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I.—A Period of Opposition to *Sôphrosynê* in Greek Thought

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This paper examines the changing attitude towards *sôphrosynê* revealed by Greek literature of the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. During the Peloponnesian War and thereafter, this virtue, which had hitherto met only praise, was subjected to searching analysis and to varying degrees of hostility. Three principal types of criticism are distinguished, and the evidence for each is studied. The paper also suggests certain points of contact between Plato's treatment of *sôphrosynê* and the opposition to this quality which was so common in the generation preceding his.

Greek literature commonly praises *aretê* and the individual virtues of which it is composed. In particular, the four cardinal virtues, *phronêsis*, *dikaiosynê*, *andreia*, and *sôphrosynê*, once this canon had been established, received the commendation of poet, philosopher, orator, rhetorician, and historian alike.[1] Yet there was one period in Greek history during which the conventional estimate of some of these values wavered and was temporarily reversed. During the last third of the fifth century, when the Greeks were suffering the intellectual and moral revolution caused in part by the misery of the Peloponnesian War, and accelerated by the sophistic movement, each of these traditional virtues was reëxamined and redefined, and certain of them were rejected. In general the Greeks, however "enlightened," recognized the usefulness of *phronêsis* and *andreia*, but *dikaiosynê* and *sôphrosynê*, both

[1] It was Plato who in the *Republic* definitely limited the canon to the four virtues which became traditional (see 427E and James Adam *ad loc.*), but for at least a century before this time the Greeks had been familiar with a grouping of four or five virtues of primary importance. See Otto Kunsemüller, *Die Herkunft der platonischen Kardinaltugenden* (Erlangen, 1935) and the writer's forthcoming note in *AJPh* entitled "Pindar, Isthmian 8.24–28."

of which demanded the restraint or total suppression of certain appetities and ambitions, came to be looked upon with disfavor.[2] Variations in the Greek attitude towards *dikaiosynê* have been studied;[3] it remains to discover how *sôphrosynê* fared through this period of skepticism and hostility.

References to *sôphrosynê* in epic, lyric, and elegiac poetry, while infrequent, are always respectful. The meaning of this many-sided term may vary, but there is no doubt that the σώφρων ἀνήρ, whether modest and conscious of his limitations,[4] prudent,[5] sensible,[6] wise,[7] obedient to authority,[8] or free from *hybris*,[9] is worthy of honor. Heraclitus early in the fifth century calls σωφρονεῖν the highest excellence,[10] while Theognis personifies *Sôphrosynê* and locates her on Olympus among the gods.[11] When we turn to Athenian literature, the story is at first the same. Aeschylus always treats *sôphrosynê* as a desirable quality, and so, almost always, does Sophocles. In fact, it is probably correct to designate the first half of the fifth century as the high-water mark of *sôphrosynê* in Athens — of the practice of *sôphrosynê* by the Athenians and of popular esteem for the virtue as well. The Athenians, as we learn from Aeschylus and Herodotus, interpreted the Persian War in ethical terms as a conflict between *hybris* and *sôphrosynê*, and their own victory was in a sense the just reward bestowed by the gods upon σώφρων Athens.[12] That this interpretation of the great struggle was not confined to the intellectual minority, but was a deeply-felt con-

[2] See Plato, *Gorgias* 491B–492A, for the retention of *phronêsis* and *andreia* and the rejection of *dikaiosynê* and *sôphrosynê*.

[3] See especially Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, vol. 1 (2nd ed., New York, 1945) 321–330 and "Praise of Law: the Origin of Legal Philosophy and the Greeks," in *Interpretations of Modern Legal Philosophies* (New York, 1947) 352–375, esp. pp. 364–366; William Chase Greene, *Moira* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944) 266 ff.

[4] *Od.* 4.158.

[5] *Ibid.* 23.30.

[6] Phocylides, Frg. 11, Diehl; Theognis 431, 454, 483, 497, etc.

[7] Hipponax 61, Diehl; Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.63, Schroeder.

[8] Theognis 41, 1082a.

[9] *Id.* 379, 754.

[10] Diels 22B.112.

[11] 1136–1138.

[12] The issue in the *Persians* of Aeschylus is clear-cut. See especially the scene in which the ghost of Darius prophesies the final ruin of the Persian force and exposes the hybris of Xerxes (800–842), and compare Jaeger, *op. cit.* 1.256–257. Herodotus' study of the rise and fall of the Persian Empire places the blame for the Persian catastrophe upon the arrogance and ambition of Xerxes, and throws into strong contrast the discipline and moderation of the Greeks.

viction of the people as a whole, we may be very sure. The painting and sculpture of the period are radiant with the spirit of *sôphrosynê*, from the vase-paintings of the ripe archaic and early classical era to the statue of Apollo on the pediment of the temple at Olympia. This temple was completed almost simultaneously with the production at Athens of the *Oresteia*, a trilogy whose final drama proclaimed justice and *sôphrosynê* to be the inseparable ideals of the city-state.[13] If more explicit testimony to the popular attitude is required, we have the inscription on a red-figured pyxis dating from c. 480 B.C., the year of Salamis:

Σοφροσύνεν ἐνὶ κλά[δοις σ]μίλα[κος heιμένος]
[Στρόμβιχε, ἐλε]υθερίας καλὸν ἐχειστέφανον.

This skolion[14] is evidence that the Athenians associated *sôphrosynê* with their newly-vindicated freedom, while early Attic sepulchral inscriptions testify to the pride with which the dead laid claim to the virtue of *sôphrosynê*, the chief excellence of democratic citizens in time of peace, as courage was their boast in time of war.[15] From Aeschylus and Sophocles, Herodotus and the grave-epigrams, we learn that to the Athenians of the early and middle fifth century *sôphrosynê* implied good sense, moderation, self-knowledge, and that accurate observance of divine and human boundaries which protects man from dangerous extremes of every kind. In private life it is opposed to *hybris*, and in the life of the State to both anarchy and tyranny.

But the last three decades of the fifth century and the succeeding years of the fourth show a distinct tendency in Attic drama, historiography, and philosophy to reappraise *sôphrosynê* — and the result of this reappraisal is not always favorable. The new tendency takes three principal forms:

1. The concept of *sôphrosynê* is examined in all its phases, and stress is laid upon the danger of exaggerating any one aspect.
2. While *sôphrosynê* is not itself criticized, the term σώφρων is ironically applied to ignoble conduct.
3. The virtue itself is unmistakably condemned.

[13] See Charles T. Seltman, *Attic Vase-painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933) 74–75 and 89. Cf. also T. B. L. Webster, *Greek Art and Literature* (Oxford, 1939) 53–74.

[14] See Werner Peek, "Ein Attisches Skolion," *Hermes* 68 (1933) 118–121.

[15] See, for example, Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca*, 2, 3, 4.

(The order used here is not intended to be chronological. All three tendencies may be found both early and late in the period under consideration, but it seems psychologically probable that it was in this order that the changes arose in Greek thought.)

The first tendency is best exemplified by Euripides, who in two early tragedies and also in one of his last plays dramatically exposes the weakness of claimants to the title of σώφρων. In the *Medea* (431 B.C.) we see that Jason, who is credited by himself and by Medea with *sôphrosynê* (which here means both prudence and self-control, 549, 884), and who in turn criticizes Medea for her lack of this quality (913, 1369), is in actual fact cold, calculating, and governed entirely by narrow self-interest. In contrast to Medea's uncontrollable passions — rage, jealousy, pride — he seems at first glance to be the personification of self-control. It is soon clear, however, that he is not so much able to control his emotions as devoid of emotions to control. Even his second marriage is dictated, not by love for a woman younger and more innocent than Medea, but by ruthless ambition. His prudence is negative and mean, and has only the name in common with true *sôphrosynê*. Yet the fact remains that he does seriously describe himself as σώφρων, a misuse of the term which was probably typical of the complacent Athenians whom Euripides seems to ridicule in this portrait of Jason. It may not be far-fetched to find conscious irony in Medea's echo of Jason's boast, when during the scene of false surrender, she says, "I praise you now, and you seem to me to be wise (σωφρονεῖν) . . . but I was a fool (ἄφρων)" (884–885). Her subsequent description of how she would have behaved, had she been σώφρων, would deceive no one but Jason. Euripides himself could scarcely have been unaware that the *sôphrosynê* which Jason embodies is an unattractive quality.[16] The poet in fact here demonstrates the dawning awareness of the Greeks that even a virtue can lose its balance and that this particular virtue may degenerate from genuine self-control into heartless calculation and cruelty. It was the same realization that led Aristotle to formulate the theory of the mean, which opposed true *sôphrosynê* to the equally vicious extremes of profligacy and insensibility (*Eth. Nic.* 1118B.28–1119A.20).

A more devastating condemnation of one-sided *sôphrosynê*

[16] For an even stronger condemnation of the cold and self-seeking variety of *sôphrosynê* see Plato, *Phaedrus* 244A–245B, 256E.

emerges from the *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.), in which Euripides draws the least pleasant picture of the σώφρων ἀνήρ in Greek literature. The condemnation is particularly effective because this hero, unlike Jason, is famous in Greek tradition solely for his *sôphrosynê* (in this case, chastity). Euripides shows that his very strength is his weakness. The picture of the σώφρων ἀνήρ in this tragedy is offensive because Hippolytus, who repeatedly congratulates himself on possessing *sôphrosynê*,[17] in reality knows only one aspect of the virtue, and the lack of modesty, moderation, prudence, and self-control in their larger sense renders the possession of mere chastity a positive danger, because the possessor is so enamored of his asceticism as to deny utterly the legitimate claims of Aphrodite. It is not that he regards virginity as for him the supreme good and renounces love as a good that is not for him. Rather, he despises everyone who does not feel as he does, and condemns the entire race of women in extravagant terms (616). From the first appearance of Hippolytus before the statue of Artemis, paying honor to his patron goddess and expressing contempt for the Cyprian, Euripides demonstrates with pitiless clarity that chastity is not enough. The temperament of Hippolytus is dangerously out of balance. By boasting of his purity and reviling Phaedra — and indeed all women — for the lack of this precious virtue, Hippolytus shows himself to be one-sided in a way peculiarly repugnant to the Greeks. We cannot read this tragedy without concluding that it is fatal to exalt a single aspect of *sôphrosynê* at the expense of the others. Μηδὲν ἄγαν is an integral part of the virtue, and no one who chooses chastity but rejects moderation and the control of passions other than the sexual has the right to call himself σώφρων. Here, as in the *Medea*, but even more strikingly, Euripides focuses attention upon the sins that can be committed in the name of *sôphrosynê*.

The *Bacchae*, written many years after the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus*, has something of the same effect, so far as *sôphrosynê* is concerned, for in this brilliant tragedy we are again reminded of the folly of the narrow view. Pentheus, who regards himself as the champion of *sôphrosynê* and seeks to safeguard this virtue among his people, is destroyed because *sôphrosynê* is much more than chastity or sobriety, and failing completely to understand its

[17] E.g., 79–80, 995, 1007, 1034–1035, 1100. Even as he dies, Hippolytus boasts that he surpasses all in *sôphrosynê* (1365).

true nature, he is guilty of *hybris*. Convinced without proof that the Bacchic rites are a cloak for every kind of immorality, he accuses the Bacchae, who include his own mother and her sisters, of "putting Aphrodite ahead of Bacchus" (225), and he does all in his power to oppose the new religion, even to the point of defying and imprisoning the god himself. Undeterred by the Messenger's report that he has seen the women sleeping σωφρόνως on the mountainside (686), Pentheus undertakes the spying expedition which results in his ghastly death. It is in the highest sense ironic that despite his sincere concern for the chastity and sobriety of his people, Pentheus himself, after he comes under the spell of Dionysus, proves lacking even in the elementary self-control that guards against what G. M. A. Grube calls "bibulous and sexual excesses."[18] *Sôphrosynê* in the wider sense of wisdom, self-knowledge, and moderation, Pentheus has always lacked. His want of the γνώμη σώφρων, indispensable to a life without grief (1002–1004), leads Pentheus to commit the acts of *hybris* which at length transform the kindly Dionysus into a terrible and ruthless fiend. As if to make his point unmistakable, Euripides has Dionysus himself at the end of the play tell the whole royal family in so many words that if they had possessed *sôphrosynê*, they would have been happy and the god would have been their ally (1341–1343). Once again Euripides has exposed, not *sôphrosynê*, but a false conception of the virtue, which is essentially the exaggeration of one aspect to the exclusion of all others.

In the sphere of government as well as of private morality, *sôphrosynê* was now tried and found wanting, or rather a certain type of behavior to which this term was applied proved worthy of condemnation. Thucydides, like Euripides, exposes the weakness of one kind of *sôphrosynê*, that aspect of the virtue which was commonly regarded as typical of Sparta. In the first two books of the *History*, Thucydides contrasts the domestic variety of Spartan *sôphrosynê* — rigid discipline and restraint imposed from without — with Athenian liberalism, and obviously prefers the latter,[19] but he reserves his most explicit criticism for Spartan *sôphrosynê* as it shows itself in international affairs where, from the point of view of the realistic historian, it is no match for Athenian aggressiveness

[18] *TAPhA* 66 (1935) 40.

[19] For this theme in the *History* consult J. H. Finley, Jr., *Thucydides* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), especially p. 149.

or *polypragmosynê*. At the Peloponnesian convention the Corinthians attribute Spartan backwardness and isolationism to a quality which is indifferently termed *hêsychia*, *apragmosynê* and *sôphrosynê*[20] — words which in the aristocratic ethics of lyric and elegiac poetry were terms of honor. All three names are here applied to a fatal quietism and slowness to act. The opposite of this conservatism is not only praised by Pericles as the virtue in a large measure responsible for Athenian greatness,[21] but under the name *polypragmosynê* is even hailed by Euphemus at Camarina as a benefit to all the Hellenes.[22] Nor is it only the Spartans whom Thucydides shows to be mistaken in the practice of this kind of *sôphrosynê* as a governmental policy. The Corcyraean envoys, requesting Athenian aid against Corinth, confess that their former policy of not making alliances, which they once regarded as *sôphrosynê*, has now proved to be folly and weakness.[23] Ordinarily, as A. W. Gomme points out, such a course would have been sensible for a state in the position of Corcyra, but "the result was now that the refusal to indulge in dangerous enterprises had led them into danger."[24] Thucydides' point is that caution can be as rash as bold activity, if it is not accompanied by accurate attention to the needs of the moment. Thucydides, we should note, condemns this inopportune *sôphrosynê*, not on moral but on utilitarian grounds. There are no moral values involved. What is called *sôphrosynê* simply does not, under these circumstances, produce the desired result. Thucydides has no objection to the ideal of *sôphrosynê* as moderation in government. There are many signs in the *History* that he approves of its application to internal affairs (see, for example, 8.64.5) and under the proper circumstances, he also commends its use in foreign policy (see the case of Chios, 8.24.4–5). But the *sôphrosynê* which proved detrimental to Sparta and to Corcyra was, like the so-called *sôphrosynê* of Jason, Hippolytus, and Pentheus, the fatal exaggeration of one side of a many-sided virtue. In this case it was prudence or caution driven to the dangerous

[20] 1.68.1, 1.69.4, 1.70.8–9. A discussion of the political implications of these terms may be found in A. W. Gomme's commentary on Thucydides 1.32.4 and 1.84.1 ff. (*A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* [Oxford, 1945], vol. 1).

[21] 2.40.2.

[22] 6.87. Cf. Euripides, *Supp.* 323–325, 561–563, 576–577.

[23] 1.32.4.

[24] Gomme, *op. cit.* 1.167.

extreme of lethargy.[25] It was *sôphrosynê* without *phronêsis* or *sophia*, an example of the danger which threatens one virtue when isolated from the others.

During this same period the second tendency mentioned above may also be observed: the ironical use of the term σώφρων to describe ignoble conduct, usually that of a coward. Not yet is *sôphrosynê* itself disparaged, but by a semantic twist, an honored name is applied to something dishonorable. Because *sôphrosynê* implied discretion it could easily be exaggerated into excessive caution, and hence into cowardice.[26] Several writers of the late fifth century reflect popular awareness of the ease with which this virtue might degenerate into the vice of δειλία. Thus in Aristophanes' *Peace* (421 B.C.) the word σώφρων distinctly implies excessive caution, when Trygaeus, dismissing the son of the soldier Lamachus, who sings of battles, sends for the son of Cleonymus, a notorious craven who had cast his shield away, and says, "I know you will not sing warlike songs, for you come of a discreet father (σώφρονος γὰρ εἶ πατρός, 1297). The same implication emerges from a passage in the *Philoctetes* (409 B.C.), which again equates *sôphrosynê* with excessive caution. When Odysseus, afraid to join battle with Neoptolemus, weakly threatens to report him to the Greeks, the son of Achilles openly taunts him with cowardice and says, "ἐσωφρόνησας! If you are always so cautious, you will live in safety" (1259–1260). While Jebb may be justified in translating the ingressive aorist here as "Thou hast come to thy senses,"[27] the additional implications carried by the verb σωφρονεῖν should not be overlooked. Sophocles, like Aristophanes before him, is reflecting a contemporary tendency in Athenian speech. Their ironical use of the word σώφρων dimly foreshadows Plato's more profound philosophical investigation of the difference between the naturally placid

[25] Cf. Aristides, *Or.* 45.112, on the two kinds of *sôphrosynê*, that which is worthy of pains and befits a citizen, and that which belongs to the dull and sluggish. The second kind is also termed βλακεία (laziness, stupidity). See also Plato, *Politicus* 307B–C, where σώφρονα actions performed inopportunely (ἄκαιρα) are termed δειλὰ καὶ βλακικά.

[26] This possibility has been recognized at all periods. Cf. Milton, *Apology against a Pamphlet* (Columbia ed. vol. 3, p. 281), "Feare and dull disposition, lukewarmenesse and sloth are . . . wont to cloak themselves under the affected name of moderation." Ancient rhetoricians suggest ways to take advantage of this confusion. Thus the *Auctor ad Herennium* (3.3.5) bids us nullify our opponent's use of the virtue of *modestia* by saying that what he calls moderation is actually laziness or sloth. Cf. Quintilian 3.7.25; 8.6.36, and see Seneca, *Ep.* 45.7.

[27] *Philoctetes* (Cambridge, 1890), p. 195.

and spirited temperaments, which he designates as respectively σώφρων and ἀνδρικός.[28] It is important to observe that in these passages the poets merely apply the name of *sôphrosynê* to undesirable conduct, without hinting that the virtue itself, in its true sense, is unworthy of admiration.

Elsewhere, however, we find a complete reversal of traditional standards of morality, with the result that *sôphrosynê* itself is recognized for what it is — the virtue of self-control and moderation — and is nevertheless deliberately rejected. In this final stage there are two tendencies, corresponding to the two chief aspects of the virtue:

1. *Sôphrosynê* is actually, not just ironically, equated with cowardice.
2. The virtue is ridiculed and rejected because its practice interferes with the satisfaction of passion and desire.

The *locus classicus* for the equation of *sôphrosynê* with cowardice occurs in Thucydides' famous account of the distortion of all normal standards throughout Greece as a result of war and revolution. The ordinary meaning of words, he reports, was utterly changed. Rashness was called courage, prudent hesitation cowardice, and moderation a cloak for unmanliness (τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα).[29] This situation exactly reverses the process noted in Sophocles and Aristophanes, who ironically referred to cowardice as *sôphrosynê*. Now σώφρων behavior is regarded as cowardice. The other was merely the application of a good name to something bad, with no intentional slur upon the good thing itself. What Thucydides records is not just a matter of semantics; it is a vicious attack upon the real nature of a quality hitherto honored, but now, in the general collapse of morality, despised and labelled with a disgraceful name. That this tendency was recognized even at the beginning of the war we know from the speech of Archidamus (1.83–84) in which he urges the Spartans not to yield to popular belief that their policy of sensible caution (σωφροσύνη ἔμφρων) is

[28] *Politicus* 306B ff. Cf. *Republic* 410E–411A, 503C. Here again we see the danger that threatens any virtue in isolation. Plato shows us that the soft, gentle, quiet, and slow behavior of the σώφρων soul is capable of excess and may become cowardly and sluggish.

[29] 3.82.4. Cf. Isocrates, *Antidosis* 283–284, where he complains that people no longer use words in their proper meaning (κατὰ φύσιν) but transfer them from the fairest deeds to the most vile, and see also *Areopagiticus* 20.

actually unmanliness (*ἀνανδρία*). It was one of the most vicious results of the Peloponnesian War that this tendency deepened and spread until it infected the whole Greek world. Its spread was accelerated, to be sure, by forces other than those of war. New types of intellectual training, which included enlightened speculation about nature, theology, and ethics, taught the Greeks to question the old values. The literature of this period faithfully reflects the disintegration of morality under the impact of a thousand blows, while in the next generation Plato eloquently describes the confusion resulting in the minds of the young from injudicious exposure to the popular occupation of dialectic. In the *Republic* Socrates says that when childhood beliefs about justice, honor, goodness, and other virtues have been challenged, and the young man is helpless to refute the sophistic argument, he ceases to honor the old standards and adopts instead the way of life which satisfies his desires. He becomes, in short *παράνομος*, instead of *νόμιμος* (538C–539A). The consequence of this demoralization becomes clear elsewhere in the *Republic* when Plato associates it with the development of the tyrannical man; he too suffers his childhood beliefs about the honorable and the base to be overcome by a host of evil and lawless opinions and desires (574D). It is manifest from these passages that a great many virtues now suffered denigration. *Sôphrosynê*, because of its complex nature, was vulnerable at more than one point. We have already seen how it could be maligned as unmanliness, and the scornful equation of *sôphrosynê* with cowardice in Thucydides finds a parallel in the ridicule of chastity by the Unjust Logic in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and the savage attack upon self-restraint by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*.

The *Clouds* (423 B.C.) describes the effect on Greek morality, not of war and revolution, but of the new, sophistic education. In this play Aristophanes, who is fiercely loyal to the bygone era of gentlemanly leisure and tranquility, and the strict, old-fashioned *paideia* which produced it, launches his most violent attack upon sophistic education, showing it to be dishonest, unscrupulous, and profoundly dangerous to the welfare of the State. The essential viciousness of the new spirit in education emerges clearly from the contest between the Just and the Unjust Logic for the possession of young Pheidippides. The whole picture of *ἡ ἀρχαία παιδεία*, as presented by the Just Logic, is fragrant with the breath of the past, with the honest, old-fashioned perfume of *sôphrosynê*, moderation,

and propriety (962, 1006, 1029). But the Unjust Logic, in his sneering rebuttal, brings to bear all the current arguments against the old morality. Nowhere else in Greek literature, save in Plato's *Gorgias*, do we find so frankly and brutally expressed the reasons why the generation of Callicles and Pheidippides, Critias and Alcibiades rejected the traditional morality of their fathers and scorned especially the antiquated virtue of *sôphrosynê*. They openly disparage self-control, chastity, and moderation, on the ground that these virtues interfere with the satisfaction of the appetites, which is man's only goal in life. The passage in the *Clouds* is particularly valuable because it reproduces the reasoning of the ordinary product of the new education. The popular attitude is not justified by a might-makes-right philosophy, such as that with which Callicles sought to override Socrates, but is expressed in the simple terms of an elementary hedonism, based on the crudest demands for profit and pleasure. The Unjust Logic interprets *sôphrosynê* narrowly, as restraint of appetite, particularly as chastity, and as such he subjects it to prolonged ridicule, summing up his argument with the sweeping allegation that τὸ σωφρονεῖν deprives a man of all the delights of love, gaming, drinking, and feasting, — in fact of everything that makes life worth living (1071–1074).

The product of a certain type of sophistic education at its worst appears under the name of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*. Though not himself a sophist nor, so far as is known, a historical figure, he is no isolated phenomenon. Plato clearly intends him as an example of a class of well-educated and potentially dangerous Athenians with whom, as a nephew of Critias, he had had ample opportunity to become familiar. In Callicles are concentrated all the unscrupulous cleverness and unmastered desires that brought political and moral ruin to Athens during the Peloponnesian War, and in him we see how the intellectual keenness developed by the sophists could be perverted, when combined with materialistic values and ruthless egoism. Scornful of intellectual pursuits beyond a certain point, indifferent to conventional standards of morality, Callicles frankly advocates the ends always implicit in sophistic education as depicted by Plato, though rarely if ever so expressed by the great sophists — success as the aim in life and pleasure as the good. In his debate with Socrates over the true nature of the good, Callicles bases his stand upon the opposition between nature and convention (*physis* and *nomos*) which fascinated so many of his

contemporaries. Rejecting convention or law as the device invented by the weak to restrain the strong from "over-reaching" (*pleonexia*, 483B–C), he ridicules the ordinary notion of justice and insists that according to the law of nature (*κατὰ νόμον γε τὸν τῆς φύσεως*, 483E; cf. *τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον*, 484B), as manifested among animals and men alike, true justice requires that the stronger and superior have "more" (*πλέον*, 483D) than the weaker and inferior. By "stronger" (*δυνατώτεροι, ἰσχυρότεροι*), "superior" (*κρείττονες*) and "better" (*ἀμείνονες, βελτίονες*), Callicles means those who are wise and courageous with respect to public affairs and the proper way of conducting them (491B–C). Such "supermen" he believes should rule, and justice means that they should have more than those who are ruled. The reference to ruling gives Socrates his opportunity to introduce the notion of self-rule, *enkrateia* or *sôphrosynê*, a concept crucial for the whole dialogue and for the revelation here of Callicles' principles. Whatever his scorn for conventional notions of right and justice, Callicles reserves his most vitriolic attack for *sôphrosynê*, which Socrates here regards as the primary virtue and the quality essential to the welfare of the individual and of society. Callicles, like the Unjust Logic in the *Clouds*, is convinced that *sôphrosynê* destroys all that is most precious in life. According to his naturalistic standards true happiness (and true virtue as well) consists in having the strongest possible desires and being able to satisfy them completely.[30] It is important to realize that the ability to satisfy these desires depends upon the possession of *andreia* and *phronêsis*. Thus these two virtues are put at the service of *ἐπιθυμία* (492A), an odd anticipation of the Epicurean picture which so dis-

[30] 492A, C, D, E; 494C. An amusing picture of man in the state of nature approved by Callicles appears in the *Cyclops* by Euripides which, although written too early to be interpreted as a satire on the cult of *physis* and the right of the strong, often reads like a deliberate parody. Polyphemus, declaring himself skeptical about the power of Zeus, says that he sacrifices to himself, not to any god, save the greatest of gods, *ἡ γαστήρ*. To eat and drink every day and suffer no grief, this is Zeus to men of good sense — *τοῖς σώφροσι* (336–338). *Σώφρων* here is equivalent to *σοφός* in 316, where the Cyclops says that wealth is god to the wise, but the force of the jest is doubled by the use of a word which customarily meant "temperate" as well as "wise." Whether deliberately or not, Euripides has provided a unique example of the reversal of meaning in ethical terminology, but has gone much further than any serious advocate of *paracharaxis*. Callicles proposed a new definition of justice — the rule of the strong — and of *aretê* — the satisfaction of the appetites — but he could find no definition of *sôphrosynê* which would make that stubborn virtue acceptable to his code of values. Only in the patent foolery of the satyr play can *sôphrosynê* be distorted into the worship of gluttony.

gusted Cicero and Seneca — Pleasure surrounded by her handmaidens, the Virtues.[31] Callicles inevitably regards as happiest of men the tyrant, who is subject to no restraint, and rejects with open contempt Socrates' suggestion that command of others is less essential than mastery of self (491D ff.). Self-control, like law and conventional justice earlier in the dialogue, is the invention of the weak, who, being unable to satisfy their own desires, try to impose an unnatural restraint upon the strong.[32] But for those who are powerful, nothing can be more vile and disgraceful than *sôphrosynê* and justice, which make slaves of those who would otherwise be free.[33] Licence and complete want of restraint, if aided by force, constitute true virtue and happiness. Hence Callicles labels the σώφρονες fools,[34] and says that the weak give praise to both *sôphrosynê* and justice because of their own unmanliness (ἀνανδρία, 492B).

In the *Republic* Plato's picture of the "democratic" man sheds still greater light on the tendency to reject the old virtues. The democratic man calls modesty foolishness, *sôphrosynê* cowardice (ἀνανδρία once more), moderation and orderly expenditure boorishness and illiberality (560D). Like Callicles and the Unjust Logic, he is a slave to many vicious desires.[35] Clearly this open contempt for the virtues that involve self-restraint was wide-spread in Greece after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, and the direct testimony of Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Plato merely makes explicit what is in any case perceptible in much of the literature of the period — the general breakdown of moral standards and the loosing of appetites that had hitherto been held in check. It is no accident that Euripides so often portrays the victory of passion

[31] Cicero, *De fin.* 2.21.69; 2.12.37; Seneca, *De benef.* 4.2.1.

[32] 492A–B. This theory of the origin of self-control is of course reminiscent of Critias' cynical suggestion that law and religion were invented for a similar purpose. See Critias, Diels 88B.25.

[33] The coupling of *sôphrosynê* with slavery has for a counterpart the equation of ἀκολασία and ἐλευθερία. See *Gorgias* 492C and *Republic* 557B, and cf. Isocrates, *Areopagiticus* 20.

[34] Τοὺς ἠλιθίους, 491E. Cf. *Republic* 348D, where Thrasymachus says that justice is mere foolishness (εὐηθία). The many parallels between the arguments of Thrasymachus and Callicles have often been observed. Especially striking are 338C (the definition of justice as the advantage of the stronger), 344A (happiest of men is the tyrant), 344C (men censure injustice because they fear, not to do, but to suffer τὰ ἄδικα. Injustice is stronger, freer, and more masterful than justice), and 348D (the unjust appear to be wise and brave).

[35] See also the description of the oligarchical and tyrannical types (*Repub.* 553A ff. and 574C ff.), which share in one degree or another the democratic man's subjection to desire.

over reason and the effect on the individual and society of rage, folly, and intemperance. The course of Athenian politics during the last three decades of the fifth century provides many illustrations of the defeat of justice and *sôphrosynê* by both personal ambition and *pleonexia* on a national scale. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the contrast which Thucydides draws between the moderation of Pericles and the excesses of those who succeeded him in power, democrat and oligarch alike.

But hostility or distaste was not the only reaction to *sôphrosynê* during these years. Democritus is an eminent example of the individualist who, like Callicles, is chiefly concerned with the relation of *sôphrosynê* to *hêdonê* and yet unlike Callicles regards the virtue, not as an obstacle, but as a positive aid to the enjoyment of pleasure. Moderation, *metriotês* or *sôphrosynê*, is the key to the sensible hedonism of Democritus, and this note runs all through his ethical maxims, presenting the greatest possible contrast to the contemporary sophistic argument that happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction are incompatible with self-restraint. Democritus says, for example, "*Sôphrosynê* increases delights and makes pleasures greater" (Diels 68B.211) and "The pleasures that come least frequently give most enjoyment" (Diels 68B.232). He is careful to distinguish between good and bad pleasures and frequently shows that the best pleasures are somehow connected with intellectual and spiritual values, especially τὸ καλόν (see Diels 68B.207, 189, 194).[36]

In addition to the contempt expressed by Callicles and the Unjust Logic, and the admiration of Democritus, several other divergent attitudes towards *sôphrosynê* may be discerned in philosophical thought of the late fifth century. Antiphon the Sophist and Critias, the uncle of Plato and the "most violent of the oligarchs" (Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.12), although both seem to have belonged to the school of thought which set nature above man-made law and regarded law and virtue as the product of convention, nevertheless left explicit evidence that they valued *sôphrosynê*, though perhaps only for utilitarian reasons.[37]

The true champion of *sôphrosynê* in these times is of course

[36] No doubt it was partly the influence of Democritus which led Epicurus to temper the crude hedonism of the Cyrenaics with some traces of the *sôphrosynê* which they rejected.

[37] Antiphon, Diels 87B.58, 59; cf. also the discussion of the evils of anarchy and the value of obedience, Diels 87B.61. Critias, Diels 88B.6.22.

Socrates, whose abiding interest in the nature and value of this virtue scarcely needs to be cited, and it is in the work of his pupil Plato that the critical examination of *sôphrosynê* bore its greatest fruit. The emphasis which Plato puts upon the value of *sôphrosynê* to the individual soul and to the State is no doubt in great measure a reaction against the evils which had of late resulted from the violence done this virtue. It is tempting to speculate upon the relation between Plato's approach to *sôphrosynê* and the earlier criticism of this quality, for he seems specifically to have guarded against certain dangers which had been emphasized in the preceding era of hostility. A complete study of this influence cannot be undertaken here; it will be possible only to point out a few significant facts. For example, Plato is careful to distinguish among higher and lower varieties of *sôphrosynê*, and he nowhere suggests that any of them is completely admirable and beyond criticism save for the highest or philosophic type of *sôphrosynê*.[38] He invariably insists upon the unity of the virtues, and often draws attention to flaws in those types of *sôphrosynê* which, being divorced from the other virtues, are inadequate and subject to corruption. Most frequently Plato insists that true *sôphrosynê* is inseparable from wisdom (whether it is called *sophia*, *phronêsis*, *logos*, or *nous*); but even more significant, in view of the widespread belief that *sôphrosynê* and courage are incompatible, is Plato's thoughtful analysis in the *Statesman* of the relation between *sôphrosynê* and *andreia*, and the need for each to mingle with the other. In this discussion Plato goes to the root of the old jibes against *sôphrosynê*, such as we have noted in Aristophanes, Sophocles, and Thucydides, and while showing to what extent they are justified, explains the difference between true *sôphrosynê* and the one-sided quality which does not partake of *andreia* (307B–309D). Plato furthermore condemns the practice of *sôphrosynê* with unworthy motives, most explicitly in the *Phaedo* (68D–69A), but very strongly too in the *Phaedrus*. This dialogue is significant also because it so vigorously denounces the selfish and mean type of *sôphrosynê* exhibited by the

[38] Cf. *Laws* 696D–E, 710A–B; *Politicus* 309E and see also the *Charmides*, which sets side by side Socrates, the personification of mature, philosophic *sôphrosynê*, and young Charmides, who possesses only the natural, temperamental variety, and is unable even to give a satisfactory definition of the virtue. By this contrast Plato implies that the popular picture of the *σώφρων* individual is false and that the embodiment of youthful *sôphrosynê*, being unable to discuss the virtue rationally, does not understand, nor even possess it.

non-lover, who is untouched by divine madness. Plato will not allow us to exalt this cold and calculating prudence any more than Euripides will permit us to admire Jason, and thus we are warned of the danger which threatens *sôphrosynê* apart from *erôs*, like that "chastity without charity" which Piers Plowman says shall be chained in Hell.[39]

It is by such arguments as these that Plato makes fruitful the criticism and the hostile analysis of *sôphrosynê* which he encountered in Athenian intellectual circles during his youth. The challenge to the old morality which he then heard from every side was inevitable and in the event salutary. Without it there could have been no such rebirth and revitalization of Greek ethical thought as that which Plato, Aristotle, and their pupils effected. This period is of course not the only one in Greek history in which justice and moderation were treated with contempt, but seldom in later times did the subject provoke so much fresh thought and open discussion. Socrates repeatedly draws attention to the παρρησία of those who attack the traditional standards, and in the *Gorgias* (492D) we read that Callicles expresses what everyone else thinks but dares not say. While these questions were new and immediate, no one who cared about keeping up with contemporary ideas could afford to ignore them, but when the problems of this period had given rise in due course to the variety of solutions offered by succeeding generations, the criticism and hostility of the late fifth century subsided and *sôphrosynê* emerged from the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Stoa with her position more assured than ever before. Men and states continued of course to deviate from the practice of *sôphrosynê*, but seldom troubled to justify their behavior by philosophical argument. The literature of the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman period pays at least lip-service to all the virtues, *sôphrosynê* no less than *phronêsis* and *andreia*. It is only in casual remarks, unconsciously reflecting the views of the multitude, that we continue to find traces, not of deliberate opposition to *sôphrosynê*, but of the familiar human resentment against a virtue difficult to sustain and often misunderstood or misrepresented.

Thus in Demosthenes' *Oration against Stephanus* the jury is warned not to mistake Stephanus' customary gloomy expression for a sign of *sôphrosynê*. It means rather that he is a misanthrope,

[39] *The Vision of Piers Plowman, Newly Rendered into Modern English*, by Henry W. Wells (New York, 1945), p. 17, line 189.

for he assumes this attitude, not because he is moderate and high-minded, but because he wishes to discourage beggars (68). The notion that *sôphrosynê* reveals itself by sour looks, rather than by "cheerful godliness," is no doubt related to the normal distrust of Hippolytean asceticism. Something very like it lies behind Plutarch's warning that a σώφρων woman has need of the graces in her relations with her husband so that, as Metrodorus had already said, "She may live pleasantly with him and not be ill-tempered just because she is virtuous" (ὅτι σωφρονεῖ, *Moralia* 142A). The woman who fears to joke with her husband, lest she appear bold and licentious, is like one who will not even wash her face, for fear of being thought to use rouge. Plutarch understands, however, that a virtuous woman may be so severe, violent, and ill-tempered as to defy reform. In such a case the husband must be reasonable and comfort himself with the reflection that if she is harsh, at least she is σώφρων, and he cannot expect to live with the same woman as if she were both wife and mistress (142B–C).

Such opinions as these reflect faint but unmistakable traces of that critical spirit which justly derides shallow or one-sided *sôphrosynê*, and sometimes transfers to the truly σώφρων the odium incurred by Jason, Pentheus, or Hippolytus.[40]

[40] For the opposition to *sôphrosynê* which formed one phase of the feud between the wine-drinking and the water-drinking poets of the *Greek Anthology*, see the writer's article, "The Concept of *Sophrosyne* in Greek Literary Criticism," *CPh* 43 (1948) 1–17.