offering to the river god. The commander pronounced a prayer, and his soothsayer foretold a fortunate outcome. And after that Plato's disciple marched straight into the city as its liberator. At one shoulder strode his brother Megacles, at the other his friend Callippus. All three were wearing crowns. They marched surrounded by a special bodyguard from the Peloponnesus. Behind its leaders came the whole army in rigid formation. This was at once a procession, a parade, and an execution. Forty-eight years of tyranny were being given solemn burial. The soldiers were shouting lustily: "We are marching to liberty!" What their definition of liberty may have been, no historian has recorded.

The Temenites gate stood invitingly open. In that market place in which the grandfathers had set the first Dionysius on the first rung of his ladder the grandsons placidly assembled. Through a herald it was proclaimed to them that the law of the land had been in a forty-eight-years' slumber, and that Dion had come with his followers to reawaken it. The reawakeners next marched on toward the shore. Their route was lined on either side with tables bearing sacrificial meats and full winejars, and the celebrants showered Dion, the hero of the occasion, with flowers, with fruits, with their prayers.

Down below the fortress on a massive stone pedestal was a towering sundial that Dionysius had had erected. Dion

clambered on to the pedestal and from it made a speech on that timely theme, liberty. At the end of it the votes of free men elected him and his brother supreme commanders-in-chief, as dead Dionysius had once been elected. Plato's disciple humbly declined the honor. But that availed him nothing; he was awarded a bodyguard in addition. His partisans disposed of the ominous parallel by proclaiming it to be an auspicious sign that Dion, while delivering his fine oration on liberty, had had the tyrant's handiwork underfoot. The cynical, on the other hand, croaked back that the sundial was now pointing to a different time of day.

On one side liberty, on the other the despot—that is an ancient and admirable formula that has won victories on many a field. And what a graphic version of it lay outspread before Syracusan eyes! Any child could rest a hand on the precise line of demarcation between thane and thrall. Dion the liberator controlled the entire city, and he was releasing incarcerated citizens from their dungeons. But over yonder in the tyrant's fastness that had loomed forbiddingly for half a century on the causeway between the main shore and the sentinel island of Ortygia, Dionysius and brute force still did the governing. Their domain was walled off from the kingdom of liberty by a rampart of massive masonry. What a superb study in opposites for a children's primer!

Then, suddenly, not everything seemed to be going so smoothly. All at once the strangest liberties sprang up in Syracuse—liberties for certain of which certain of the citizens had a less flattering name. So far, everything that had been done against Dionysius had been transfigured in the aura of emotionalism that surrounded the hero of liberty. Now there were once more but two classes, the rich and the poor; and the clash between them, if scrutinized narrowly, was a good deal more bitter than much of the opposition to

the vanished tyrants had been. Many a man who had been a sturdy anti-Dionysian was now learning by observation that he had not, in losing Dionysius, lost the most powerful of his oppressors. Was this Dion, when you came right down to it, a great deal better? What, over and above the downfall of the man of Ortygia, did he want?

Dion's father Hipparinus, making common cause with Philistus, had long ago created the earlier Dionysius. Dion himself had then spent a long stretch of his life at the court of the reigning family and further enriched himself. Eventually there had been quarrels. But did the renegade have anything whatever as an equivalent of his whilom friend? It is not enough merely to be against something—not enough even in the hour of battle, to say nothing of the sequel. The flag of mere opposition is always equivocal, because its bearer is always even more so. In fine, did this Dion have any real program of his own? A tremendous program, rumor had it. There were, indeed, men of the age who felt that the whole world was watching it in acute suspense. "The whole world"—that was surely an exaggeration. The whole world is never interested in a political program, however near to or however remote from themselves. That being so, no one should conceive the year 357 before the birth of Christ as a theater with the world as audience filling its orchestra and Dion on the stage as protagonist. The world, fortunately for itself, was not yet so shrunken that any brazen adventurer could, by seizing just the right occasion, lay it waste in a week. But the judicious few who felt that a road must eventually be found leading away from the everlasting cycle of oligarchy followed by democracy followed by dictatorship—these were awaiting, and not without passionate sympathy, the outcome of the Syracusan experiment.

The man whom, as the saying is, the whole world had its eye on did not in the least feel himself to be the focal point of creation; for he was only a disciple. He was gazing wistfully across the sea in the direction of the city of Athens, the oft-hymned citadel of liberty. What could Athens have to tell him? Its affairs were in a no less tumultuous state. Athenians were wailing that in Athens affairs were so arranged that no single citizen was able to live unhounded by troubles. The town was overflowing with woe. Some were having to bear all the afflictions of poverty, the rest those of endless official molestation, unendurable taxation, and most obnoxious judicial procedures. The situation was said to be so vexatious that the well-to-do were in worse distress than those on the point of starvation. But when things have got to that pass, dictatorship is no very remote prospect; for when rich people have their troubles they are ready and willing, as Isocrates predicted at the time, to go to any length whatever to stay rich. Better a slave than a beggar! That being so, it was necessary in the so-called free republic of Athens of the year 357 to admonish well-to-do democrats that they must not set too cheap a valuation on their civic liberties. Patently, the lesson of Dionysius' career had left no very deep impression on them—possibly because the experiences we have ourselves are the only real experiences, possibly also because people found that trade and traffic were doing anything but badly under the Dionysii. It was quite certain that these democrats were the last who could provide Dion with a stopping place on his precipitous path.

But in the midst of the Athenian hurly-burly, in a miniature solitude outside the city gates, there had arisen the prototype of a new order: the Academy. To it the reigning disciple had turned his gaze. From it he counted on approbation and criticism. Plato was his discernment, his will,

and his judge. Plato, unlike the mass of people in foreign countries, was not going to be bowled over by any speciously brilliant stroke or any ordinary success. In letters he was asking his pupil the stern question: "Are you making a worthy use of your victory?" It was a long, long way from Syracuse to Athens. The truth was not to be descried by reason of all the rumors. But Dion was to bear in mind that in one goodly grove far away every piece of news from him was being awaited in all solicitude.

The truth was that Plato had meant to have nothing whatever to do with this whole business. Yet here he was, involved in it again. The world would not suffer him to remain aloof. Dion's manner of governing would prove once for all what the Academy amounted to, the world was insisting. Everything was once more unsettled, and events were whispering: "After the downfall of Dion it will be perceived that this experiment, too, was wrecked by the ambition of its promoter." That must not be. The credit of the Academy was at stake. Dion, my dear fellow, we have got to prove to the world what manner of men we are! The thing that had been initiated without Plato's consent must be brought to a salutary outcome with his collaboration. Teachers have inveterately been their pupils' creatures.

But what more could Plato do to help? For thirty long years he had been pouring his own ideas into his disciple, whose belief in the Perfect State was what had given him the hardihood to undertake this far from perfect venture. Dion had even lent a serious ear to Plato's criticism that he was lacking in affability. ("The realization of great designs, my dear Dion, can be achieved only when one is not too unyielding and inspires affection.") That was excellent advice. Plato, however, had overlooked the necessity of making his own, his Platonic, principles as well as the man ingratiating

and amenable. At the best, they were scarcely calculated to make people very comfortable. There was—thus Article One of the implacable catechism—an eternal order of things that was knowable and that Plato knew. Dion, then, had to take the position: "It now becomes my task to destroy without a qualm whatever is transitory, whatever is troublous, in the human relationships of this eternal order. Plato has made it clear as crystal to me what form human society will then assume. But how am I to effect the transition to it from this dismal state of things? Of that, Plato has said not a word. Do I join forces with the fishermen, or with the tradesmen, or with the property-owners, or with Dionysius' courtiers?" All of these had precisely the same standing in the Master's court as in his pupil's—that is, no standing whatever. Most people were utterly unfit to be anything more than the raw materials of the Platonic order. But with what instruments, then, was it to be established? There were a good many factions in Syracuse that wanted something. Each wanted a different thing, and—none of them wanted the Perfect State. Plato, like Dion, rejected them all, hugging the delusion that general affability could counterbalance the rejection. Dion rejected both the masses and the aristocracy—especially, of course, the masses.

Having spent his whole life on lofty levels, he naturally had no very intimate comprehension of fishermen, cobblers, and petty tradesmen. Not being able to differentiate either their faces or their thoughts, he unconsciously conceived them as being both faceless and thoughtless; whereas every one of his own social equals was genuinely a person to him. Anything that existed in huge numbers and, for one reason or another, did not present itself to him in terms of distinguishable individuals, he summed up as "the mass." The Athenian mob psychologists from Isocrates down were tire-

lessly complaining: "Oh that this accursed mob could be caught holding the same identical opinion on the same identical subject twice on the same identical day!" Dion's comprehension of the folk he proposed to govern was about equally extensive. His real inclination was to have nothing to do with the folk, and in fact to stow it away in the place that Plato's system had conveniently provided for it—behind bars.

The masses felt as far away from Dion as he did from them. They perceived him with no distinctness whatever. Across such gulfs there is no appreciation of subtle discrepancies—say, of Dion's having been for thirty years a tyrant's right-hand man and at the same time a Platonist and hence a foe of tyranny. Anyway, all their lives the people had been used to mentioning Dionysius and Dion, the master and the man, in the same breath. They had, to be sure, subsequently had a falling out. The powerful satellite had, to be sure, wrested the power away from his sovereign. But did that make the rebel aristocrat one of the common people? They had no bond whatever with him.

There was a meeting of the popular assembly. One Sosis took the floor. What many had merely been thinking, he said. "So we are shouting hosannas! So we are making holiday! So we are letting ourselves go until it is a scandal! Why, exactly? What has changed? We are quit of the violent libertine, and we have the pedantic moralist on our necks. Does the shoe pinch any the less because we have traded a drunken tyrant for a cold sober one? A virtuous oppressor is a good deal more dangerous than a dissolute one." The next day Sosis was running across the market place almost naked, his whole face besmeared with blood. Dion's men had set out to do him to death because he had blurted out the truth the day before.

This day became an extremely tumultous one. Public opinion was running against Dion. He was trying to extricate himself from his present predicament by making sensational charges. Sosis, a brother of one of Dionysius' halberdiers, was acting as a tool of deliberate trouble-makers. Physicians examined his wounds. Sword cuts are deeper in the middle, but these were mere shallow meaningless scratches; moreover, there was an astounding number of them, as if someone had kept losing his resolution and then starting in again. A search brought to light a razor hidden under a heavy rock slab. On that evidence Sosis was convicted. He was given the death sentence. Was he actually an agent of Dion's enemy, or was he simply an enemy of Dion's regime ? The trial is no longer subject to review: the evidence is inaccessible. All that is certain is that Sosis was not alone in his posture toward the new overlord.

The people had had seven days of freedom when the master of Ortygia returned to his base. He sent at once for the new master of Syracuse. Dion replied like a practiced liberator: "Whatever you have to say will have to be said straight out to the free people of Syracuse." Dionysius promised them any number of things, including abatements of their taxes and amelioration of their military duties. They would have nothing to do with isolated reforms: they unceremoniously demanded his withdrawal. Almost anything else can be extorted from a dictator, but not that; he may relinquish every item of his program of despotism, but not despotism itself. Dionysius, then, simply thrust into prison the poor wretches who had transmitted this brazen demand to him, conceded his own following one last untrammeled orgy, and then ordered an assault on the negligible wall that separated him from the hearts of his subjects. Unable to achieve the victory he sought, he at least showed who he

was in connection with the burial of his fallen heroes. The dead were crowned with golden wreaths and laid out swathed in purple robes, by way of incentive to the survivors to follow the path of their highly decorative but inert comrades. Dion, too, had a golden wreath from the grateful citizenry, although he was not dead yet; but that was what he had won the victory for.

Occupational psychology has deduced that tyrants are, generally speaking, more than ordinarily crafty persons. That comports pretty well with the known fact that the person who acknowledges no restraints is generally very adaptable. Dionysius saw with ready intuition at what point the bond between his enemy Dion and Syracuse could best be severed. Heralds emerged from the fortress to deliver to Dion some letters from his family. He prudently forearmed himself against suspicion by ordering that they be read out in public. It then became manifest that one of the letters, addressed "To my Father, from Hipparinus," had originated with Dionysius himself.

This malicious communication had been designed, from its first word to its last, to fall into the wrong hands. It was teeming with slanders; also with worse than slanders, because none of it was wholly false and all of it was unerringly aimed. (The most insidious lies are the ones formed around a core of truth.) "Ah, my dear Dion, what have you ever in your whole life left undone that could contribute to the maintenance of tyranny? Do not now wipe out your own handiwork! Rather, take the burden on your own shoulders. Verily, it would be folly for you at this point to liberate these Syracusans who are so ill disposed toward you. To do it could only involve yourself, your relatives, and your friends in extreme peril."

There are no counterproofs that can prevail against mis-

trust, because any proof rests at bottom on faith. If Dion were to propose that Dionysius be let into the city on certain conditions, it would be said that there is honor among thieves. If he made the opposite proposal that they besiege the tyrant's fastness until it surrendered, it would be thrown in his face that he wanted only to prolong the fighting to extend the term of his own power. Every contingency can be disposed of with some argument that apparently clinches the case. It all came down to their not trusting Dion. Had they any particular reason for trusting him ?

He was, however, expelling Dionysius, and that sufficed for the time being. Philistus, an old man now, made one last attempt to break the blockade with a flotilla of galleys. He failed. He was taken prisoner, stripped of his armor, and exposed naked to the public view, and at the last his body was sundered from crown to loins. Guttersnipes who took possession of the corpse seized the tyrant's late mentor by one leg and so dragged him from end to end of the city. It was a pat enough allusion, for in days long gone he had given his pupil Dionysius the precept that a man should relinquish power only when torn from it feet first. That was precisely his fate; and after it his body rotted impotently in the quarries of Achradina. Such was the end of the great historian Philistus. He had helped one of the city's clerks mount a despot's throne, been sent into banishment, hymned the deeds of his thankless protégé for posterity, and after the death of that former friend and enemy been recalled to defend his son against Plato; and he had now died as he had lived, a faithful servant to his overlord.

Dionysius the Last made still another set of overtures. He undertook to hand over his fortress, his mercenaries, five months' pay for them, and all armament. For himself he

demanded no more than unobstructed withdrawal to Italy and the income from his properties.

The Syracusans, however, had now come to the point of wanting chiefly his person, and they declined his offer with thanks. Thereupon he relinquished his father's fortress to his eldest son and took his departure by sea, along with selected valuables and friends. The admiral responsible for this escape was Heraclides—the very officer on whose account Plato had become involved in so many vexations on his last preceding visit to Syracuse.

Heraclides was a popular favorite. Dion was stern and unapproachable, but with Heraclides the people had an excellent understanding. With Dionysius driven from the field, Heraclides the admiral was Dion's foremost antagonist. He may have taken it for granted that Dion was enraged against him because of his carelessness, and for that reason flung himself into the people's arms to escape being devoured. He may have been induced by the mob's favor to constitute himself its spokesman. He may even have been a genuine revolutionist. However that may be, he made himself sponsor for a new major demand: the redivision of landed property. Equality, people were now saying, was the cornerstone of all liberty. Dion, who had come on the scene in the name of liberty, had a diametrically opposite conception of what it was. His kind of liberty infringed no man's inequality. On precisely that ground Heraclides was now demanding that Dion be replaced by another and that his foreign troops be dismissed.

When a government is in process of collapse there is invariably a deal of voting. (Let the collapse become an accomplished fact, and all voting ceases.) The Syracusans, delivered from their tyrant but still something short of freedom, patently observed that a kind of nemesis dogged all

this incessant counting of noses, and they sabotaged it whenever they could. Once a terrific thunderstorm broke at the opportune moment. Then, on a day of really ideal weather, a steer suddenly tore loose from a wagon and charged the electorate; it promptly took to its heels, partly to get away from the steer, partly to dodge the balloting. Eventually Heraclides and twenty-four other men were elected as military commanders. The new incumbent immediately attempted to alienate his predecessor's mercenaries by promising them citizenship. Fighting men, however, ordinarily have no particular hankering to become citizens. These men remained loyal, and along with their perfect but jobless ruler they straggled off to the neighboring city of Leontini. Was Plato not right? What possibility was there of a man's becoming the ideal statesman if he had to wage an unremitting fight for power?

Dion the outcast was now befriended, however, by one important circumstance: the withdrawn tyrant's fighting force had still not been quelled. A hostile fleet approached the coast with funds and provisions for the beleaguered citadel. The Syracusans, capturing the ships, abandoned themselves to convivialities. The besieged garrison seized on this propitious moment to swarm over the rampart. There was bitter hand-to-hand fighting in the streets. In this nightmare of confusion the question whether freedom depended on equality or inequality somehow became rather less pressing. A hurried appeal was made to Dion and his troops. The emissaries who transmitted it were received in style in the Leontini theater, and the melodrama that followed was superb, with a moment of dead silence, weeping men prostrate on their faces, Dion gulping back his tears, Dion finally pledging his aid, Dion embraced and kissed on both cheeks.

This honeymoon did not last long. In the interim Diony-

sius' soldiery had simply withdrawn, and the people, who in their interlude of freedom had been getting the hang of equality, could not see why they should readmit a man of totally different outlook powerfully backed with armed force. He was told, then, that his presence was now superfluous and that he was desired to be so amiable as to go away again. The superior citizens, on the other hand, implored him to press on. Heraclides' faction was manning all the gates in order to protect the freedom inside the city and keep the inequality outside. At that juncture the Dionysians launched a fresh sortie. Firebrands were hurled into the city. Torches and lighted lamps were tossed into the buildings. Whatever could not be captured and held could at least be devastated. Thereupon Dion and his army became supremely welcome again, and his most vindictive opponents wailed the most pitifully for his presence. He was the lesser evil. It was better to be a victim of inequality than a corpse. Messenger on messenger besought him to make haste. Heraclides himself dispatched his uncle Theodotes. For the second time Dion entered the city as its liberator. The tyrant's army and the glorification of equality had vanished together.

No so Heraclides. Knowing the Platonist with whom he had to deal, he hit on exactly the proper line to take. Such a man as Dion, whose virtue was above suspicion, was not, after all, going to let himself be actuated by his anger. The principal thing was to make a defeated opponent recognize that his defeat had been primarily a moral one. What a fine ring that had ! An even more irascible moralist than Dion could be satisfied with that formula. To be sure, his friends were advising him to liquidate this dangerous faction finally and forever; but the perfect ruler could not bring himself to do it. Year in and year out he had been disciplining him-

self at the Academy to suppress in himself all envy, all vindictiveness, every species of bigotry. Plato had charged and surcharged his being with the thought that the supremely glorious battle is the one we wage against our own passions. Benevolence toward well-behaved and upright persons was no moral triumph: a man had to be capable of forgiving even miscreants. Even if Heraclides had been false to his trust as admiral out of deliberate malevolence, was he to be harshly dealt with in the spirit of vengeance?

(As a matter of fact, provision had already been made in mysterious ways for the placation of the spirit of vengeance.)

There was really no reason to dread the future. Wickedness *must* be overthrown, goodness *must* triumph. No human being could be so coarse that he would not in the end desist from hating his benefactor. Poor doctrinaire disciple! The errors of philosophers take a frightful revenge on the executives who put them into practice. Even unphilosophic tyrants are by no means so realistic as they and their admirers fancy: they merely take drastic measures against the opposing side, uprooting not too few things, but too many. This kind of error takes a slower revenge and lets them enjoy for a while the name of being redoubtable realists. On the other hand, those moralists who fail to realize that, whereas individuals can perhaps be conciliated, organized groups never can—these have to pay an instant price for their blindness. For it is much more dangerous to leave too many opponents alive than to kill too many of them. Dion left too many alive when he undertook to inaugurate a Platonic government in collaboration with Heraclides and his following.

Heraclides began by accepting his destiny with sweet reasonableness and proposing Dion himself as commander-in-

chief. On this the upper classes were perfectly agreed. The seamen and artisans, on the other hand, preferred their admiral, and they proceeded to elect him on their own initiative. They had quickly to recede from that position. Dion had no alternative but to proclaim a retroactive confirmation of the vote and provide the popular hero with another bodyguard. On the other hand, he declared the late redivision of lands and houses to have been invalid. That was an expedient perfectly typical of the regent who has not the faintest comprehension of the monstrous composite being he has undertaken to manipulate. Such a one leaves the forces arrayed against him perfectly intact, spares the persons in whom those forces are embodied, and serves notice that such forces are not to increase and multiply.

Heraclides took the fleet to Messana and there labored energetically against his opponent. At the first opportunity he made another attempt to undermine his position. This failing, he renewed his former oath of fealty—which, as a matter of fact, was still in force. Dion had attained his goal. The powerful leader of the hostile faction was making his peace with him. That chronic breeding place of revolution, the navy, was broken up. Dionysius' son surrendered. The conquering hero strode along the causeway that united the foreshore with the islet of Ortygia. A master was making his entrance through the fivefold gateway. There followed a family reunion in the grand manner. Women came forth to meet and greet him. Dead Dionysius' widow, his sister Aristomache, ceremoniously conducted his son to him. Her daughter, once his wife, was weeping without restraint. Aristomache spoke in her behalf: was Arete henceforth to call him uncle, nevermore husband? Whether that was Arete's only reason for weeping, we may not know. In any event the husband behaved magnanimously, embracing his

wife, taking his son by the hand, moving on with wife and son to re-enter his home of long ago.

Thus, the saga of the Dionysii might have ended on an exceedingly edifying note, and the Perfect State been ushered into the world in the year 355, if everything had truly depended on the occupancy of the throne by one who had faith in the purity of his own motives. But there exists a certain destructive force, neither moral nor immoral, more potent than the wickedness that gets all the attention of moralistic persons: to wit, mental incapacity. That is the soil without which wickedness itself cannot thrive. Were there no good Dion, there would be no evil Dionysius. Dion in his goodness did everything the way he had been taught in his distinguished school. He did not take up residence in the fortress, because he did not want to give his Syracusans any pretext to confuse him with Dionysius. He was striving, not for the glitter of panoplied royalty, but rather for the fame of the worthy Academician. He was, in fine, the perfect ruler. Against all that, not even Heraclides and his faction would have had a word to say. But, over and above it all, Dion was determined to have also inviolable tenure of power. Requiring that, he could not for long govern nobly and remotely.

Heraclides once more took to behaving provocatively. Invited to take counsel, he declined on the ground that he was a private citizen and would participate in the popular assembly like other private citizens. With the present regime he had no connection. It called in state counselors from aristocratic Corinth. It did not sanction the destruction of Dionysius' monument or the desecration of his remains. It preserved the tyrant's strongholds, too—against what contingencies? Heraclides became steadily more and more intractable. And in the end he goaded Dion the Good to the

point of having him put out of the way. The world was made up of virtuous people and vicious people, and if there was a virtuous one at the top, could not everything be given thereby an impulsion toward goodness? Was anything needful other than that the virtuous should serve as a pattern for the vicious? Dion was wrong. He had erred on the main point: it is not always possible to overcome evil with good. And then he had repaired his first error by committing a second, likewise with Plato's support to give him courage. It was the bounden duty of the true statesman to eliminate the incorrigible citizen from human society. And was not Heraclides an incorrigible citizen? So murder is committed in all innocence of soul. So murder is committed by the good man. So murder is committed by philosophers.

For the victim of his murderous act the perfect ruler arranged the most resplendent obsequies, and for honor's sake he escorted the body to its grave with his entire army.

CHAPTER X

THREE DEATHS: DISCIPLE, MASTER, TYRANT

WHETHER a man who has done murder is or is not hounded by the Furies thereafter depends on whether his own conscience calls the Furies up. He has to make his own terms with that particular mentor. It is a matter in which not even Plato in the flesh could help him.

Plato had worked everything out with so admirable a sobriety !—a Perfect State and, before ever that should be, the perfect statesman, righteous and godlike arbiter of life, of death. It is conceivable that such a man could without a qualm cross off a human life with one slash of his pen if that life were upsetting the designs of the gods. But clearly Dion the bewildered disciple stood on no such Olympian height. His Syracuse was no better than a turbid commotion made up of small traces of perfection and unlimited amounts of imperfection. The powerful regarded him with contempt because he lacked money—though he had had opportunity enough during the reign of Dionysius the Great to learn how money is made. The common people had no affection for him; their conception of liberty was totally different from his. The mercenaries stood in no fear of him, because his discipline was not harsh enough; and neither did they respect him, for they did not understand him. To his friends he had become nothing but an incon-

venience. He was a trial even to himself. What was he to do with himself? Simply to have an objective is of no avail to a man: he has to know how to reach it, too. Dion had lost his way, and Plato could not find it for him.

When a man has already got to the point of stumbling, there will always be the one more thing necessary to lay him low—a rock toppled on to his head by the wind, or a siege of illness, or something else malevolent. In connection with exalted persons this role is commonly filled by an exalted instrument—for example, an assassin. For Dion fate had with consummate aptness delegated a pre-eminently literate assassin—a product of the Academy. This man had once placed his residence in Athens at the disposal of the princely exile. At Eleusis he had ushered his esteemed guest into the presence of the goddess Demeter. And Dion valued this religious sponsor of his so highly that on the occasion of his entry into Syracuse he had had him march at his side crowned with a wreath. It is now impossible to determine exactly what turned this Callippus into a murderer. It is known that the disaffected soldiery were greatly taken with this man of bold initiative, and that he went to work effectively and promptly. His gambit was to confide to his friend what scandalous talk was going the rounds about him. After that, when Dion had warnings from other sources to keep a careful eye on Callippus, he understood at once that his valued and loyal associate was only bent on discovering what persons were working against his ruler. By this means the assassin was able handily to determine who could be made use of for his scheme.

Warnings serve no purpose after a man has abandoned himself to a situation; if he is going downhill, mere evidences do not set him on the upward way. Aristomache and Arete saw through the double-dealing; but Dion, brooding

somberly in the entrance hall of his residence, only saw spectral women in the dimness, apparently sweeping his house with long brooms. Was it hope that they were sweeping out of doors? Callippus was a wary assassin. By way of precaution he went to these women who, he perceived, were seeing through him and, sparing neither tears nor expense, took the oath of oaths. (Many a criminal thwarts himself by being stingy in these matters.) In a shrine of the Eleusinian goddess he had himself arrayed in the purple mantle of the divine mother and, holding a lighted torch, swore his oath of fidelity; after which he embarked on his program of infidelity on the very day of Demeter's festival. Whether that was the subtlety of a subtle assassin or mere inadvertence, we shall never know.

As soon as Dion was back from the commotion of the festival, Callippus went about his doings with all circumspection, proceeding with all the nicety of someone dissecting an abstraction in the Academy. To begin with, he made sure of his own line of retreat, lest the scheme miscarry. Then he armed a vessel, put it under command of his brother, and had it beat back and forth across the harbor as if at sailing practice. After that his followers occupied all the fortified points in the city. Finally he had Dion's residence surrounded with trusty guardsmen. So far, good. Some of the followers who had started with him from Zacynthus—he picked the boldest and strongest—went into Dion's house, bearing no weapons. They barred themselves in, tied Dion up as if he were an animal for sacrifice, and, being weaponless, tried to finish him off with their bare hands. The uproar was heard outside, but no one thought it expedient to intervene. The attackers' mere hands not sufficing, a sword was passed in from outside through the window.

So, in the fifty-fifth year of his life, died the austere and bigoted nobleman Dion, thirty years after bringing his master Plato and Dionysius the Great together, ten years after guiding Dionysius the Little to the same master, and in the fifth year after embarking on his philosophic coup d'état. No man took it on himself to avenge his death. Callippus dispatched a bombastic letter to Athens. Dion was ostentatiously cremated at state expense and accorded a memorial monument in one of the most frequented squares.

Even men who had berated him as a tyrant during his lifetime extolled him as a liberator after his death. The dominating sentiment was relief at having been delivered from him. This handsome treatment was, however, reserved for the part of him that was dead. All of him that remained alive was vouchsafed a good deal less honor. His pregnant wife had to bear her child in a prison dungeon.

The assassination of Dion was a grievous blow to the Academy, which was, after all, a good deal more than a research institute for calculating the orbits of stars and of ideas.

It had reared within all men's sight its pretension to deliver humanity from every confusion and set its affairs in order for ever. The experiment had been made—made by a pre-eminent person in a pre-eminent place. And what it all came to was that the perfect ruler had left the world even more imperfect than he had found it.

Plato was undergoing the most grievous of his defeats. Why, was not that Academy of his an actual hatchery of assassins ? The story did not end with Callippus. There was Chion, too—another Platonic product who, at the opposite margin of the Hellenic world, had slain the Prince of

Heracleia. It was by suchlike fruits that an invidious world was appraising the sacrosanct shrine of learning.

Plato did not allow himself to be dismayed. He took under advisement the plea of Dion's political associates that he would compose for the occasion a stately obituary on his favorite pupil. He was as certain that Dion had been a perfect statesman as it is possible to be of anything whatever about another human being. Dion would have delivered his country from every form of servitude. He would have given it the best possible code of laws. And if he had got as far as that, if this just, courageous, moderate, scientifically educated man could have restored public order in his homeland, then even the recalcitrant masses themselves would have succumbed to persuasion. Why, his leverage would have made itself felt all over the world! Why, the victor's crown was already radiant on his head when malignant fate suddenly snatched him away! Malignant fate has to be invoked to exculpate many a man who has tried and failed. Plato the Thinker actually saw no occasion to analyze the soil out of which this calamity had grown. The defeated will never admit that they are defeated enough for that.

Plato did not feel himself to have been in any way confuted. What he felt was sadness. He had lost the human being who was dearest to him, and who was also the last of his hopes. Despite all his disapprobation of Dion's adventure he had been quite unable to keep himself from entertaining hopes of it. Now it was all over, so far as his lifetime was concerned. He was thinking, as excessively demanding people do when disappointed, in terms of catastrophe. The partisans of tyranny and those of democracy were going to be plunged into the same abyss. In the place where the Perfect State was to have come to flower, the sound of the Hellenic lute would soon be heard no more. He was troubled

in his mind, and the future was looking troublous. His faith, though, remained untroubled. In the face of all troublement he still had the strength to formulate a fresh solution. In all conscience, a tenacious dreamer!

For two thousand years the world has been doing Plato the injustice of elbowing him aside, albeit deferentially, as a utopian and nothing more. There are a thousand beguiling ideas in the world. They blow like gentle winds over the surfaces of solid realities without jostling them from their foundations. When that happens we can say that the realities were too unyielding. We can also say that the ideas were too impotent. Plato's conception was not that sort of gentle breeze blowing against solid realities. He understood that the idea could wax great and strong only so far as ways were paved for it into the realm of power. To power he was by no means oblivious. For all that, it would never have entered his head to seek this valued and coveted power in the hands of the common people; and indeed it would not have been possible to use them for the creation of a state in which the lower orders should exist under surveillance, like a tenderly shepherded flock of sheep. Plato recoiled from the irrationality of the mass, and left its energies, which could have brought his ideas to full flower, quite untapped. Power, which is indispensable if the perfect conception is to be turned into the perfect reality, was rather what he sought and found nowhere but in the domain of existing empire—in fine, in the tyrant. Thus he spent his whole life trying to prevail on high and mighty personages to take his great plan under their sponsorship. The elder Dionysius had given the planner but short shrift. His successor, Dionysius the Little, had made up his mind that Plato had to agree with him, not he with Plato. The third, Dion, had actually endeavored to establish what Plato had

but conceived, and he had been destroyed. All Plato's instruments were now lost to him—the malevolent one, the undependable one, and, for pressing down of the measure, at last the tractable unlucky one, Dion. He was only sorry that he considered himself too old to be still on the lookout for a fourth.

Those who were resorting to him now were the bereft, the mourners. Not even to these did he deny himself; but he did not repose vast confidence in them, and in no time at all he was dealing with them in the tone of warning. If they were merely looking for a famous co-worker in some new cabal, they were not to count on him. They would have to espouse Dion's creed. They would have to prove that their zeal was commensurate with his. They would have to foot their way over the precariously narrow path between tyranny and licentious liberty. Granted thus much, he would be their man.

He had nothing more to say now about the dictatorship of mind. The hour in which Perfection might have arisen had slipped ingloriously away. The question now was solely of circumventing the worst evil; and the worst evil was the crumbling of foundations. A bad stability was always better than the best revolution. He made his plea, then, in this critical hour, for a united front of all the pretenders to the throne, of the houses of both the Dionysii and Hipparinus—Hipparinus the son of Dionysius I, Hipparinus the son of Dion, and Dion the younger. These were to work with a coalition of worthy gentlemen—men who had, first, excellent repute; secondly, mature years; thirdly, wives and children and their own homes; fourthly, a long line of respectable ancestors; and, fifthly, some landed property to attest their independence. These men were to promulgate laws that expressed the moral sense of the community.

What the moral sense of the community might be, he did not investigate. Plato the king had become exceedingly restrained in his demands. He had reached the point of being satisfied with avoidance of utter collapse. Hard on eighty now, he had gone through a great deal and was more than ready for peaceful adjustments. The trouble was, other men were not peaceably minded.

In his middle years he had looked forward with pleasure to the placid evening of life. The fleshly appetites would have ceased to hound him; he would have been freed of many an insensate tyranny. Yet even at eighty he might not have relinquished the subjection of mankind to the eternal order of things if mankind itself had not grown so senile that weight of years was beginning to oppress even its most robust specimen. The Grecian world was weary unto death. The second Athenian maritime league had disintegrated. Sparta and Thebes were exhausted. At Delphi the Phocian tyrants were holding an army of mercenaries together by resorting to the treasures of Apollo's temple. The frontiers showed signs of crumbling. The whole East was dominated by Persia. Philip of Macedonia was subjugating the North. And in the West Carthage and Rome were coming to the fore.

And look at Sicily—his own Sicily, the focal point of forty years of his hopes! After Dion's death the man who had murdered him ruled for thirteen months. To begin with he had popular support. Then the people began to feel that they were being oppressed, and they drove him out. But there was no one in that whole vast island who would undertake to cope with him. He regained a foothold by the use of armed force, only to be dispatched in the end with the selfsame blade with which Dion had been struck down. Even the assassin of Callippus was himself assassi-

nated. Dion's widow bore another son in prison. Friends of her dead husband presently had her and her child put aboard a vessel sailing for the Peloponnesus and pushed overboard somewhere on the way. Dionysius' stepbrother Hipparinus ruled for a short interval, lorded it, caroused, and died in his cups. His brother, who succeeded him, was expelled by Dionysius himself, who returned from ten years' exile to his Ortygian fastness and fresh crimes. His wife, two daughters, and a younger son, whom he had left behind in Locri, were there horribly tortured to death, for the exalted exile had dealt with his place of refuge very much as he had with his own country aforetime. All this had come to pass in Syracuse. And the whole island was a menagerie of dictators. The one omnipotent tyranny had been converted, not into the Perfect State, but rather into a multitude of petty and powerless despotisms. Even the holy alliance that Plato had projected had come to nought. The aged philosopher's memory was dwelling with actual gratitude on his great early antagonist, who had at least unified the island and defended it. It is regrettable that the seer pursued this belated reflection no further; he might have delivered himself of some invaluable observations on the subject.

Plato was near the end of his rope. Had his former tenacious belief in the unity of all things been undermined, too? It might be that this earth was not the center of the universe after all. It might be that the Mediterranean was no more than a trivial puddle in comparison with the many waters of ocean. His uncertainty was increasing. How, now, to command the hardihood required for dictating to mankind a timetable good for all eternity? Once upon a time he had reared a perfect structure in flat defiance of all the governments of his time, whether dictatorships run by

assassination and terrorism or democracies run by accidental majorities. So and no otherwise must you live if you are to live at all! Now he was recanting the "So and no otherwise." Ah, all that had been nought but a ravishing and extravagant dream, a poem, a beguiling parlor game. What was needed was more moderation. And if it should transpire that even the new moderation was too immoderate, it would have to be moderated still again. It was not for humanity to demand the unattainable.

Amenable as he had become, however, he continued to be the stern lawgiver he had always been. Once he had overvalued mankind, and he resented the fact that he had done so, and now he was paying the old score by somewhat undervaluing mankind. Indeed and indeed, he declared in his distress, the affairs of these ephemeral creatures were utterly unworthy of a great and dedicated enthusiasm. And then he went on dedicating the rest of his days to putting these affairs to rights. All Greece is in decay, Sicily falls in ruins, for Plato himself the sands are fast running out—and he devises still another pattern for society. It is a good deal less grandiose than the Perfect State, and it is readily imaginable that he is able to experience nothing of the old pleasure in the building of it. Nevertheless, what underlies it is the old foundation, intact: the axiom of morality that all men think it natural and right to love themselves without measure, and that this self-love is the wellspring of all evil. It is too difficult to persuade his fellow men that this self-love of theirs is neither natural nor right, and therefore he has long been trying to circumvent it by a subterfuge. He has been determined to convince his contemporaries that the righteous man has a much more agreeable existence than the unrighteous. What a pack of fallacies he has got himself committed to in the course of bolstering this pious

fiction with the most telling arguments ! The false premises have never yet failed to be followed by the false conclusion: to wit, that the life of the unjust man is of necessity not only more shameful, but also more unpleasant, than that of the just man. If people in general had had the feeblest grasp of that dictum, he would not have had to be laying down so many laws at the age of eighty.

And what a vast number he was laying down ! Because anyone who imagined that regulations were necessary only for man's life in society, and that in private living every man might do as seemed good in his own eyes, was making an egregious mistake. As long as there was any single province of existence abandoned to disorder, there was always the risk that disorder would spread far and wide from that province. Therefore it had to be provided with all particularity how any given man was to employ his time from every sunrise to the next. Back in the days when Plato had still believed that all details could be left to the discretion of his philosopher kings, he had not had to bother his head about individuals. He had now parted with his faith in the possibility of power without the abuse of power, and therefore everything down to the most microscopic detail had to be regulated by statute.

How many men friends of the groom and how many women friends of the bride and how many family connections of both were to be invited to the wedding feast; what was to be done when the earth was so dry that it absorbed all falling water and no water table was to be found even by digging down into bottommost clay; why it was deleterious to the young to go fishing or fowling; what fruits and how much of each a traveler ought to take with him; how a master was to be punished, and how a slave, when either partook of forbidden fruits or partook to excess—on all

these problems and thousands more Plato had handed down definitive pronouncements. He had even stipulated what was to be done when a beast of burden or other animal killed a human being. Even in that event, the victim's relatives could lay a charge of murder, and if the animal were found guilty, it was to be put to death and thrust across the country's boundary like any other murderer. The same procedure was to apply when a human being was killed by any inanimate object. The dead person's next of kin was to summon the nearest neighbor to pass judgment, and he was to have the guilty object deported from the country.

Plato could now die in peace.

For whom, exactly, was he doing all this? Possibly the old man asked himself that question. During the last five years of his life no single new work of his pen was given to the world. For whom, indeed? His *Laws*—that collection was simply a series of lectures for his own institute. Plato's name and Plato's subject drew many a curiosity-seeker, including two Peloponnesian women who turned up in men's clothing. But the auditorium became steadily less and less well filled. People were terribly bored by all this solemnity.

On the last evening of all a girl from Thrace played music. It was provoking that she should play so erratically. She propitiated Plato, however, by admitting that to be a finished artist one had to be a Greek. Plato was laid in the earth without pomp and without sight-seers; for his kingdom was still a kingdom unknown. There was no Plato to chronicle his life and his death; and he left no disciple that was his peer. The elder Dionysius had had his Philistus. But Plato, when all was said, had been only a secret dictator who had brought no miseries on mankind, and who for that reason had aroused in mankind no extraordinary inter-

est. It was for that reason that his nephew Speusippus, the new director of the school, tried to heighten Plato's renown a little by resorting to an inadmissible distortion of the family genealogy that made his sainted uncle a descendant of Apollo.

Dionysius the Great left behind at his death all Sicily, the southwestern tip of Italy, a hundred thousand foot soldiers, nine thousand horsemen, four hundred triremes, five hundred transports, fortresses, harbors, catapults, suits of armor, greaves, swords, spears, shields, a million and a half bushels of grain, and a name that filled the world like a thunderclap. Plato, his antagonist for time and eternity, left behind him two cottages, one debtor (a stone mason), two silver drinking cups, a gold ring, a pair of earrings, and an alarm clock—for it was his view that much sleeping was salutary for neither body nor soul, a man asleep being of no more use to anybody than a man dead.

Outside of these effects, Plato left behind him something over twenty-five dialogues that have already outlasted Dionysius' Ortygian walls by two thousand years.

Plato lost nothing whatever by his failure to survive the second reign of his Dionysius. All that this sovereign had left after two years was the choice of delivering Syracuse to his worst enemy, Hicetas of Leontini, or to his next worst enemy, Timoleon of Corinth, or, thirdly, to the Carthaginian empire. The city was being eyed with expectant greed by all three.

The asylum appointed for him after the surrender was Corinth. There he lived on his capital and on the delusion that he had been disastrously at fault in the selection of his birth date. Had it come thirty years earlier than it did, he too would have been Dionysius the Great. The period in

which his father had come to power—that had been the great age. Democracy had been an object of hatred in those days, and its assailants objects of affection. But by the time he himself had attained the throne people had no more use for strong men. This was the cold comfort that an extremely weak devotee of power would permit himself in his exile.

He did not last very long, and neither did his money. Dionysius sold his priceless furnishings to the tyrant of Heracleia, and in no time at all after that he was going about in rags. What a spectacle for foreigners ! Indeed, the transience of glory is not without its fascinations. Behold, all ye inglorious ones, what the one-time heir to the one-time omnipotence of Syracuse looks like in these latter days ! He haggles with a vegetable woman in the market place. He stares hungry-eyed into butchers' shops. He loafs around taverns and drinks with the more debased sort. He beckons to common women in the public street and gives lessons to songstresses of dubious character, it may be to obtain an enjoyment that he is otherwise unable to procure. "What did it profit you, O Dionysius, to do all that philosophizing with your Plato ?" malicious tongues are asking; whereto this oddest of Platonists retorts: "Do you count it as nothing that I endure my change of fortune with such equanimity ?" Dionysius' weakness for Plato had perhaps been the sole display of strength in his whole weak career.

Even deposed gods sooner or later become a bore. In time Dionysius no longer had any money, any accurate recollection of his past career, or—finally—any spectators. He lapsed into oblivion like any other corpse. The little of him that still breathed had for a good while past had no connection with the despot's famed philosophic offspring. And he was actually in business now, though the business was a far cry from the one to which he had been born some decades

earlier. There were sundry persons who made nocturnal excursions into the hills uttering raucous screams, dancing dementedly to the Phrygian flute, beating their drums with pitiless monotony. Sundry other persons gave them the bread of charity by way of provision against certain contingencies—in order, for example, to induce these priests of the mighty mother of the gods to give absolution for the crime of murder to him who had need of it. The second lord of Ortygia became, in his declining years, one of these distracted drummers.

It is easy enough to comprehend what drew him to this occupation. He whose soul is a monstrous void is relieved enough when he can usher into it a monstrous god, for it takes a deal of filling. In time gone by, Plato had been that omnipotent indweller. His place had now come to be occupied by the mother of the gods, Cybele. Dionysius had not been assassinated; he did not drink himself to death. He danced and sang and begged his way to the grave.

To posterity, however, he is simply one of those grayed, cracked walls on which great artists have painted their glowing murals. The walls collapse because they are made of inadequate materials, and there remains nothing but the memory of what they contained. Dionysius did not live up to the picture of the Perfect State of which he was to have been the vehicle to all eternity. Mankind has not lived up to the mighty dream of the Perfect State's mighty poet. Is mankind never to fulfill that dream ?

Is our species too frail a vehicle for the strongest of its own yearnings ?

Epilogue

EPILOGUE

THE LONGING FOR THE GOOD SOCIETY

THE HISTORY of the craving for solidarity among human beings and groups of human beings is a very long one, and it is rich in brilliant figures and extremely arresting adventures. On the literary side the history of this craving can be traced back at least as far as the prophet Isaiah, who set down this promise: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." These words are among the earliest descriptions of the classless society.

In the Greek language this same longing is supposed to have attained very early expression in the *Sacred History* of Euhemerus of Messana and in the *Island of the Sun* of one Iambulus—works neither of which has survived. The two most celebrated masterpieces of utopian writing are the Republic of Plato, of the fourth century before Christ, and Thomas More's Utopia, of the fifteenth century after Christ. The Athenian and the Londoner are alike in that they are not so much preoccupied with wolves and lambs as with the actual organization of the ideal society. They have progressed to the stage of developing rather specific programs according to which it is to operate.

Regardless of the stages through which civilization may

have evolved between Isaiah, who was a Marxist, and Karl Marx, who was a prophet, all utopians have been in one respect alike. They have refused to accept the world in which they lived, with its overt and disguised wars, its overt and disguised civil wars, as a matter of course; and the reforms that they projected for it were no trifling ones. They have done what none of the mere reformers have done, from Henri IV to Geneva and San Francisco: recklessly challenged the fundamental assumptions of their own forms of life. To do that is what it means to be a utopian. Here is one example: In the second century after Christ a certain Epiphanes said that the injunction of the Hebraic lawgiver, "Thou shalt not covet," was nonsense, and that the way to achieve well-being was to do away with need, not to command the needy not to covet things. Epiphanes was a utopian.

The point on which all utopians were agreed, then, from Isaiah and Plato down to More and Marx, was this: that mankind was not condemned by God's fiat or Nature's law to jog on forever at the same sluggish pace at which it had advanced through the millennia of recorded history. The points on which these utopians radically disagreed are summed up in two principal questions. First, how much of our present misery is inherent in the nature of things and would still exist even in a heaven on earth? (There have been some extremely conservative utopians.) Secondly, who is to bring about the revolution and lead mankind forward from its benightedness to felicity? (There have been aristocratic utopians and proletarian ones.) On these two questions, more than on any other points, utopians have been divided.

Consider Plato. He was a utopian, in that he appears as one of the most radical of revolutionists if you compare his

pattern of the good society with any actual society known to history. In his state the ones who control all the power neither possess any private property nor enjoy any freedom, whereas their subjects have both. No such state has ever existed. This incidence of power with renunciation contradicts what every system of psychology as yet extant has taught about human nature. Despite his radicalism in this respect, Plato was nevertheless intensely conservative in maintaining that caste differences were a product of Nature herself—that peasants and soldiers and philosophers were born to be such. And this rigidity of his world, a world in which a man was born to be a citizen or a slave "by nature," compelled him to project an ideal regimen that could work only under the philosophers' machine guns. Which is why Bertrand Russell, writing in 1945, allowed himself to be tempted into the slightly unphilosophical position of dealing with Plato as summarily as if he had been some contemporary British or American champion of the totalitarian state.

Utopians have not as a rule discarded *all* prejudices. They have discarded some and incorporated others. Even More adulterated his extremely bold vision of the good society-to-be with the most reactionary ingredients. Thus, he believed that even in the ideal society monogamy was a necessity—and an unnatural necessity. On that account his happy community was subject to a law promissory of singularly little happiness:

> If either the man or the woman be proved to have actually offended before theire marriage, with an other, the partye that so hathe trespaced is sharpelye punyshed. And bothe the offenders be forbidden ever after in al their lyfe to marrye: oneles the faulte be forgeven by the princes pardon. . . . That offense is so sharpelye punyshed, bicause they perceave, that oneles they

be diligentlye kepte from the libertye of this vice, fewe wyll joyne together in the love of marriage, wherein al the lyfe must be led with one, and also al the griefes and displeasures comming therewith paciently be taken and borne.

In order, however, to lend the forbidding institution at least a show of greater attractiveness, the Utopians, by vote of their married couples, applied the following procedure:

For a sad and an honest matrone sheweth the woman, be she mayde or widdowe, naked to the wower. And lykewyse a sage and discrete man exhibyteth the wower naked to the woman. At this custome we laughed, and disalowed it as foolishe. But they on the other part doo greatly wonder at the follye of al other nations, whyche in byinge a colte, whereas a lytle money is in hasarde, be so charye and circumspecte, that thoughe he be almoste all bare, yet they wyll not bye hym, oneles the saddel and all the harneies be taken of, leaste under those coverynges be hydde som galle or soore. And yet in chuesinge a wyfe, whyche shal be either pleasure or displeasure to them al theire lyfe after, they be so recheles, that al the resydewe of the woomans bodye beinge covered with cloothes, they esteme her scaselye be one handebredeth (for they can se no more but her face).

Our advocates of trial marriage will detect in this utopian nothing other than a somewhat formidable precursor. Even the most remarkable utopians have never been able entirely to divorce their thinking from that of the people who made up their environment.

The more happiness the utopians expected to attain and the wider they thought the gulf between the actual present and the good society, the less they tried to depict the future in circumstantial detail; for no one can do his depicting with pigments that have not yet come into existence. Thus,

we can put beside the negative systems of theology—that is to say, the ones that reveal the nature of God in terms of what He is not—the negative utopias, which reveal the perfect community in terms of what it is not. The Superman is one such utopian negation; the Classless Society is another. Marx's work contains no affirmative corollary to the negation—no looking forward such as appears in Plato and More. And the affirmations that Nietzsche pronounced about the Superman, though meant figuratively, have been interpreted literally, to the complete obfuscation thus far of the truths embodied in them.

The Utopians disagree, then, as to the amount of existing human misery they will have to drag along with them into their happy society of the future, and they disagree as to who must terminate the present world order and usher in the happy society. To the second question Plato's answer was: the ruling class—as soon as it has become wise and good. Thus far his program has always come to grief against this "as soon as." Marx's answer was: the triumphant proletariat—as soon as it has become just. Actually, he did not put it quite that way: rather, he tacitly affirmed that the proletariat, as soon as it had gained the upper hand, would no longer either oppress or be oppressed. This implicit hypothesis has proved itself to be quite as dubious as Plato's "as soon as."

2.

The longing for the good society is not, when all is said, an impulse that exhausts itself in mere literature. Plato's Republic itself was something more than an intellectual labor on the part of the founder of the Academy. Indeed, both the founding of the Academy and the very inception of the Republic itself were nothing but sublimations or substitutes, resorted to when Dionysius I and Dionysius II successively

barred the way to the founding of the good society. It is perhaps a safe enough generalization if we say that utopias have very rarely been nothing but literature, nothing but reveries or fantasies or pastimes.

They have always been primarily strokes, challenges, manifestoes—writings done in hot haste to hasten man on his way to heaven. They have often been, indeed, nothing more than the incidental music played at times when (shall we say?) the Cathari or the Brothers of the Free Spirit or the Taborites or the Lollards or the Anabaptists or the Levelers were getting ready to crash away from the humdrum of ordinary historical sequence. One such utopian eruption had its being in the words "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité," although these words presently began to sound rather like the names of three partners in a business establishment of great prestige. The present indigence of a fine word does not affect the illustriousness of its lineage.

Utopianism has invariably been the mightiest force at work in the great revolutions. Those revolutions are not to be understood without a vivid realization that their momentum is a composite of two forces alien or even hostile to each other: a historically conditioned struggle for power, and a suprahistorical, world-old, still unconsummated struggle for heaven on earth. Both struggles are sometimes waged by the same persons; and that is why so many revolutionaries are enigmatic to us. In the battle for power the rulers want to keep on ruling, and the ruled want, first, not to be ruled and, secondly, to do the ruling themselves. But these oppressors-to-be are also—without prejudice to their later history—invariably the natural vehicles of the utopian aspiration; for those who suffer are more urgently concerned about making a heaven on earth than those who do not suffer.

Thus, no one is entitled to discount the formula "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" as so much hypocrisy or grandiloquence, merely because the passionate prophets of liberty, equality, and brotherhood began by being confused in their thinking, went on by becoming subtle humbugs, and ended by degenerating into dreary after-dinner speakers. No revolution is worth any more than the amount of craving for happiness it has generated; all else is simply the substitution of a more up-to-date kind of inhumanity for an obsolete kind. It is a sheer superstition that the bourgeois pattern is *in itself* superior to the feudalistic pattern, or that the socialistic pattern is *in itself* superior to the liberalistic pattern. The social pattern supplies no automatic measure of the degree of oppression that is being experienced.

Has the good society ever yet been realized in practice? Ancient Greece had its Pythagorean Brotherhood, ancient Palestine its sodality of Essenes. Throughout the centuries Asia and Europe have had a succession of cloistered brotherhoods—harmonious little local fellowships that anomalously achieved a serene internal order in the midst of the tumultuous external disorder around them. The world, having nothing to fear from them, left them in peace. The local Eden, the oasis in the desert, has always been a possibility and always will be one. If a man of wealth supplies the wherewithal, if a man of powerful influence devotes his energies, if the unifying idea or the unifying passion is itself powerful enough, what is to prevent a small-scale paradise from flowering for a time in the midst of the long-familiar pandemonium? But mark: the question then arises, Can this form of Paradise Limited make any difference to the general birthright of Paradise Lost?

There have also been any number of happy fellowships flowering in utter obscurity, held together by spontaneous

affinities, and for the most part emblazoned on no page of history. Many a marriage, many a family, many a friendship of past or present constitutes one of these miniature Edens. But the deliberately planned universal Eden, the paradise that denies and challenges the whole status quo, has never yet come to anything. Why has it not? Because the status quo unfailingly mobilizes all its resources against it. Dionysius I had Plato auctioned off in the slave market at Aegina. Dionysius II flung the prolocutor of the good society as a sop to his mercenaries. In these latter days the utopian is generally dealt with less dramatically. He is suppressed with the minimum of public outcry, with or without the shedding of blood, always according to the usages of the day.

Thus much is, however, but half the answer to the question why man's utopian aspirations have never yet been gratified. The world's so-called callousness is but partly to blame. The quixotic assurance of the utopians is to blame, too. The study of utopianism has no more important objective than the taming of the utopians' quixotism. What is to be learned from their exhibitions of this quality? Not where we want to go: Isaiah saw that with utter and final clarity. But we can learn from the utopians the ways whereby it is impossible to get where we want to go.

The inadequacy of the utopians does not consist in the fact that their formulas for arranging the perfect world are manifestly obsolete in the age of atom-splitting—the fact that any utopia of the past is bound to seem to our own time rather like the earliest locomotive seen in the railway terminal of a modern metropolis. Rather, their inadequacy consists far more in this: that utopians of both the Platonic and the Marxist kind had a too rudimentary, *too little utopian* conception of both the foundations of the good society and the superstructure to be reared thereon. It was

not the utopianism of all utopias thus far conceived that made them inadequate: it was rather their disguised conformity.

The opponents of utopias through the ages have resisted them, not because of any dearth of ardent imaginativeness, but, on the contrary, precisely because of their audacity. In any period of history whatever, the hardest of all assignments has been to conceive of a world in which the recognized laws of human nature are abrogated. From the time of Daedalus people have always had more imagination to squander on a world of human bodies able to fly than on a world of human spirits not at war with one another. All the people that felt comfortably at home in the world, all the people that were too tired or too indolent or too narrow to do otherwise than accept the extant as the inevitable, have always said of utopias: "Impossible!" And under every "Impossible!" they have put an underpinning of philosophy. The philosophy has been sometimes crude, sometimes highly refined, but it has always been reducible to this idea: that the Creator made his creatures, once for all, clean or filthy, rich or poor, cultivated or boorish; ergo, by divine dispensation it was idle to prate about a better society. In former periods this dogma was stated a good deal more brazenly and also more picturesquely than anyone ventures to state it now. Suppose we choose, then, as a prototype of the inveterate opponent of the utopians the Zürich choirmaster Felix Hemmerlin, who wrote in the first half of the fifteenth century, in a composition entitled *De Nobilitate*:

> Beside the man of gentle birth he [the man of the common herd] looks, not like a human being, but like some hideous, half terrifying, half comic hobgoblin. He is a human being with back twisted and humped, shapeless as a mountain, with foul and grimacing visage, the stupid random stare of the donkey, brow

covered with furrows, beard unkempt, hair a grayish matted thatch, eyes blear under brows like bristles; and he has a huge wen. His unshapely, coarse, mangy, shaggy body is upheld by wambling legs, and his foul and scanty clothing leaves his discolored and inhuman breast exposed to the sight.

What possibility was there of the good society when such a specimen of mankind could co-exist with the delicate nobleman? It was, then, the Creator Himself who had confounded the anticipatory hopes vested in the various utopias.

At a later period the workingman was described in the terms here applied to the peasant; that is, as a monstrosity by nature. And in every period the same descriptive terms have been applied to those whom the awful pressure of society has so crushed that they are travesties of humankind. What the Hemmerlins have said is accurate in every respect but one: they impute to God or to human nature what is actually the ghastly work of their own species. Human beings are Nature's collaborators in the manufacture of human beings; and on the whole they are pretty deplorable craftsmen in that department.

Now, the utopians are the unremitting adversaries of all the sometimes fatuous, sometimes diabolically astute Hemmerlins. The utopians have played a searchlight on the whole process of manufacture that turns out bestialized peasants and brutalized workingmen, the whole process of manufacture that turns out human talent and human incompetence and such distinctively human attributes as jealousy, envy, spite, and many another disfigurement of the human spirit. And on this subject suppose we confront the choirmaster of Zürich with an opponent belonging to his own century—and no shaggy peasant, but an extremely

cultured and influential English gentleman. Thomas More, Chancellor of England and a utopian, displays in his Utopia a vast provisions warehouse from which every father of a family or head of a household takes whatever he and his are in need of, without money and without price. Now, surely no one will continue to doubt at this time of day that it is possible to produce a sufficiency of everything for everybody. But someone objects: "What would that lead to, human greed being what it is? Would it not lead to strife and bloodshed in the midst of abundance?" To that objection Thomas More replied over four centuries ago:

> Seynge there is abundaunce of all thinges, and that it is not to bee feared, leste anye man wyll aske more then he neadeth. For whie should it be thoughte that that man would aske more then anough, which is sewer never to lacke? Certeynly in all kyndes of lyvinge creatures either feare of lacke dothe cause covetousnes and ravyne, or in man only pryde, which counteth it a glorious thinge to passe and excel other in the superfluous and vain ostentation of thinges.

In such or suchlike terms the Mores have always answered the Hemmerlins.

The Hemmerlins retort, possibly in the words of a nineteenth-century Prussian teacher of jurisprudence: "It is the eternal and unalterable dispensation of God that the stronger rule, must rule, and will always rule." To which the Mores rejoin, possibly in the words of the philosopher Schopenhauer: "Though men's capacities are unequal, their rights are nevertheless equal, because their rights do not depend on their capacities." Thus this endless interplay of saying and gainsaying has gone on through the centuries.

How much longer is it to go on? In the beginning, the Word; at the end of words, the Deed.

3.

The Deed will never be the sequel to official speeches. Nothing so stultifies the living as the official vocabulary of their day. Neither will the Deed be the sequel to compromises. All that they ever lead to is a truce. The Deed will never be the sequel to anything short of the Platonic passion that insists: "Things are not to go on this way any longer."

What Plato, what the utopian of all men, can do for the extant part of the human race is to wrench it out of its apathy. For the first step toward the Deed is to launch a fervent "No!" at the world in which we are living. Plato is the classic non-conformist, and he said his "No!" with such emphasis that it reverberates in our ears to this day.

The second step is, without fear or favor, to think our way through to finality on the question, How must a society be organized that war may be an impossibility in it? Most of today's thinkers behave as cautiously in the vicinity of this question as if they were in a china shop, with do-not-touch signs on everything. Over here is Sovereignty with the do-not-touch warning on it. Over there is Liberty, similarly marked. The end of it all is that people think it best to stand fast in their tracks and merely bandy a few catch phrases to conceal the immobilization of their minds. How cabined and confined even Plato was! What we can learn from him is the grim determination that thinks the way through to finality.

That he failed to accomplish the Deed is neither here nor there as a commentary on the goal of his endeavors. Anyone who has ever calculated the number of experiments required from the time of Prometheus down to bring the modern match into existence will not be too quick to draw

the most pessimistic inferences from the miscarriage of the Platonic experiment in the creation of a society exempt from wars and from injustices. His life profits us, not by virtue of what he succeeded in doing, but by virtue of what he tried to do.

The tragedy of our own time, on the other hand, is not what it has failed to do, but rather what it has failed to try. It is in the trying that a viable idealism is to be found.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set in Electra, a Linotype face designed by W. A. Dwiggins. This face cannot be classified readily as either "modern" or "old-style." It is not based on any historical model, nor does it echo any particular period or style. It avoids the extreme contrast between "thick" and "thin" elements that marks most "modern" faces, and attempts to give a feeling of fluidity, power, and speed.

The book was composed, printed, and bound by Kingsport Press, Inc., Kingsport, Tennessee. Map of the Central Mediterranean drawn by Robert Galvin. Binding based on original designs by Warren Chappell.

DATE DUE		DATE DUE	
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