

1980

## Kykloi : cyclic theories in ancient Greece

Hubert Wayne Nelson  
*Portland State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds)



Part of the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Intellectual History Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Nelson, Hubert Wayne, "Kykloi : cyclic theories in ancient Greece" (1980). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 3266.


<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.3256>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Hubert Wayne Nelson Jr. for the  
Master of Arts in History presented November 14, 1980.

Title: Kykloi, Cyclic Theories in Ancient Greece.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

  
John P. Cavarnos, Chairman

  
Rabbi Joshua Stampfer

  
Noury Al-Khaledy

It is both curious and frustrating, given the perennial popularity of the cycle concept in Ancient Greece, that there has not been a single book written devoted to the wide variety of philosophic and historical conceptions bound up with that loosely descriptive designation. This study was originally undertaken to satisfy my own curiosity on the subject. Herein I intend to survey the entire history of the cycle concept in general from about 700 B.C. to the time of Polybius in the second-century A.D. It is intended to be a descriptive as well as an analytical report.

The evidence for our subject is enmeshed quite casually in all types of material, and because our discussion covers such a broad area of investigation, both chronologically and intellectually, it would be entirely unfeasible here to trace all the primary and secondary sources that contribute to my interpretation.

In my attempt to arrive at reasonably sound generalizations concerning the "higher unity" of Greek cyclic theory, I have divided this thesis into four chapters with an introduction and a brief conclusion.

In the first chapter, we will examine the various nature faiths of the Near East and Greece with the purpose of discovering the worshipper's psychical attitudes toward the deified powers of nature, whose lifetimes corresponded exactly with the cycles of the seasons. We will find that the nature gods Adonis, Tammuz, Dionysos, and others who died temporarily and resurrected, expressed the life and death of all nature in unison as patterned after cyclic time itself. We will see that either a parabolic or dialectic cosmological perspective is inherent in that concept. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the Orphic ideas of cosmic circularity which have significant implications for later philosophical cosmogonies.

The second chapter is concerned with the cycle of World Ages, which describes the fall of man from a golden age to that of iron. This motif grew out of man's

perception of nature's regular intervals which were rationally extrapolated to include a cycle of collective human experience. In its post Hesiodic derivations, the epochal cycle is generally associated with a phase of transcendent time, the Great Year, whose four internally distinct phases parallel in macrocosm the "four-fold glory" of the circular seasons. Next, a discussion will include an examination of the primitivistic motif as it existed in the mythological accounts of the great Near-Eastern cultures from which I draw a tentative conclusion of a Babylonian provenience for the mythic archetype in question. Finally, several Orphic variations of the cyclo-epochal theme, including their schematic allegorizations, will be examined. We will find that older epochal concepts were absorbed by them in an increasingly rational attempt to construct an experientially consistent order to existence.

The third chapter, the first two dealing with the mythopoetic mode of expression, is an exposition of the scientific or logical cosmic cycles of the Philosophers. Building on all cyclic concepts previously discussed, the early philosophers in their search for the fundamental structure of Being, found that the universe as a whole operated according to generally cyclic principles of disturbance and restoration that maintained a fundamentally static balance of Being. As a preliminary we will discuss the circular cosmologies of the Presocratics, including the



Heraclitean Great Year and Empedocles' theory of cyclic development and cosmogony. Next will be examined the cyclic theories of Plato and Aristotle. The chapter will close with a discussion of the Hellenistic cosmologies of the Stoics and Neo-Platonists which represent a modification of Heraclitean cyclic doctrine as mediated by the Platonic conception of the unity of all flux.

In the fourth chapter I intend to show how ideas of circularity permeated the writings of Greek social commentators and historians in general--specifically, how they derived their circular conceptions of history according to two fundamental perspectives: (a) in light of the biological analogy, that says that Nations, like all living things, must rise and fall according to the fundamental law of growth and decay; and (b) in view of the oscillatory laws of action and reaction (hybris and nemesis) which are corollaries to the preceding principle.

A brief conclusion will draw a comparison between the form and content of the scientific theories and the mythopoetic perspectives of seasonal-deific circularity.

KYKLOI

CYCLIC THEORIES IN ANCIENT GREECE

by

HUBERT WAYNE NELSON JR.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
HISTORY

Portland State University  
1980

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of  
Hubert Wayne Nelson Jr. presented November 14, 1980.

[REDACTED]  
John P. Cavarinos, Chairman

[REDACTED]  
Rabbi Joshua Stampfer

[REDACTED]  
Noury Al-Khaleedy

APPROVED:

[REDACTED]  
Frederick M. Nunn, Head, Department of History

[REDACTED]  
Stanley E. Rauch, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
 CHAPTER	
I A PROLEGOMENA TO GREEK CYCLIC THEORY: SEASONAL- DEIFIC CYCLES IN GRECO- ORIENTAL POPULAR RELIGION . . . . .	12
II THE " <u>PHOINIKIKON PSEUDOS</u> ": CYCLO EPOCHAL THEORIES IN GREEK LITERATURE . . . . .	96
III SOME PHILOSOPHIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC, OR LOGICAL CYCLIC THEORIES . . . . .	182
IV POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DESTINY: CYCLES IN HISTORY . . . . .	264
 CONCLUSION . . . . .	 364
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	367

## INTRODUCTION

Those whose task it is to record, interpret and teach the events of the past are understandably "hesitant" to ascribe verisimilitude to the notion that the long sweep of historic time is a circular stream of repetitive pulsations, and that history in any significant sense repeats itself. This "aversion", however, has not long been so widely entertained. Such ideas were once broadly accepted. In fact, until only recently, the propensity was to view civilization in biological or "naturalistic" terms; to assume like any other organism its necessarily limited life would pass through infancy and robust adolescence to a culminating maturity--the oft referred to "Age of Gold"--from which it inevitably declines until at last, yielding to fate, it goes the way of all living things and passes from life; but this is not the end, so the theory holds; for after the clouds comes helios, and from the corpse arises, phoenix-like, the germ of a new order and another cycle of years.

Earlier in our own century, such luminous chronographic investigators as Petrim, Sirokin, Spengler and Toynbee, among others, expressed the economic, social, political and cultural factors relating to civilizational development, flowering and decline in terms of paradigmatic cycles of

historic reiteration.<sup>1</sup> Though it is true, their schemes were not the unalterably rigid circular movements so popular with the Greeks and Romans in which even trivial occurrences were faithfully repeated; but were sort of winding movements or spirals, similar but never the same--fixed patterns of growth and decay in which the constituent dynamics of the historic "phase" retained their own identity and peculiar history. There is no repetition of internal detail. The course of the phase is determined by its predictable response to set stimuli, and thus is condemned to follow in mechanical fashion the cyclic form.

Though initially well received by academics and educated laymen alike, theories of historical periodicity are now, in the main, viewed with little sympathy and are seen by most as extreme, even dangerous abstractions, "imposed" on history by the procrustean talents of admittedly great minds, who in their over zealous search for manageable conformity of the historic process, "discovered" arbitrary patterns where none existed, ignored that which did not fit their pre-conceptions, and made dangerously indefinite assumptions from all too often un-related particulars. In their attempt to find the quintessential historic form, they lost touch with Clio's guiding spirit; and were drawn irrevocably to the ancient and lulling myth of cycles; their systematized histories reflecting not any historic reality, but only their own wish to create order from seeming chaos.

Currently, the idea of cycles in history has been

abandoned to the poets for the scientific idea of "indefinite progress", a theory that holds that time and the events of men are not eternally recurring within a static structure, but are the processes of a continuum, flowing incessantly onward; marked by perpetual change. Thus, knowledge of the past is no longer valued for its once alleged ability to confer-- even in the broadest sense--"mystic like" powers of prediction, but because it can help us understand the present, the real world in which we live and strive to know.

Our ancient Graeco-Roman companions would have grave difficulties in accepting this conception of historico-temporal progression. For them, as we have said, the opposite was true; the inexorable course of nature as determined by the undulating rise and decline of things was all inclusive: nature, history and the cosmos repeated themselves an indefinite number of times, and though earthly years whirled by, and earthly creatures scurried through their little lifetimes and change everywhere seemed apparent and real they were but illusions. The Ancient's formulation of nature's cyclic expression is commented on by Guthrie:

No Greek, whether rationalist philosopher or religious poet thought of the world as created in seven days by the fiat of an omnipresent god. This did not however exclude another idea, to which the Greek mind was especially attracted; the idea that as in space, so in time, the cosmic movement was circular. Everything returns to what was before, and what has been will be again. As the ancient poets had taught them, 'not only does everything come to be out of one thing' but, 'it is resolved into one again' and the process recommences.<sup>2</sup>

Such a principle when applied to the universality of

human experience, prevented by logical necessity any concept of true progress. Though some cyclic theories held out the hope of an eventual return to an "Age of Gold", it was understood to be but a brief re-visitation, and was like the seasons, intermittent, its recurrence only a periodic completion of the "wheel of life", followed inevitably by a return to a state of misery and decline, where wretched men once more played out their brutal lives in toil, sorrow and death. They did not see the lot of man as improving in any significant or permanent sense, nor did they see themselves as moving toward any intellectual, moral or spiritual improvement, let alone perfection.<sup>3</sup> In short, there was no feeling of "advancing achievement, realization or expansion of values," as the world for them had a thoroughly bankrupt look.<sup>4</sup> Yet, however dreary this view might appear to us, it at least enabled the individual to discern a pattern amongst the events of the world and to project that pattern into the future and into the past, affording man at least the small comfort derived from the knowledge that what was happening now, had happened before and would happen again and again, ad infinitum.

It cannot but fail to strike the student of Graeco-Roman culture how central and omnipresent was this belief in the eternal recurrence of things and events. The cycle was the eminent structural feature in the ritual stories of the chthonic mystery religions and was given continuous treatment from the gnomic poet Hesiod to the late philosopher Plotinus, the founder of Neo-Platonism. In this long stretch



of time, the cyclic exemplar underwent numerous transmutations as it was used in the explication of diverse physical and ideational phenomena. The germ of the cycle is the basis of numerous time-action themes, including: religious cosmico-agrarian schemes of naturo-deific death and rebirth; ideas of periodic world destructions and restorations; numeromystic cyclic scenarios; the theory of the revolution of Magni Anni, Great Years, and historical notions of wave-like or cyclic civilizational developments and degenerations. From these patterns can be distinguished, however, two simple, self-explanatory archetypes: the doctrine of cultural degeneration and the cosmological cycle of eternal return, often connected through the intervening agency of the Theory of Ages. The synthesis and exposition of these patterns are the aim and purpose of this paper.

Included herein will not only be an illustration of the fundamental permeance of the cycle in Greek thought per se, nor its mere chronological development--though both are important themes--but an attempt also to discover the critical psychological affects and sanctions bestowed by such concepts on the Greek mind and to underline the Greek intolerance of factual improbability implied and manifest in their cyclic hypotheses. But perhaps most important for us, is the examination of the ancient philosophers' and historians' attempts to interpret and apply the various cyclic scenarios to their own understanding of the human condition i.e., how the cyclic theory influenced their

dominating perspectives of the socio-political processes of degeneration.

To these ends, this essay draws upon a broad spectrum of Hellenic and Hellenistic philosophy and theology; cosmology and cosmogony, history and political theory. When necessary, comparative references will be made to the mythologies of the more ancient Near Eastern cultures to clarify and explicate details in derivative Greek analogues. Moreover, as the volume of primary material is staggering, and as a certain amount of information about each theory was necessary, the analysis and presentation of the various themes was limited to those of significant influence to their own times or on subsequent thought, and to those characteristic of an important genre.

The ensuing discussion will follow the chronological evolution of Greek cyclic thought, insofar as is practicable, from its religious Hellenico-Oriental beginnings to its culminating "scientific" treatment at the hands of the second century B.C. historian Polybios.

In Chapter I, the prolegomena, the myth and ritual of Graeco-Oriental mystery religions will be examined to ascertain the celebrants' implied metaphysical stance. The paradigm of the "cosmico-agrarian" or "seasonal-deific" cycle, linked closely to the regular succession of the seasons, will emerge as the dominant modus operandi for vegetation gods and cosmos alike. Man's intimate dependence on the naturo-deific cycle, his fears and anxieties over whether or not it would repeat,

and the sympathetic religious measures he acted out to assure its regeneration will be discussed to illustrate among other points: 1) how the cyclic passing of the seasons represented a universal architecture of simple elegance and logic from which all things derived their life force and were kept in axiomatic harmony with one another; 2) how the fertility cults' concept of seasonal-deific renewal lent itself to the mystical hope of spiritual regeneration as actualized in the cycle of metempsychosis; 3) how the cyclic perceptions derived from the agricultural cycle became focused on the daily and yearly movements of the heavenly bodies; and 4) How these notions were rationally blended in the philosophized theology of the early Orphics in that movement's attempt to become a philosophy.

The second chapter puts forth Hesiod's synchronic presentation of human development through four ages--gold, silver, bronze and iron, in this order. His is the first unified and complete treatment of the idea of epochal successions in classical antiquity and was "central" to and the "ultimate source" of all later elaborations, poetic and otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Hesiod's account represents a re-working of a very old bit of folklore mediated by the cyclic theory, derived, as the evidence suggests, from eastern lands. We shall examine the possible connections between the Hesiodic formulation and the several Egyptian, Persian, Biblical and Mesopotamian accounts. Moreover, the religious and literary treatment of the cyclo-epochal theme will be studied with special attention being paid to the Orphic variations, and

the account in the Phaenomena of Aratus.

The third chapter addresses the Greek Cyclic Theory per se, and begins with a discussion of the presocratic cosmologies, the most important of which include: 1) Anaximander's world process of circular motion as related to the Apeiron: 2) the Heraclitean belief in cyclic regeneration as related to the "Great Year"; and 3) the highly influential Empedoclean cycle of alternating motions of attraction (Philia) and repulsion (Neikos). It will be demonstrated that for these beginning metaphysicians, nature's diurnal and annual cycles stood as the ultima signa of a universally controlling law and that from such consistencies they extrapolated a cosmic order in which the cosmological and life processes periodically disturbed and restored "being" as was contained by the stable framework of an enveloping world edifice.

Next we will summarize the important aspects of the cyclic theory as found in the various dialogues of Plato, more especially in the Statesman, Republic, Timaeus and Critias. It will be discovered that for Plato, the cyclic force of time had a special significance. His application of the cyclic theory comprehends the political and historical processes as well as the metaphysical so that a complete analysis of his concept of flux and reflux will be reserved for a later chapter. A discussion of post-Platonic cyclic theory will briefly touch upon Aristotle's wave-like idea of human advancement and retardation; and, more importantly, the Stoic modification of Heraclitean cyclic doctrine, which--

when mediated by Platonic concepts of harmony--resulted in their "pyro-deific" idea of indefinite time punctuated by periodic world conflagrations or ekpyrosis--held by them to be a divine process.

In the fourth and culminating chapter, the discussion of cycles in Greek history will take us through Herodotus's concept of oscillating slight and revenge (hybris and nemesis) followed by an examination of Thucydides' implicit theory of recurring historical themes. Next will be presented Polybius' "scientific" theory of cyclic constitutional devolution. The latter's debt to Plato will be emphasized, especially in regards to similarities resting on their shared perception of humanity's psychological uniformity and the shared belief that nations as well as men are ultimately corrupted by the possession of unchecked power.

Finally, some words on the procedural methodology used in the pursuit of my theme. As previously noted, the amount of primary information is voluminous; but as the author's incipient knowledge of the Greek tongue is inadequate for the task at hand, a reliance on Greek literature in translation was necessary. Though there exists, to my knowledge, no specific treatment of the subject of cycles in Greek thought per se, numerous indirect references abound in the various professional journals and in the myriad of commentaries on Greek religion, philosophy, and history in general. Of these, only sources available in English and French were drawn upon. A working knowledge of Latin was only rarely

useful--primarily in the aid of understanding extant Roman testimonia concerning Greek sources as found in various monographs, articles, et cetera.

## FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Michael Fogarty, "The Rhythm of Change," The Review of Politics, 22, (1960), pp. 451-465.

<sup>2</sup>W. K. C. Guthrie, In the Beginning, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Radoslav A. Tsanoff, "Ancient Classical Alternatives and Approaches to the Idea of Progress," Greek and Byzantine Studies, 1 (July, 1958), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Kirby Flower Smith, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1955 ed.

## CHAPTER I

### A PROLEGOMENA TO GREEK CYCLIC THEORY: SEASONAL-DEIFIC CYCLES IN GRECO-ORIENTAL POPULAR RELIGION

While the Earth remaineth, seed time  
and harvest and cold and heat and  
summer and winter and day and night  
shall not cease.

Gen. viii:22

For man to make any sense of the ineffably vast bio-cosmic constructional systems that move and give shape to the life processes which surround him, requires that he reduce their huge and overwhelming complexities to some simple, harmonious and therefore, comprehensible pattern. To this end, his mind, in its quest to make intelligible that which is seemingly incomprehensible, gathers together the bits and pieces of phenomenological information gained from life in the physical plane, and subjects them to its rational and intuitive functions, where generalized, abstracted, and subjected to the laws of contiguity and association, they are synthesized and emerge as a manageable system of conformity--in short, a pattern.

In this model, the endless detail of our experience is reduced to a number of simple bits of information that we can easily process and retain. We call this model a paradigm, i.e., the archetypal pattern which repeats in



universally understandable terms the fabric of our experience.

In the ancient Hellenic-Oriental world the most pervasive belief concerning the bio-cosmic structure of the universe was the belief that all Being was bound by immutable laws of temporal periodicity. These laws represented the vera causa of the universal regularity evident in all sensible phenomena. They were the terms in which ancient humanity conceived of themselves, their world and their destinies. The journeying of the celestial orbs, the pulsations of seasonal change and the numerous intervening cycles of sleep and wake, and growth and decay, compelled our ancient brethren to view themselves as pulsating beings immersed in a world ever oscillating between poles of infinity and finitude, the upward arcs of which were marked by the facts of birth and growth; and the downward arcs stamped with the grim tragedies of decay and death.

The universal construction derived from the observation of these rhythmic celestial and life processes was one in which the ordered structure of the cosmos and its constituent dynamics were seen as eternal developments of alternating disturbance and restoration. This concept implies an ontological opposition of forces--a great cosmic conflict. Numerous terrestrial regularities confirmed this notion: each morning the sun defeated darkness, only to be in turn vanquished each night; rain and drought were locked in a never ending struggle for supremacy; and the expiration of each life was viewed as death's victory; each birth its

defeat. The result of this eternal dialectic was a palpable explanation not only for the living world, but also the supporting cosmic superstructure, itself vivified and limited by the necessity of its own inner-compulsion to revolve eternally upon itself, incessantly returning to its own beginning time, the point of departure for the perceptual present.

As far as we can judge, the nearly universal propensity of ancient man to see the world as a basically static process of cyclic coefficients, reflected his understanding of the seemingly changelessness of the human condition. After all, aside from an exceptionally disastrous visitation of war, famine or plague, his was an eminently stable, even rigidly fixed world. The only deviations of any real importance were the modulated intervals of the life-cycle itself, the solar and lunar patterns which determined the passing phases of the agricultural year. On these rested the fortunes of fields, flocks, and families, the really important elements of human life.

A world view such as this could be either comforting and reassuring, or hideously depressing, depending on the individual's experiential perception of the life forces at work around him. For example, one of the great reflectors of the Egyptian national psyche, was their feeling of being en rapport with a primarily beneficent, even magnanimous, world force. The relative predictability of the natural forces at work in Egypt served to comfort and reassure her

inhabitants and assuage their normal anxieties resulting from the common vagaries of everyday life. There are good reasons behind this attitude. "The climate of Egypt made life easy to mankind; the weather provided him with no grievance, and fields bore rich crops throughout the year; the cattle were never in want of pasture; the river was stocked with fish in abundance."<sup>1</sup> These idyllical aspects of life contributed to the Egyptian's belief that time and cosmos would be reactualized each morning with the triumphant rebirth of the ever-resurrecting sun and on an annual basis with the generally orderly Nile's life-giving inundation. These twin miracles pledged to Egypt an un-interrupted continuation of the blessings of bounteous plant and animal fecundity--the fresh beginnings of life that so enriched life along the luxuriant banks of the Nile.<sup>2</sup> This "promise" is given expression in a passage from one of the coffin texts, in which the Nile spirit says:

I am he who performs the service of gifts (i.e. harvest)  
 For Osiris at the great inundation,  
 I raise up my divine command  
 at the rising of the Great God (i.e. Osiris)  
 I nourish the plants, I make green what was dried up.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the regularity of the heavenly bodies, the metered movement of the sun and stars across the sky--aside from determining the parabolic stages of variation in Egyptian agricultural life--became the basis of those salutary perspectives that are the conspicuously distinguishing characteristics of their religion: their well known zeal for life, and their heartfelt veneration for living things in general.

We can gain some insight into the effects of environment upon the Egyptian psyche if we understand how they translated this joie de vivre into a deeply fervent hope for personal resurrection after death. Sparse as is the material available for the study of this development, it is enough to justify certain general conclusions. We might start by defining the Egyptian view of the after-existence as a psycho-physical continuance in the hereafter as patterned after the cyclic rebirth of the solar and lunar bodies. In their view, then, the circling orbs assured not only the fortunate continuation of earthly abundance, but the transcendent eternal life of the human spirit (ka) as well.<sup>4</sup> This belief is best expressed in the story of the life and death of Osiris, chief god of the Egyptian popular religion and central figure of the Egyptian mortuary cultus.

The polar motif of the Osirian cult's mythico-ritual drama is a variation of the ubiquitous Near Eastern theme of the dying and rising god. These stories invariably involve a divine couple, usually a husband and wife, though sister and brother, and mother and son teams are commonly found in many forms of the cycle. At any rate, the divine pair are separated by the death of the male who is carried off by the forces of darkness. The female attempts to prevail against these infernal powers, and commonly descends into their midst to seek his resurrection. In the Osirian mythology, this theme is expressed by the death of Osiris, his sojourn in hell, and finally, his resurrection as

obtained by the efforts of his wife Isis, a moon hypostasis and fertility goddess.<sup>5</sup> As related to the solar and lunar cycles, the death of the god is symbolized in the disappearance of the sun, followed by the rising of the "searching" moon, Isis. Their reunion is realized in the coming of the dawn which represents the birth of the ascendant son Horus, a youthful regenerative phase of the "divine-father", Osiris. Thus does the solar motif stress the reproductive aspects of life. In this case, as in all other cases wherever the cycle is found and whatever the names of the dramatis personae, the close astral association is paralleled by an equally important agricultural association.

In the Osirian mythos, the lunar and solar coefficients determine the three Egyptian seasons brought on by the cycle of the Nile River: inundation, sowing, and reaping. Yet a third association; in many respects the most important one, is derived from the immutable predicatibility of the solar-Osirian circuit. I am speaking, of course, of the aforementioned Egyptian belief in the persistence of the soul after death. In this connection, the solar cycle was conceived to be mystically linked to mortal man's own resurrection, when at the rupture of death, the ka was cast in transcendent homeopathic unity with the sun, becoming like it, an eternal being. S. G. F. Brandon elaborates:

By virtue of ritual assimilation to Osiris in death, every devotee believed that he would be raised to a new post-mortem life as the divine hero had been. Moreover, he believed that he, like Osiris, would

have to face a judgement after death, and he trusted that he also would be declared Maa kheru ("true of voice") by the awful judges. This Osirian faith helped to make sense of life and death for the average Egyptian: As Osiris had suffered and yet had ultimately triumphed, so he trusted he would through Osiris. Death, therefore, seems to have formed no problems such as to cause him to question the divine providence. . . . In his cosmogonic speculation the Egyptian never tried to account for the origin of death--he seems ever to have regarded it as caused by the intervention of some hostile force, as Osiris had been struck down by his enemy Set, and as Osiris had ultimately triumphed, so he hoped would he.<sup>6</sup>

By far the most famous and important ritualistic re-enactment of the death of Osiris took place during the Egyptian Sed festival which was held some thirty years after the ascension of the Pharaoh and every three years hence. On this most sacred of occasions, the living Horus himself enacted the death and resurrection of the god. In the closing act of the Sed "pantomime" the king was thus addressed:

Thou beginnest thy renewal, beginnest to flourish again. Like the infant god of the sun thou art young again year by year . . . Thou are reborn by renewing the festival of Sed.<sup>7</sup>

It was the prevailing fashion throughout Egyptian history not to recognize the Pharaoh's death as permanent. After all, they reasoned, would he not rise again in the form of Horus the son of Osiris? This they must believe for the apotheosis of Pharaoh reaffirms the divine promise that all men should live life eternal.<sup>8</sup>

In the Osirian mythico-ritual scenario we clearly see the predominating Egyptian tendency to view all aspects of reality in terms of recurrent models, or cyclic archetypes.

This is an important observation, because the nature of these archetypes reflects the Egyptian's perception of his geographical and meteorological environment. The life-giving and life-preserving cycles at work in Egypt; especially the rhythms of the Sun, the Moon and the River Nile, were dependable, benign; almost always supportive and only rarely destructive. Consequently, the Egyptian psyche, at ease with the perceptual world, conceived of the invisible realms of "heaven" and the higher spiritual planes in a like and similarly positive manner drawing therefrom its comforting reassurance that "the renewal of life may always be victorious over death."<sup>9</sup>

In stark contrast stood the pervasively pessimistic civilizations of Mesopotamia, the land between the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. The inhabitants of this broad plain--Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians--comprised a number of ephemeral and contentious city states and regional empires whose dealings with one another were marred by interminable friction and almost continuous warfare. To compound the tense and uncertain realities of daily life arising from such tenuous surroundings were the very forces of nature herself, as cruel and whimsical a mistress to Mesopotamia as she was a kind and supportive mother to Egypt. This idea bears closer scrutiny.

Insofar as environmental influences correlate with civilizational character--by shaping cultural attitudes--the drooping spiritual and intellectual apprehensions of

ancient Iraq were determined by that culture's dependent interaction on the oft-chaotic Tigris-Euphrates River system around which her society flourished. Georges Roux compares the deleterious aspects of the Tigris-Euphrates system with the more salubrious impact of the Nile on Egypt.

While the Nile fed by the great lakes of East Africa acting as regulators, has an annual flood of almost constant volume, the volume of the combined floods of the Tigris and Euphrates is unpredictable, for it depends upon the variable amount of rain or snow which falls on the mountains of Armenia and Kurdistan. If low waters over a few years means drought and famine, one excessive flood often spells catastrophe. The rivers break through their embankments; the low land as far as the eye can see is submerged; the flimsy mud-houses and reed-huts are swept away; the crop is lost in a huge muddy lake, together with the cattle and the belongings of a large part of the population.<sup>10</sup>

The gnawing fear of impending doom derived from the ever-present danger of such sudden and widespread destruction, linked in the Mesopotamian imagination nature's watery powers with the sinister force of Chaos resting just beyond the pale of divine order. Water assumes the status of some huge, amorphous all-encompassing beast. It becomes the very symbol of Chaos itself. These ideas combined to have a profound impact on Mesopotamian cosmogonies, where the primordial powers of chaos and destruction were usually cast in the mythological forms of aquatic serpent demons: great dragons of evil who dwelt in the murky depths and who symbolized in the Near Eastern imagination, death and chaos. Such were Tiamat of Babylon, Yam of Canaan, Illuyankos of the Hittites, the Hebrew Leviathan, and El-Zebub of Syrio-Palestinian mythology (who is known to us primarily



as the Prince of Demons in the New Testament).<sup>11</sup> Elements of the theme are also found in Egyptian mythology as represented by Apophis, the Snake of darkness; and also in Hellenistic astrology as reflected in the Draco Caelestis, the serpent who girded the spheres of the cosmos.<sup>12</sup>

Though the native biographies of each of these Dragons of chaos vary in significant detail from their simlized foreign counterparts, it is, nevertheless, likely that they derived the bulk of their identifying characteristics from some nameless prototypal serpent-god or goddess, who represented, at least in its earliest manifestation, an aquatic potency of sufficient strength to have caused even the mighty summer sun to shrink away in fear. Its arrival paved the way for the darkness of winter and heralded the dread season of floods, which, as we have seen, transformed the wide Babylonian plain into a spateful and deadly sea. Such an evil visitation must have appeared to the ancient Mesopotamian very much like the arrival of a great monster voraciously devouring the dry green vegetation as it moved across the land, turning order into chaos and marking the earth with the stigmata of death.<sup>13</sup> When we contrast this view with the Egyptian perception of water as the "basic matter of the universe"; the essential substance on which all things depend, we begin to get an idea of how the respective apprehensions of nature held by the Egyptians and Mesopotamians formed diametrically opposed psychical attitudes concerning man's relationship to the gods and

the Cosmos.<sup>14</sup> This dichotomy of perception is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in their separate beliefs concerning death and life in the hereafter. For just as the munificence of life on the Nile aroused the Egyptian's hopes for rebirth in the womb of cyclic time, the Mesopotamian's dread of ever-lurking tragedy and impending doom found expression in his stark expectations of either death and dissolution among the elements, or worse yet, a ghastly metamorphoses turning his etinnu ("spirit") into one of the winged demons that dwelt in Arullu, the kingdom of the dead, where the Gilgamesh Epic tells us: "dust would be its fare and clay would be its food."<sup>15</sup> At any event, the average Mesopotamian held no hope of future blessedness, as real, i.e., "personal" immortality and supra-sensual existence were, he believed, the guarded possessions of the gods alone: those great and terrible beings who had created man for their own amusement and benefit, and from whom man could expect no reward save the struggles of life and obliteration at death. The belief finds succinct expression in one of the most moving passages of the Gilgamesh Epic:

When the gods created mankind,  
 Death for mankind they set aside,  
 Life in their own hands retaining.<sup>16</sup>

Though this perspective is certainly depressing, especially when compared to relevant Egyptian beliefs, it, nevertheless, represents not the least of their fears about existence. For theirs was a world where misfortune was

believed to be lurking around every corner and behind each door in the form of one of the legions of evil demons and vicious genies whose only drives and desires were to darken the lives of men with the grim tragedies of hunger, sickness, death, and a thousand other terrible dispensations that made life on earth a living hell.

Such factors of belief tended toward the creation in the Mesopotamian religious psyche of dualistic perceptions, especially relating to monsters and demonic beings who attempt to undermine the rule of the bio-cosm's ordinal forces. And though many such creatures haunted the dark recesses of the Mesopotamian mind, humanity was not totally bereft of defensive measures. For the gods of nature had prescribed the supernatural means of meeting these dangers or of alleviating their effects. Numerous mythico-ritual celebrations provided some degree of systematic protection through their complex rituals loaded with magical virtues designed to cast man in homeopathic unity with the beneficent forces of order in hopes of hindering or preventing the powers of chaos from re-conquering and destroying the powers of life.

The most crucial by far of these collisions between the forces of good and evil; order and chaos, took place between the primal order of gods, who had created the original material out of which the cosmos had been built; and their offspring, who were responsible for the apparent orderliness of things. Because of their jealous and chaotic

natures, the older creative deities, already cast from power, were constantly determined to wage war with their progeny to pervert and wreck the definite and stable structure of the cosmos. The crisis point of this great conflict was observed throughout Mesopotamia in the rituals and attendant mythical motifs of the various new year festivals. The most famous of these celebrations was the great Babylonian Akitu. The theme of this powerful allegorical drama was the duality of nature, with its alteration of good and evil impulses. It was celebrated throughout the first and second milleniums B.C., and we are reasonably well informed about it due to the fortunate preservation of certain relevant texts dating from the first Babylonian period (2225-1926 B.C.).

The pattern for the festival was the solar model which determined not only the annual cycle of the seasons and its crucial effect on agriculture, but also the creative-destructive cycle of the megacosm as mentioned above. The obvious moment of the crisis was the beginning of the vernal equinox, the most critical instant in the yearly cycle, as it heralded a new evolution of life from the corruption of the old year. It is at this critical point, when the old cycle is coming to a close, that man and his divine benefactors, the forces of life, must unite together to restore the ever-perishing world.<sup>18</sup>

The festival, though it might be termed a crisis, was

a grand double-drama, commemorating on the one hand the microcosmic passage of nature from want to fruitfulness, and on the other, the cosmogonic conflict which had taken place in "illo-tempore".<sup>19</sup>

During the festival, the thoughts and hopes of the entire, emotionally charged populace were focused on the ceremonies which took place in the temple of bit akitu, a nature temple, and in the Esagilia, the temple-palace of Babylon's chief deity, Marduk, an order hypostasis. The festal program opened with a representation of the revived threat of chaotic destruction in the mimed flight of the lesser gods to the ramparts of Marduk's palace, where, "yelping like dogs", they hysterically entreated the mighty lord to make ready for the coming battle.<sup>20</sup>

What followed was the central dramatic presentation depicting the humiliation, death and resurrection of Marduk (drawn by analogy from the death and annual resurrection of the primitive vegetational potency, Dummuzi), and the moment of his cosmogonic conflict with the forces of death led by the dragon goddess Tiamat, as related in the liturgical creation epic, Enuma Elish.

On the fourth day of the celebration the Enuma Elish was read in its entirety--not as a sterile, pro-forma recollection of the primal creative act; but, rather as a powerful auto-suggestive rite of magic, reenacted to call back divine order from the abyss. Only thus could the original procreational deed be reactualized and could

what Eliade has called "the perfection of the beginning time" be recovered.<sup>21</sup> In the accompanying ritual drama, the combat was acted out by two groups of performers who reiterated the cosmogonic moment of the primordial fight in imitatio dei. Unfortunately, we lack the details of this ritual mime, but it no doubt included the following representations: 1) the repulsion of chaos by the defeat of Tiamat and the imprisonment of her followers; 2) the creation of the world from Tiamat's body; 3) the making of man from the blood of Kingu; 4) Marduk's re-acquisition of sovereignty; 5) the subsequent renovation of order and Marduk's setting of the destinies of mankind for the succeeding cosmic cycle.

Once these essential tasks were completed, the worshippers directed their attentions to a more primitive aspect of the festival which in character ante-dated by millenia the more recent Sumerian cosmogony. The original significance of the rites of spring were embodied in this part of the ceremony, as men joined with god to hasten winter's departure and to incite the emergence of new plant life. Marduk here assumes the characteristics and functions of the dying and resurrected fertility god, while his arch-foe, Tiamat, loses her astral associations and becomes a somewhat less colorful, though no less malevolent flood-dragon such as has been discussed earlier.

In the Akitu, as in the Egyptian rites of Osiris, the renewal of vegetative life was the ultimate result of the

reunion of the resurrected god with his consort as expressed in the ubiquitous rite of the "sacred marriage", as originally expressed throughout the whole pre-historic Near East in the ritual marriage of each city-state's patron god and goddess to the purpose of ensuring the fecundity of fields, flocks and human reproduction. Texts from the Ur III period, for example, clearly attest that such hierogamies "took place at Lagash between Ningirsu and Baba, at Ur between Nanna and Gula, at Uruk between Anua and Inanna and at Nippur between Enlil and Ninlil."<sup>22</sup> These rites embodied the primitive understanding of the dialectical opposition and synthesis of the masculine and feminine aspects of nature, by associating nature's active principles with the animative masculine spirit, and her passive principles with the female reproductive spirit.

In the Akitu, Marduk weds the fiery Ishtar, goddess of life and fertility, and they together become the combined force manifest in the rebirth of springtime life and the basis for nature's continued fecundity.<sup>23</sup>

It has become customary in recent years to regard the marriage to have been symbolically consummated in the Esagilia by the imitative union of Marduk's high priest to the high priestess of Ishtar, though some scholars feel it more likely that the consummation was represented by two statues of the gods in the more appropriate surroundings of the nature temple of bit akitu.<sup>24</sup> In any case, this marked the final stage of the festivities leaving only the

the singing of the epithalamium and the "rite of integration" marking the passing of the crisis. These having been completed, the Akitu festival was brought to a close and the individual celebrants were free to return to the comparatively insignificant struggles that marked their daily lives, reasonably secure in the knowledge that, at least for another revolution, the great wheel of life would continue.

At the slight risk of repetition, it should be stressed that the underlying process in the central conflict of the Akitu was our old friend the dialectic, defined in this paper as the direct opposition of two non-coeternal powers or principles which alternate supremacy in unending cycles of action and reaction. And though such dualistic scenarios predominate in Mesopotamian cosmologies--albeit to a lesser extent than in the Indo-Iranian Zoroastrian or Chinese Taoistic traditions--they are also represented in the mythologies of other ancient Hellenic-Oriental peoples. Such is the case in the conflict between Set and Osiris in Egyptian mythology and in the opposition of Zeus to Dionysos in the Thracian mythos, or in the Hebrew story of Jaweh and Rhahab. But by far the most important representation of the motif, aside from the Marduk-Tiamat epos, recurs in Canaanite mythology, in the myth of Baal's struggle with the forces of chaos as preserved in the Ugaretic mythological tablets from Ras Shamra.

In the Baal cycle, the presentation of the struggle of



reality divided against itself is for the most part based on the cycle of the seasons. Baal is the god of rain and fertility. He rules upon earth from September to May. His great enemy, Mot, is the god of aridity and death. He supplants Baal during the summer months, only to be driven out--with the help of Baal's sister-consort, Anath--at the coming of Autumn, the time of the ingathering, which is the beginning of the new year in Canaan.<sup>25</sup>

That the Mesopotamian New Year liturgy influenced the rites of Baal is attested by Mot's identification with the transcendent powers of chaos, and by Baal's earlier clash with the sea-god Yam--an odd enemy indeed for Canaan where the great threat was not flood but drought. Moreover, in the Baal cycle the reality of the menace to order in nature was visualized and depicted, as a face-off between the forces of life, fertility and order in nature and the forces that would destroy them--this in obvious parallel to the vernal Akitu. Finally, Baal, like Marduk, must die a brutal death so that crops as well as human and animal production might thrive. However, here the similarities end.

The differentiating earmark of the Baal myth's cyclico-seasonal pattern is the apparent isochronous nature of the agricultural fertility and sterility phases as they appear in Canaan. We recall that in the Mesopotamian Akitu it was believed that as long as the benevolent powers were propitiated in exact accordance with the appropriate

ritualistic formula, the world would be reborn on an annual basis. Such certitude concerning the regularity of the bio-cosm was not enjoyed by the inhabitants of Canaan. They saw no guarantees in nature as the prevailing meteorological conditions of that region are among the most unreliable anywhere. In Canaan, the seasons are not clearly defined by sharp variations in nature; "rain does not always materialize in the rainy season; nor is there always sufficient dew in the summer," further, "locusts may plague the land and devour the crops. A series of bad years is the major natural catastrophe against which the fertility cult was directed."<sup>26</sup> In short, Baal did not always triumph over Mot.<sup>27</sup> Either god might vanquish the other any number of times in the course of a decade and the outcome of the struggle could not be known until the first fall of the winter rain softened the soil for the new season's crop. Given such conditions, we should not be surprised that the imitative magic of the Canaanitish autumnal rites often failed in its purpose. In this desperate event, the populace, fearing the drought and sterility of the Syrian summer, resorted to such crude and cruel expedients as animal and human sacrifice in a final effort of the last resort to placate the dark power who had vanquished their god of life, and who now threatened them with death.<sup>28</sup> Thus did the Canaanites respond to their environment and strive to accommodate the vagaries of their existence.

There is still another paradigmatic framework for the

seasonal gods that found expression in Near Eastern religious psychology: One more primitive and simple than the dialectic pattern, but equally efficacious in facilitating the adjustment of the individual to his environment. I am speaking of the so-called pendular motif, or, put more simply, the cyclical pattern, which, though not totally devoid of dualistic aspects, is characterized not by the opposition of supreme powers, but rather by the conception of the world in the simple terms of a process of mechanical reiteration: a concept derived, obviously, from the processes of decay and renovation apparent everywhere. In this model, death is the logical and necessary contingency for birth, the moment of renewal. These central facts of life were commemorated in the initiation rites of the various fertility cults throught the Near East. Such faiths were especially sensitive to the numerous cycles of nature in all their multiplicity of themes and variations.

The devotional focus of these cults were invariably minor gods, who ruled a carefully limited area of the real world as their territory, but who grew in stature with time to represent the whole of nature's changing processes. These so-called "vegetation" deities are without a doubt the most interesting figures in ancient Near Eastern mythology. The oldest representative of the type is probably the Sumerian Dumuzi, but similar gods are found throughout oriental popular religion: Abu, Ningircu, Ningiszida, Eshmun, Ninazu, Ninurta, Tishpak, Assur, Dagon, Melqart, Hadad Rimmon, Attis

and above all Tammuz (the Syrian and Greek Adonis) whose story eclipsed other variants of the myth--all are gods who died to be reborn and in so doing represented the yearly cycle of fertility.

The usual prototypal pattern for the seasonal resurrection myth associated with the aforementioned gods, depicts in its earliest development a father-god--source of light, warmth and moisture--who impregnates the earth-mother, his wife, by his radiant warmth, or by the moisture of his rain. From the quickening of the soil would be conceived a son, the god of the annual harvest. His birth coincides with the death of the worn out and now impotent father-god, who dies and is returned to the earth, only in due time and at the proper moment to emerge therefrom to be resurrected, as it were, in the youthful form of the divine son, the crop of the new year. This process occurs and reoccurs ad infinitum; the single hypostized god experiences through the eons the pangs of birth and death: submerging and re-emerging; decaying and growing, not in mere parallel with vegetative nature, but, as its literal animative spirit.

In the later and more widely known variations of this story, the youthful corn-god is no longer envisioned as a hypostasis of the now clearly differentiated father or sky god. Nor is his death the result of polluted old age, but is the usual consequence of an accident or a chance brush with an infernally lethal force. Moreover, at death, he is no longer, as before, returned to his consort-mother's womb to

be reborn, but is instead dragged off to the interminable gloom of the nether-world, to dwell in abject misery among the dead; yet, fortunately for mankind--to say nothing of the dead god--a fertility goddess of greater potency, the young god's wife or lover, seeks him out and, according to the common oriental motif, becomes the agent of his resurrection, and the cause, thereby, of fertility on earth.

The season of the corn-god's recession is invariably fraught with sad repercussions in the living world. Woe and desolation are everywhere apparent as the beneficent powers of the dead god and his distracted lover are pushed into abeyance by the forces of sterility and death; vegetation droops and life becomes barren. On everyone's minds rest the questions, "How long shall the fruiting be delayed"? "How long shall the appearance of green be hindered"?<sup>29</sup> The so-called Nineveh recension of the story of Ishtar's descent, from the library of Ashurbanipal, contains a passage expressing man's perception of this woe-begotten season:

The bull springs not upon the cow,  
the ass impregnates not the jenny.  
In the street the man impregnates  
not the maiden.  
The man lies in his own chamber,  
The maiden lies on her side.<sup>30</sup>

As in the Akitu festival and in the autumnal rites of Baal, the menace to nature was presented in the myth's accompanying ritual pantomime with sufficient dramatic force to evoke powerful reactions from the female celebrants. They beat their breasts and cried, and violently wailed the god's

disappearance; and when they were through they sacrificed in his name and called out to his consort for help. This extreme involvement not only helped the votaries exorcise their own fears, which were great, but, more importantly, provided them with a means by which they could achieve a mystical homeopathic unity with the goddess-consort; to aid her in her quest for the dead god; to reawaken him to life again and place him once more in the realm of the living.\*

The year-spirit's revivification, like Baal's, represents the restoration of the vital and vitalizing power of man's crops; the vernal renewal of fertility and plenty. But this is not an everlasting gift of life. The forces of death and famine are not forever banished--only temporarily satisfied; bonds of death are never completely severed, even by the gods, and the year-spirit must perforce return annually to the infernal kingdom, allowing nature to sleep, only to be resurrected each spring in the cult. For as each beginning demands an end, so too each end a beginning; just as in the Akitu, where the cosmos is compelled to dissolve before its annual recall to life, so too the god of fertility must periodically die and suffer the torments of hell before he

\*Of course, this interpretation is an inference based upon classical observations, and is not one derived from any cultist's direct statement; but insofar as we are able to ascertain the prevalent beliefs and feelings of cultic adherents through an examination of their overt acts, this seems to be a fair conclusion. It furnishes us a concrete picture of cultic action and betrays the general states of mind of those involved in the mystery. These perspectives seem to hold true for fertility rituals wherever such faiths were practiced throughout the Near East and Aegean areas.

can be resurrected with renewed vigor to the living world. Alone among the gods does the corn-spirit stand at once the author and victim of the supreme and all pervading law of seasonal rhythm.

As I have said, the earliest known account of the dying and rising god, presents itself in connection with the death and resurrection of the Sumerian nature god Dumuzi (the Akkadian Tammuz, and the Syrian and Greek Adonis), in one of the most famous stories of Mesopotamian mythology. The narrative is extant in a number of cunieform tablets found both in the Akkadian and older Sumerian tongues. And though the separate accounts vary in detail, the differences are far outweighed by the similarities.<sup>31</sup>

In the fragments we find preserved the essence of the myth of the descent of the corn-god into the underworld; we find a description of the desolation that befalls the land of the living when the powers of nature are dead and can no longer function; we are told of the mourning of the young god's consort who descends into the underworld in search of him, and, finally, we hear of their return to the earth bringing with them joy, fertility and spring.

In the accompanying cultic ritual--performed at the height of the hot season--the worshippers are stirred to the remembrance of their god and try to draw his spirit to their own. Professor Langdon provides a compelling reconstruction of the ceremony:

It is very probable that the celebrants made an image of the young god, and clothed him in some sacred garb,

adorned his bark with flowers and grain and cast him upon the waters to the canals and rivers. His descent beneath the waves symbolized his transportation to Arullu by demons. In the celebration of his festival the celebrants probably chose one of the priestesses to play the part of the weeping mother Innini (Ishtar) who sighs for the departed lover and finally herself descends to Arullu to seek for Tammuz. She rouses him from his sleep and returns to earth bearing him in her bosom. The liturgies of this festival consist largely in dialogues and monologues uttered by Tammuz and Innini and it is difficult to understand how the celebration could have been performed unless a priest acted out those parts in which Tammuz appears as a young god shepharding his sheep becoming the bridegroom of Ishtar and reposing in Arullu where he utters dialogues with the descended goddess . . . no doubt the priests taught the people that the mysteries consisted in death of a god, in the consequent disappearance of the mother-goddess, in his resurrection; finally the reviving of life on earth depending upon the marriage of these deities.<sup>32</sup>

The seasonal god is far more pervasive in Greek religion than was at one time assumed. Gilbert Murray, in writing the early editions of his monumental study of the Five Stages of Greek Religion, was himself somewhat surprised by the discovery of what he termed "the deep threads of anxiety" that ran through Greek religion as expressed in the worship of the "corn-god" whom he found representative of a complete religious system underlying that of the Olympians.<sup>33</sup> The latter were distant, cold, and whimsical gods whom men revered from afar, but in whom they seldom placed their fullest measure of trust, love and hope. These feelings were reserved in the main for the corn-sprites and "year-daemons" who shared much the same vicissitudes as mortal man and whose deaths and rebirths suffered the world to bring forth a new profusion of life.

The examination of these deities as worshiped in the



Greek popular religions shall occupy our attention shortly; but first, we should undertake a brief investigation of Greek religion prior to the advent of the mysteries, in order not only to determine its psychological significance to man--the fruit by which the tree is judged--but, also to trace its progressive decomposition; to determine why it surrendered its claim over the human heart to the "veiled faiths", the secret mysteries, which responded well to man's deepest spiritual desires by imparting a sense of security in regard to both the present and future.

Our examination necessarily begins with the Olympians themselves whose characteristics and personalities derived, like their Eastern counterparts, out of humanity's translation of the world as filtered through the senses. Thus, we find, to our surprise, that they too emerged in their nascent states as purely phenomonological potencies. They were highly compartmentalized beings who expressed specific and narrowly defined aspects of nature's many manifestations. As such, Zeus was a god of storms, Artemis a moon goddess, Apollo a sun hypostasis and Hephaestus and Poseidon gods respectively of fire and water, and so on. Their origin and genealogy were "organized and given precision" in Hesiod's Theogony and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and were further rationalized, re-defined and allegorized by later poets, until, at last, their original purpose and meaning were completely subverted. Cut off from the spring of their metaphysical and spiritual vitality, they became disassociated from the "natural flux

that patterned the experience of man."<sup>34</sup> They evolved into a society of childish, jealous and dishonest creatures patterned after human society, towards which, however, they bore no special solicitude. Over the course of this "evolutionary" period the relationship between man and the high gods became less personal and passionate. The Olympian religion grew increasingly moribund and offered less by way of spiritual comfort, intellectual stimulus or moral perspective.<sup>35</sup> Finally, in time, the Olympians failed. There was a deepening sense of spiritual distress. Men grew more sensitive to the impact of death and more anxious at the contemplation of the hereafter. Society itself seemed marked by a growing mood of melancholy and restlessness, of vague and nagging dissatisfaction. At last, in the turbulent sixth-century B.C.<sup>36</sup> large numbers of people abandoned the Olympian religion altogether--though it survived for centuries as a decoration for state occasions. Some sought meaning in the natural philosophy being formulated in Ionia, though many more turned to the Eastern mysteries for a new way to feel religious experiences not provided by the state cults. New gods multiplied, old gods became orientalized. A whole system of secret orgiastic cults spread with extraordinary rapidity throughout Hellas. These new faiths emphasized the individual; his personal needs and aspirations and brought him back into sympathy with the central rhythms of nature by inspiring him with the hope of achieving immortality through blessed communion with the "year-spirits" who

represented the soul of life. J. T. Marshal expresses the role of nature in the mystic conception of rebirth:

The cyclic renovation in nature fostered two anticipations: (1) that, as nature puts on her beautiful attire in spring after months of ugliness and deformity, so there must be a possibility, if one could only enter into thorough union with the World-Soul, of renovation, cleansing, and beautifying the human soul, of whose pollution they were so painfully aware; (2) that, as Nature lives again yearly after apparent death, so it must be possible for the human soul to undergo some process which shall render it incorruptible, and secure for it a glorious immortality.<sup>37</sup>

Innumerable different personifications of the year-spirit pervade Greek mystical religion. Adonis, Dionysos, Persephone and many other cyclical gods of myth and legend, are personifications of the vital life force. Their rhythmic comings and goings cleanse the world by casting out the polluted past and by inspiring nature and the human spirit to renew themselves.

To what extent these gods derived from Mesopotamian models is hard to estimate. External similarities alone are insufficient reasons to assume a common origin, as independent parallel developments have been frequently educed in the mythologies of unrelated peoples. And though it is not unreasonable to assume that the pre-historic ancestors of the Greeks might well have possessed their own version of the dying and rising god, it is, nevertheless, commonly held that Greek indebtedness to Semitic origins in this matter is most significant--a conclusion born out in part by the fact that nearly the entire body of Greek religious literature prior to the fourth-century B.C. bears strong witness to an important ideational and cultural

exchange between the Hellenic Aegean and the Semitic Orient.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the best example of Greek mythological borrowing from the East is the Hellenized Syro-Mesopotamian Adonis-Aphrodite myth, important for its cyclico-temporal pattern, which remains true to the Oriental archetype, and for its close thematic similarity to the famous Persephone myth, but, most especially, because it prepared Greece for the entry of other mystery religions.

This is not to say that the Hellenized Adonian myth did not represent a departure on several key points from the Semitic Tammuz cycle of which it was a direct descendant. Certain tell-tale characteristics mark it indelibly with the stamp of Hellenism. The story reflects a comparative degree of emotional control and balance of thought that insinuates an incipient manifestation of the so-called classical ideal such as is often expressed in later Greek literature. I do not here mean to imply that the transmutation of the oriental myth is a clear victory for the Greek rational impulse, as such is not the case. For the Adonis story is at once rational and irrational and in this respect reflects all myths regardless of the place of origin. Safer by far is the observation that the Adonis tale and other Greek mythico-ritual scenarios represent a relative intolerance of factual improbability; and though Mesopotamian mythology was also grounded in fact, as we have seen, that fact seems somewhat distorted and extreme by comparison.<sup>40</sup> For example, Near Eastern myths are characterized by colorful extremes

of temperment and by such fantastic and horrendous personae as Namatar, the god of plague, or Nergal, god of mass destruction by war; and a hundred other, many nameless, no less frightening, nor malicious demons that permeate the crude nightmare world of the Mesopotamian subconscious. Conversely, Greek myths, in which "the gods never do evil for evil's sake,"<sup>41</sup> are divested of such extreme personalities, though for this reason they seem in many respects less powerful, less raw; Kirk elaborates:

Not even Homer's elaborate underworld-scenes in the eleventh and twenty-third Odyssey, still less the learned variations on depth or darkness of Tartarus in Hesiod's Theogony, can rival the force and terror conveyed by a few Sumerian and Akkadian tablets-- the record of Innana's descent through the seven gates of hell at each of which she is further stripped until she is hauled naked before her pitiless sister Ereshkigal, queen of the dead, to be instantly killed and hung on a meat hook; of the obstinate and fatal quest of Enkidu for Gilgamesh's Pukka and Mikku that have fallen through a hole into the world below.<sup>42</sup>

The difference in temperment between Greek and Oriental myth is of course emblematic of the gap between their respective apprehensions of nature. When we turn to examine the geography of the Hellenic culture, comprising as it did the Greek mainland, Ionia, and the Aegean islands, we are at once struck by its difference from that of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Greeks had no experience of life in an environment dominated by mighty rivers; thus they did not worry much about floods; nor did they fear drought, as winter was always abundantly moist; and though the summer heat was parching, it was not oppressively so. The Grecian seasons passed more

quietly so their world changed less dramatically; nature was rarely hostile and was more usually kind. Little wonder, then, that far from seeing nature's shaded variations as potential threats to life, the Greeks saw in her rising and falling the promise that Being was eternal and that though men's fortunes might vary, the processes of cyclic-nature would continue in a more or less invariable sequence throughout the round of eternal time.

The pleasant relationship between the Greeks and their environment dulled the normal tensions resulting from man's necessity ever to yield to fate, to the extent that their ritualistic attempts to assure the continuation of the life-cycle seem un-enthusiastic, even half-hearted when compared, that is, to such Eastern festivals as the Babylonian Akitu or the Canaanitish Ingathering. This is not to say, however, that Greeks did not emotionally involve themselves in the process of renewal; in fact, nothing could be further from the truth, as we shall see.

The worship of Adonis (a Greek adaption of the Semitic form of address "lord") was assimilated directly into northern Greece from Byblos sometime before the seventh-century B.C., where he had been associated with Osiris,<sup>43</sup> and from Cyprian Paphos to the Peloponnese and Corinth where in numerous midsummer festivals, women--whose own 28 day cycles of fertility brought them closer to nature's creative power--celebrated his secret rites in the temples of Aphrodite. They mourned the effigy of the dead prince in lamentations of **song-singing**;

and watched for him in seaside vigils; they shaved their heads to express their grief and recited magic spells which the priests proclaimed to have the power to enable Adonis to rise from the dead. The celebration had its climax in an orgiastic revelry in which the worshippers achieved an immediate relationship with the powers of nature.

An explication of the similarities between the older Tammuz story and the Hellenized Adonis variant bears no detailed elaboration here as both dieties diverged from the same West-Semitic tradition. The numerous fragments appertaining both traditions center around the same archetypal action, including the god's descent into the underworld, the mourning of the goddess consort; her quest for the dead god and their reunion in the hierogamy.

We must not be surprised that the cyclico-temporal skeleton around which the Adonian theme is developed follows closely the Semitic mythico-ritual agricultural scenario discussed on pages 35-36; and that Adonis's death and resurrection, in the Greek world, corresponds exactly with the cycle of the seasons. The story of Adonis has been too often explained to need more than a brief recapitulation here.

Adonis, like Tammuz, Attis and Osiris, was a beautiful youth. He was beloved by the fertility goddess Aphrodite. According to one version of the story, Adonis was killed in a heroic struggle with a monstrous boar; though other accounts declare that Ares, Aphrodite's wild lover, was the one who killed him. In either case, Adonis died and passed

through Acheron's portal into Hell. There Persephone (Ereshkigal in the Semitic tradition), goddess of the underworld, became enamored of him and, despite the pleas and protestations of Aphrodite, refused to release him. Aphrodite's bitter resentment expressed itself in her neglect toward man and nature. Men grew cheerless, dismal and forlorn; the land **went** to waste. Moreover, a feud ensued between her and the other gods who were understandably loathe to involve themselves in a test of wills that threatened to upset the balanced order of "Heaven", "Hell" and the Mortal World between. The conflict was finally resolved when Zeus devised a plan to satisfy both Eros and Death; to wit, he decreed that neither would be forbidden permanently the boy's company, nor enjoy exclusively his affections; hence the much coveted youth would spend his time divided equally between the two, one half of the year with Aphrodite on high Olympus and the remainder in the the bosom of the earth with Persephone.

The experiential basis of the myth is clearly the changing of the seasons and though the Semitic myth pattern only clumsily fits the Greek seasonal procession, a crude aition for worldly change is adopted. We should know something of the cycle of the seasons in ancient Hellas.

In Greece vegetation sprouts up very quickly, grains of the fall planting grow during the moist winter and are harvested in late December, the month of Poseidon. In February the second crop is planted which matures toward the end of April and is harvested in May, just before the onslaught of the



of the long summer drought. It was during this hot period that the cultist's tensions were relieved in sacred rites designed to recall the gifts of Nature and diminish the menace of the sterile Summer Sun.<sup>46</sup>

The above remarks--in conjunction with those made before--will suffice for the needful understanding of Greek meteorological and seasonal phenomena. I must point out, however, that besides these considerations, there are other environmental factors that contradict the correspondence between the god's death and resurrection and the cycle of seasons in Greece. For example, the time of the god's recession to Tartarus--late spring and summer--corresponds well with the dry period there, as we have learned. However, in other festivals observed throughout Ionia and elsewhere along the Hellenized Mediterranean, the god's descent was celebrated at the onset of winter--in the Mesopotamian manner--which, as we have seen, was a relatively mild growing period and not one of death and desolation. Such ritual observances are clearly out of line with the mythical representation of the yearly fertility cycle, and were practiced, we must assume, not as fertility rites, but as a means by which to assure individual salvation. We shall discuss this possibility in more detail later, but for now, we should continue for a time with our analysis of the seasonal and fertility aspects of the myth.

To the best of my knowledge, no single comprehensive Adonis liturgical hymn has come down to us. In fact, the most comprehensive and enlightening references to the Adonia

appear only in such relatively late pieces of conventional literature as Bion's First Idyll, The Festival of Adonis by Theocritus or in Ovid's Metamorphoses. In these works we are able to gain a clear sense of the profound involvement of the people in the actual sacramental celebration of the festival of Adonis, and discover the depth of their psychical co-operation with the deified forces of nature in order that worldly death and sterility might vanish and new life be reborn.

The votive offerings made to the "Assyrian Youth" reflect his ancient association with vegetative life as indicated in the XV Idyll of Theocritus:

On his right are piled  
 Ripe apples fallen from the oak tree tall;  
 And silver caskets at his left support  
 Toy gardens, Syrian scents enshrined in gold  
 And alabaster, cakes of every sort  
 That in their ovens, the pastrywomen mould,  
 When the white meal they mix all flowers that bloom,  
 Oil cakes and honey cakes.<sup>47</sup>

The "toy gardens" mentioned above were consecrated to the goddess Aphrodite and were comprised of red anemones planted originally in small earthen crocks. The plants themselves were allegorical to the blood of Adonis, and recall the red poppies that grew in his native Syria.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, their rapid growth, short life and sudden death symbolized the brief episodic existence of the god himself, as Ovid explains:

Within an hour, a flower springs up, the color of blood, and in appearance life that of the pomegranate, the fruit which conceals its seeds under a leathery skin. But the enjoyment of this flower is of brief duration; for it is so fragile, its petals so lightly attached, that it quickly falls, shaken from its stem by those same winds that give it its name, anemone.<sup>49</sup>

When dead, the petals and dried stems of the plants were gathered up by the worshippers and tossed into fountains as a sort of vegetational magic also serving to commemorate the god's fall into perdition such as was earlier practiced in the rites of Tammuz.

The actual descent of Adonis as described in the extant literature lacks detail, but may be visualized as occurring not long after the harvest of the late spring crops, just before the Autumn planting. This was the hottest part of the year, when Phoebus bathed all Hellas in a sea of burning asperity, mirroring in the eyes of the cult, the boy's death, the woman's melancholy and the combined absence of their munificent animus. As such, it was the season of cultic despondency; a time of profound languishment, compassion and commiseration. The pathematic essence of this festal phase is captured in Bion's Lament for Adonis (Idyll I), the emotive lines of which echo, in all probability, actual dirges sung by the mystae who, inter spem et metum, mourned the hero's descent:

I mourn for Adonis--Adonis is dead,  
 Fair Adonis is dead and the Loves are lamenting.  
 Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-stewed bed:  
 Arise, wretch stoled in black; beat thy breast  
 unrelenting,  
 And shriek to the worlds, "Fair Adonis is dead".<sup>50</sup>

This period of wailing and sobbing is typical of the mysteries as the means by which the mystae strove to partake of the suffering and death of the god so that they might also share in his rebirth.

After mourning, the initiates set out to the place where

they had buried the likeness of the god. This they ceremoniously disinterred in an act signifying his anodos (ascension). Finally the stark tension of the festival is broken and the worshippers acclaim their joy:

Adonis, now pour new year's blessings down!  
Right welcome dost thy come, Adonis dear.<sup>51</sup>

As fears of transiency take flight, the now ecstatic celebrants prepare to partake mystically in the cyclic renewal of life which was the promise of their own glorious immortality at death. The boundless joy of the occasion is captured in these lines from Theocritus's Festival of Adonis concerning the hierogamy:

But sweet Adonis hath his own sweet bed:  
Next to Aphrodite sleeps the roseate-armed,  
A bridegroom of eighteen or nineteen years,  
Kiss the smooth boyish lips--there's no sting there!  
The bride hath found her own: all bliss be hers!  
And him at dewy dawn we'll troop to bear  
Down where the breakers hiss against the shore;  
There with dishevelled dress and unbound hair,  
Bare bosomed all, descants wild we'll pour.<sup>52</sup>

The beliefs embodied in the Adonia represent an important contrast to the Mesopotamian's grim observation that the change of season marked the calendar with a mere shift in the nature of human misery. For in the frenzied joy of the Adonisian experience the faithful were transported from the cares and worries of this world into a higher realm where they were able to glimpse the limitless horizons of continued new beginnings for themselves and nature lived in the presence of the gods in accordance with the cyclic flow of seasonal time. This concept is derived by extension from their own

observation and belief that what the cyclic-god did on a yearly basis for nature could be achieved also for man, and that the individual too could in some sense be born at death into new life. Though this concept is of a very vague and in many ways of a very contradictory nature, yet it exercised an immense influence on the life of the Greeks down unto the third-century A.D. when it was superseded by the story of Christ's death and resurrection.

It is an a priori conclusion that a conviction such as this is derived from the assumption that the soul itself is immortal or at least more long-lived than the body. And though earlier we mentioned that immortality concepts were not characteristic of Mesopotamian religion per se, evidence strongly suggests that such ideas were brought into connection with the Tammuz-Adonis cult "in a late period of Babylonian and Assyrian history."<sup>53</sup> Supporting this claim is the Semitic story of Ishtar's descent which, though derived from a Sumerian prototype, clearly adumbrates the notion that the soul would live on after death and in some sense share in the year-god's resurrection to earthly life:

On the day when Tammuz comes up to me!  
 when with him the lapis flute (and) the carnelian  
 Ring come up to me,  
 When with him the wailing men and the wailing  
 women come up to me,  
 May the dead rise and smell the incense.<sup>54</sup>

It is probable that the direction of this tendency was strongly affected at Byblos, by the association there of Adonis with Osiris which resulted in the accretion of

immortality concepts to the meaning of the Adonian cultic symbolism. The new implication is that the spirit was itself quasi-divine, and that rebirth involved nothing less than the re-unification of the individual spirit with the World-Soul as personified in Adonis. In this view, the blessed dead were supposed to reside in the underworld with Adonis during the season of his withdrawal, where by virtue of their friendship with him and his mistress (Persephone), they would be spared the torments of Tartarus. With the god's anodos they would re-emerge in realistic communion with the World-Soul as an aspect of fertility. F. M. Cornford has remarked on the metaphysical aspects of this notion:

We are to conceive of a limited quantity of soul-substance, which passes out of the living body into the opposite state of separation from it, and, in perpetual revolution, reappears again in new living bodies. Soul of this sort evidently has no organic connection with the series of bodies it temporarily informs, and it must be conceived as impersonal, continuous and homogenous. The same soul-stuff passes through an endless succession of individual forms, and their individualities leave no abiding mark on it.<sup>55</sup>

This pantheistic idea of cyclic immortality cannot long have been entertained by the votaries of Adonis, however, as the expectations of those who flocked to the mysteries concerning the quality of the after-life rapidly increased in the course of the sixth-century. Henceforth, the saving affects of the Adonian religion and similar faiths increasingly emphasized the "good hopes" for a glorious personal immortality. This tendency made any thought of the personality's insurvivability inexplicable and absurd.

By the fifth-century, the old notion of pantheistic

immortality had developed into or been supplanted by (exactly when and how we don't know) the doctrine of soul transmigration, variously known as palingenesis, the proper Greek term for it, metempsychosis, which occurs in late writers, or Metempsychosis, used by some of the Neo-Platonists and Christian apologists. And though it has been suggested that the idea derived from India or from Egypt,<sup>56</sup> such notions have largely been put to rest by Nilsson, Pearson and others who have found ample evidence for the concept far back in Greek popular religion, on which much has been written.<sup>57</sup>

At any rate, by the waning years of the fifth-century B.C., the palingenesia doctrine enjoyed a wide currency not only among the various cults of Adonis, but also in the mysteries of Dionysus and Demeter; and in the "mysteriosophic" movement known as Orphism. Professor McLintoch's comments concerning the tenet seem worth quoting:

In Greece, the doctrine of transmigration appears to have been generally inculcated as one of the deepest doctrines of the mysteries . . . the Greek mysteries were in fact, not only a school in which metempsychosis was taught, but an indispensable grade or lodge through which all of the aspirants must pass before they could be purified and go on to higher stages of existence.<sup>58</sup>

That Adonis himself was reincarnated in the mystical sense is incontrovertable: he was born a man; he died a man; his soul descended to hell where by virtue of his special association with the queen of souls, Persephone, and by virtue of his marriage to the goddess Aphrodite, he was reborn a god. As a seasonal hypostasis he is reincarnated time without number in cycles of involution and evolution

between the natural and hyper-natural worlds. His life in nature, the sensate plain, is prefixed by his submission to an existence in the higher spiritual plain of Hades. In this context, the red anemone, or poppy, signifies his worldly incarnation; his interval of sensuous existence--as does also his attachment to Aphrodite. Conversely, his recession to Persephone, the cycle's upward arch in the spiritual sense, becomes the cause of his personal renovation by which he is endowed with the divine powers necessary to revitalize not only nature, but the souls of his followers as well. Therefore, in consequence of this view, we might assume that as the followers of Adonis took on a new life lived in mystical sympathy with him, then for them also the pattern of reincarnation seems obligatory.

The simple rationale for the reincarnation doctrine is derived from the central ontological thought that underlay the mysteries as exemplified in the periodic death and resurrection of the corn-god. It is this: as life results inevitably in death, so death, by reciprocal necessity, must needs result in life, for if not, then all would at some point perish. On the day of his death, Socrates in a clear-cut and straightforward argument, affirmed this old rule by asserting that all beginnings or generations derived from the oscillation between extremes; that "opposites come from opposites, such that the stronger come from the weaker; the waking from the sleeping and the worse from the better, not only in regards to things and states, but in regards also to qualities, so



that cooling comes from heating; and combining comes from separation and so on. This argument is extended by him to man in that man's death must result in new life, and visa versa. For if human life went forward in a rectilinear progression, "without any return to the starting point or any deflection" then everything would have the same quality and reach the same state, and change would cease altogether and life itself, unreplenished, would ultimately vanish from the earth.<sup>59</sup>

This premise and its conclusion, grew not only from man's immersion into the external rhythms of nature, but also from his awareness of the internal rhythms of his own body: the cycles of wake and sleep, the methodical pounding of the heart, the regular cadence of respiration and a countless number of similarly periodic bodily functions, conspired inexorably to imply that despite the apparent lineal progression of man's personal existence, the cycle was as an integral part of his being as it was for any other process in the universe.

As mentioned earlier, the cycle of reincarnation was also associated with the religion of Eleusis. Sallust tells us that the periodic descent of souls was the message expressed in the dramatic presentation of Kore's death and rebirth.<sup>60</sup> Pindar avers that Persephone kept the souls of men for nine years to purify them so that they might acquire a new form.<sup>61\*</sup>

\*The idea of cycles of Nine is of a probable Cretan provenience and has a long history of ritual and calendrical connotations throughout the Classical period.<sup>62</sup>

And in the Frogs of Aristophanes, a chorus of Eleusinian mystae are depicted celebrating Demeter's regenerative rites in Hades during their recessional phase.<sup>63</sup> Further evidence may be derived from the interpretation of Eleusinian art and iconography such as Demeter's serpent which had a dual symbolic value: first, when depicted devouring its own tail it represented continuous Being without beginning or end; and second, it illustrated the metempsychotic principle of everlasting life and rejuvenation by sloughing off its old skin and acquiring a new body.<sup>64</sup> However, the best evidence for the idea can be discerned in the symbolism of the life-cycle of Kore herself, who personified the planting seed and was an underworld goddess part of the year and goddess of living nature for the remainder. She was thus attached, like Adonis, to a sensuous existence to which she had to return periodically, making reincarnation for her too a fact.<sup>65</sup>

The rites of Demeter and Kore were the most sacred and secret of all Greek mysteries, and had been practiced in one form or another at Eleusis from Mycenaean times in a festival originally designed to dissuade the goddesses from withdrawing their powers from nature; to promote good crops to farmers and healthy children to mothers.<sup>66</sup> By degrees the old fertility ritual "became charged with a higher meaning, and became an acted parable to the relation of the spirit of man to the divine basis of the world, assuring to the mystae the protection of Persephone in the world beyond the grave."<sup>67</sup>

The mythology of Eleusis is contained in the Homeric

Hymn to Demeter, which dates probably from the 7th cent. B.C.

At its most elemental level, it is the story of the grain cycle which was thought to be a parable to the cycle of man. In the myth it is told how Hades carried off Kore to be his wife; and how Demeter refused to be consoled for her loss, and punished gods and men by refusing to make the grains grow. Finally, Hades was bidden by Zeus to restore Persephone for a time to her mother so that she should spend every year eight months of the twelve in the light of the world as the grain maiden, and the remaining four months as the wife of Hades, the queen of souls. This compromise satisfied Demeter who caused the grain to grow and instituted her rites at Eleusis.<sup>67</sup>

Thus we see that Persephone's life, death and rebirth served as an aition for seasonal change in much the same way as did the life-cycle of Adonis.<sup>68</sup> When the harvest was ripe, she disappeared for a time to the underworld, to come to life in the world again in the spring. The external ordering of the Eleusinia is substantially that of the Adonia, although the sexual overtones and orgiastic qualities associated with the latter are absent at Eleusis, as a result, no doubt, of the rendering of the Persephone myth in the terms of a mother's love of her daughter as opposed to the concupiscent attraction between Aphrodite and Adonis.

All attempts to lay out with any precision the relationship between the eschatology and the actual mystic ceremony of Demeter's regenerative rites is open to the widest interp-

retation. Some of the main facts and approximate meanings of the ritual may be relied on but very little of the festivals elaborate detail. And though a number of highly plausible albeit diverse reconstructions have been offered by the likes of George Mylonas, Harold Willoughby, Jane Harrison and others, there is as yet no general agreement as to the exact spiritual significance of the rites except this: their aim was high; their saving and healthy affect was such as no other Greek faith. Isocrates described the rites as imparting "pleasing hopes of happy immortality."<sup>69</sup> Pindar said that "those who know the life and sufferings of Demeter knew also the end of life and its god sent beginnings."<sup>70</sup> Cicero tells us the mysteries taught the initiated "to die a fairer hope."<sup>71</sup> And Plato, who cannot condemn in odious enough language the rites of Orpheus, declared positively of the Eleusinia that "he who enters the next world uninitiated and unenlightened shall live in the mire, but he who arrives there purified and enlightened shall dwell among the gods."<sup>72</sup>

The ancient sources make it clear that initiation into the rites of Demeter procured salvation by a process of purification from bodily taint, thereby freeing the individual from the liability of eternal death. Immortality, however, did not consist of eternal transcendence from the world, but rather, was seen to be an eternity of earthly incarnations unfolding in axiomatic conformity with the cycle of nature as personified in the Corn Maid, Persephone. As the symbolism of the grain-cycle is the cause of mediation between the

Eleusinian and other regenerative "philosophies" its closer examination is warranted.

Many speculate as to how the planting seed and its gods of affinity became entwined with the rituals of rebirth. Obviously we cannot know what went on in the minds of the worshippers, though we do know a lot about their collective experience. The fact is, the process was simple and obvious, and the following hypothesis, equally simple and obvious, seems to strike at the heart of the matter.

To those who tilled the soil, the seed appeared to be indestructible and immortal and yet its life-cycle followed the same pattern of growth and decline as man. In its infancy it was the vernal sprout pushing up through the soil. It grew, acquired new form, matured and ripened until it stood a tall and erect ear of wheat; it yellowed with age and was killed, cut down to make the bread that nourished humanity, leaving behind as dry bones its essence, the seed, which when returned to its earthen crypt completed the old cycle and began the new. The parable to the cycle of man is transparent. The seed is our soul. At death it returns like the planting grain to the earth, the realm of Persephone, where it undergoes a metamorphosis and is joined to new flesh creating thereby a new man who returns to the world to confront anew the mysteries of life.

Numerous regenerative festivals associated with Demeter-Kore, and later with Dionysos, were concerned alike with the planting of seed and the resurrection of the soul.<sup>73</sup> The

Thesmophoria, the Andania, the Haloa, and other rites patterned after the Eleusinia, were concerned with the rebirth of both natural and spiritual life which the Greeks believed shared equally in communion with the World-Soul. The mystic connection of seed and soul was especially conspicuous at Athens where it was a common practice to sow wheat on the graves of the dead to hasten their rebirth. Also at Athens was celebrated the Anthesteria, a flower and soul festival, at which underground seed bins which also served as coffins for the dead, called pithoi, were opened, symbolizing the return of grains and soul's to earth.<sup>74</sup>

As I alluded to earlier, the regenerative symbolism of the seed is commonly found in conjunction with various metempsychotic and other regenerative beliefs. Plato, expressed his own reincarnation theory in terms of the seed:

Earthborn seed that had by now become quite exhausted-- each soul had run through its appointed number of births and had returned as seed to the earth as many times as had been ordained for it.<sup>75</sup>

The Stoic belief in ekpyrosis permitted them to speak of cyclic reincarnation insofar as the soul's new beginnings were understood to be a manifestation of the World-Soul's creative phase, called spermatikos logos or semina logos which like the human soul was purified after the conflagration and blessed by the divine seed of knowledge and virtue.<sup>76</sup> The highly syncretic Hermetic tradition of Egypt also taught that regeneration was the "end and aim of all revelation" and described the metempsychotic soul as an "eternal seed".<sup>77</sup>

And though strictly used in the context of resurrection as



opposed to reincarnation, the writers of the New Testament incorporated the seed as not only a symbol for the soul (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18) but as a symbol for the divine logos (Luke 8:11) in which respect they seem to follow the Stoics.<sup>78</sup>

With the passage of time the fertility aspects of Eleusis diminished and the rites became "more closely concerned with the life beyond the grave."<sup>79</sup> The cause of this modification, according to Gardner, was the intrusion there sometime in the 6th cent. of Dionysiac and Orphic elements. "Iachos, who was a form of Dionysos, became henceforth a chief person in it, though exactly how he was related to the original goddesses is not altogether clear."<sup>80</sup> It was during this period that the worshippers at Eleusis were imbued with the so-called Orphic sense of sin and its corollary belief that the only way to escape the "wheel of life", that is, to liberate the soul from bodily palingenesia, was to lead a saintly existence.<sup>81</sup>

Before, however, we can undertake a proper discussion of Orphic cyclic theory, we must know something of the central Orphic god, Dionysos, and distinguish several important aspects of his pre-Orphic religious development.

The native biography of Bacchus varies in significant detail from that of gods discussed elsewhere in this paper. In many respects he represents a throwback to an earlier transitional stage of religious development when vegetation and fertility gods were emerging from purely plant and animal incarnations and beginning to take on human attributes.



We find him entering Greece half animal, a "bull-browed" "son of a cow" whose horns represent erect phalli or a woman's open legs; he appeared also as a snake, a stag, a goat, or even a lion as is expressed in Euripides' Bachae:

Appear appear, whatever thy shape or name,  
O mountain Bull, snake of a hundred names,  
Lion of the burning flame, God, Beast, Mystery, Come!

As we might assume, his appellations were many: Bromios, Euios, Sabazios, Zagreus, Iackos, Tyroneos, Dendritos, Lenaios, and Eleuthereus are but a few.<sup>83</sup> In Thrace he was known principally as Dios Nusos, "young Zeus".

His cult had developed in the primitive tribes of Thrace where inscriptions have been discovered which speak of him as the "New King", whose advent in the mythico-ritual drama of the cult "generally combined with the casting out of the old and polluted king of the past."<sup>84</sup> We recognize this theme as having a striking affinity with the old "pendular" motif of Mesopotamian myth such as was described on page 32 of this chapter. We recall that in this archetypal mythologem the sky or rain god, representing the father figure, is supplanted at the beginning of the new year by his son, who is a youthful, hypostatic phase of his own existence. In the Thracian story, Deos, like his etymological analogue, Zeus, is a sky god. He is married to the earth goddess, Zemela, "Semele". From their union is conceived a divine son who must usurp the sky-father who has become exhausted and inefficient with age. The expropriation of the Ouranian throne by the son is accomplished with the aid of the earth-mother, who because of her husband's



sterility is no longer capable of producing. Once the old god is overcome, the earth-mother is delivered from her barrenness by her marriage to the New Zeus, her son, who makes her fruitful once more.<sup>85</sup>

Borrowed and transmuted by the Greeks, the mythos in its later development does not allow the clearly differentiated and yet ever-youthful Dionysos to supersede his eternally mature father, though evidence exists in certain Orphic fragments adumbrating a vestigial trace of their ancient conflict.<sup>86</sup>

Dionysos's adoption to Olympus is validated by the classical myth of Semele, which we should know.

Semele was a daughter of Cadmus and the paramour of Zeus who had promised to fulfill her greatest wish, but when she asked to behold him in his full radiant glory, he warned her not to persist in the perilous wish. She refused to heed his warnings, however, and Zeus, in deep despair, repaired to the upper regions to don his splendid panoply. When he returned in his blazing armor, as the god of lightning and thunder, Semele was blasted by his immortal radiance, and consumed to ashes.<sup>87</sup> From her charred remains, however, Zeus retrieved their unborn child and sewed it up in his thigh for several months: at birth the god, the infant Dionysos, was commended to the nymphs of Mt. Nyssa who brought him up in secret to save him from the jealous malice of Hera. It was here that he invented wine.<sup>88</sup> When he was grown, he travelled throughout Greece with his followers (thiasos)



teaching viticulture to humanity and establishing his religion. He brought many benefits to those who accepted his rule; but for those who stood against him, he punished with great cruelty. One who opposed him was King Pentheus of Thebes. His attempt to stop the worship of Dionysus resulted in his being torn to pieces by the wild Maenads, one of which number included his mother, Agave<sup>89</sup> (according to Walter R. Agard, the many mythical accounts of the god's encounters with kings who resisted him, reflects, perhaps, the historical resistance to the spread of his cult.).<sup>90</sup> Despite such attempts, Dionysus was able to firmly establish his religion, in consequence of which he was accepted into the Olympian fraternity.<sup>91</sup>

As a member of the stately Olympian household, Dionysus was an anomaly. He was too lusty and full-blooded to separate himself so completely from the society of man as had the other dieties, and instead, sought to draw mankind near so that they might join him in his revelries and become one with him. He remained specifically a god of the vine, wine making and libation; but the limits of his authority were far broader; he was an expression of the human psyche's animal impulse and of human sexuality; of general fertility and of trees especially;<sup>92</sup> as the son of earth and sky it is natural that he should be conceived as a vera causa operating in the physical realm, effectuating the phased passages of nature as a time god, who went to sleep and awoke each eniautos "anniversary" signifying a new seasonal aion "age".



His characteristic cyclic qualities are remarked on by Plutarch:

The Phrygians think that the god is asleep in the winter and is awake in summer, and at one season they celebrate with Bacchic rites his going to bed and at the other his rising up. And the Paphlagonians allege that in the winter he is bound down and imprisoned and in the spring he is stirred and let loose.<sup>93</sup>

According to the Zagreus and Cretan myths, Dionysus was believed to have died a violent death by being torn asunder, but, like Osiris and Adonis, was brought back to life again. His death and resurrection were made periodic by the strict dictates of Hades who allowed no permanent exit from his realm, but so that nature might live, agreed to a compromise by which Dionysus would spend one third of the year above ground, a third below and the remaining third wherever he chose.

It is true, that this story is of late invention (6th cent. B.C.) but this does not affect its value as evidence of men's attitudes towards Dionysus in the classical period, and, in fact, may shed light on even earlier views. However, an examination of the fuller ramifications of the story would not be significantly related to the task at hand, and should be put aside for the present. Nevertheless, we should take a brief look at some other seasonally related Dionysiac mythologems in order to better comprehend the effects of cyclic nature on the religious ideas of the people.

In several accounts, nature's variations are explained by the descent of Dionysus into Hades to secure his mother's

resurrection. In this story, Semele becomes identified with Kore<sup>94</sup> and her return becomes a seasonal event heralding the return of vernal growth.<sup>94</sup> In the Eleusinian iconography Dionysus is often associated with Kore and in one particular representation is depicted as emerging from the ground "corn like" in the manner of Persephone.<sup>96</sup> In still other narratives, he dies and comes to life again under circumstances similar to those surrounding Adonis with whom he is closely identified. In these tales his blood is transformed into a plant, though not the anemone of Adonis, but the pomegranate, the fruit associated with Kore, which when split open looks like a wound, its red seeds "symbolizing death and the promise of resurrection (Eastern Christians still carry on this symbolism).<sup>97</sup> Other very late and somewhat obscure traditions associate Dionysus with Hades, the Egyptian Osiris and Serapis, and Zabaziu of Phrygia, but space does not allow us here to elaborate these connections.

Regardless of the mythic explanation by which his life-cycle had been superimposed on the seasonal flow, Dionysus's blessed manifestations were universally and joyously welcomed, as is reflected in Euripides' Bacchae:

The whole earth bursts into joyous dance  
 When Bromios leads his troop toward the hills  
 Where the band of women await him, drawn  
 From loom and shuttle in reverent ecstasy.<sup>98</sup>

His epiphany was celebrated in observances held during late Autumn and early Spring. The most important of these were the **Argolid Dionysia**, the raw and graceless Rural Dionysia; the

Attic Anthesteria and Lennaea (the feast of wild women); and the festival called Haloa at which both Dionysus and Demeter were offered the first fruits of the winter harvest.

The constitutive elements of the various Bacchanalia were similar in most respects to those of the Adonia. Ablutions, fasting and other purifications were undertaken preparatory to the usual performance of rites of sympathetic magic designed to prompt the refructification of nature. Such magic was usually imitative in character. Dionysiac revelries were especially characterized by an exuberant phallic worship, in which the god's effigial genitalia were handled by the *mystae*. This apparently served as a prelude to a general orgy where cultic neophytes were initiated into adult sexual life. This having been completed, other more symbolic acts of nature worship were consummated. One in particular evinces a special affinity with the Syrian born rites of Adonis. I am here referring to the throwing of Dionysus's image into water to bring on a stronger and more fertile incarnation (this practice may derive from the mythic accounts in which the opponents of Dionysus attempted to destroy him by various methods of drowning but from which the god returned with new vigor to reap a terrible vengeance).<sup>99</sup> And though the hieros gamos was not an integral part of every Dionysian festival, in the Anthesteria at least, the god was united each year with the wife of the Archon Basileus by which act the cult's collective femininity hoped to receive, through their sympathy with the queen archon, the blessings

of fertility.<sup>100</sup> These preliminary purifications and initiations having been completed, and the hierogamy, if it were observed, consummated, the celebrants then prepared to actively intervene in the affairs of god; to undertake a search for the buried effigy of Dionysus in which the deity was incarnate, and return it to its temple. Once exhumed, the figure was displayed for all to see; its presence conferred special blessings upon those present and assured fertility to the land by the reawakening of nature's creative powers in spring.

As the reader will remember from our discussion of Adonis, it was more than the hope of promoting vegetational and personal fertility that drew so many to the mysteries. For the people believed that as the cultic god had died and afterwards had arisen to new life, so too would they, as a similar fate awaited each man and woman who had been united with god through the magic of the cult. This hope of rebirth is the central message taught and embodied in the Dionysiac mysteries; it is accomplished by what Miss Jane Harrison has called the "savage rite of divine possession", in which men not only identified themselves with god, but actually "became god."<sup>101</sup> Such realistic communion was achieved in part by the imbibing of wine which was thought to be sympathetically bound up with the spirit of Dionysus. Wine, however, was not wholly responsible. Wild music, shouting and other crude and unrestrained activities taken up by the worshippers, prepared them for their fusion with divinity, which was actualized in the signal mystical act, the communion of raw

flesh (sparagmos). E. R. Dodds aptly describes the savage rationale and homeopathic affects underlying the sparagmos:

If you want to be lion-hearted, you must eat lion; if you want to be subtle, you must eat snake; those who eat chickens and hares will be cowards, those who eat pork will get little piggy eyes. By parity of reason, if you want to be like god you must eat god (or at any rate something which is θεῖον). And you must eat him quick and raw, before the blood has oozed from him: only so can you add his life to yours, for "blood is the life".<sup>102</sup>

In earlier times the unfortunate beast was more usually a bull though Dodds discovered that Dionysos was eaten in many forms:\*

In Plutarch's day it was the ivy that was torn to pieces and chewed: that may be primitive, or it may be a surrogate for something bloodier. In Euripides bulls are torn, the goat torn and eaten; we hear elsewhere of ὑποφάγια of fawns and rending of vipers.<sup>103</sup>

Whatever the animal eaten, the effects were the same: the worshippers hoped to become that which they worshiped, the god incarnate in the sacrificial beast. Erwin Rhodes summarized best the collective effect of this the ultimate Dionysian experience:

Such a state raised man above the normal level of their limited, everyday consciousness, and could elevate him to heights of vision and knowledge unlimited; that, further, to the human soul it was not denied, in very truth and not in vain fancy, to live for a moment the life of divinity.<sup>105</sup>

\*Dionysus's incarnation as a bull bespeaks his ancient connection with Attis of Phrygia, which under the influence of Mazdaeism conceived a mystic bull as their originator of creation and resurrection. J. G. Marshall describes the Phrygian origin of the custom: ". . . the old custom of devouring a bull into themselves renewing their physical energy, underwent a sublimation of meaning, and was used as a means of acquiring eternal regeneration of the soul."<sup>104</sup>

Offering escape from worldly reality by divine communion, and promising hopes of blessed life after death, the worship of Dionysus became the distinctive faith of the Hellenistic age. All Greek mysteries developed strong Dionysiac aspects and the Bacchic mysteries spread with extraordinary rapidity throughout the Hellenized regions of the East. The weight of evidence is clearly indicative of an attachment of the cult of Dionysus to a number of religions noted for their orgiastic processions and rites: to the faith of the Magna Mater of the Phrygian corybantes, to the mysteries of Baal-Eshmun-Melqart; to Kubebe and Osiris;<sup>106</sup> to the spectacularly indecent rites of Roman Flora; and most prominently, to the cult of Adonis and its affiliates which by the end of the second century B.C. were Dionysian in all but name only. Dionysus enjoyed an especially robust popularity in southern Italy, where he was identified with the old Italian deity Liber. Nowhere, however, did he achieve such complete acceptance as with the philosophico-religious movement known as Orphism, to whose adherents he became the mystery god par excellence.

The Orphic and Dionysiac mysteries had much in common. Both entered Greece from Thrace;<sup>107</sup> "both centered in the same god, Dionysus; both aimed at the same goal by prescribed rites and ceremonies; both made a strictly individualistic appeal and were highly developed along the lines of personal experience."<sup>108</sup> Yet, despite these similarities, a wide gulf separated their respective approaches to personal



salvation. Where the Bacchante experienced god through a spontaneous, frenzied ecstasy induced by drunkenness, the student of Orpheus sought to establish direct contact with the divine principle through a controlled system of contemplation and revelation.

In this respect, Orphism represents a revision of the more primitive aspects of Dionysiac religion in which, claims Gardner, "the savage elements were at least in the better times of Greece eliminated and religious and philosophic elements implanted in it."<sup>109</sup> The result is what we might term a complete reinterpretation of the Dionysian mythic epos into a corpus of eschatological dogma expressing the old mystic "truths" in terms of the physical and metaphysical elements and processes of the cosmos.<sup>110</sup>

In their attempts to achieve this synthesis, they relied in part, on the theoretic investigation of the principles or laws that regulated the universe and that underlay all knowledge and reality. To the extent that this is true, their system evinces a decidedly philosophical disposition.

Despite this high appreciation of scientific principles, their aim was truly theological: they promulgated a reason for man's sinful nature, and lay a foundation for the "doctrine of man's double nature and the soul's possibility of escape from the prison of the body."<sup>111</sup>

This blending of philosophic and theologic elements represents nothing less than a new valuation of human life, unrelated either to the Homeric or mystical traditions which

preceded it: a conception, posits Jaeger, that marks "an important advance in the development of man's consciousness of self-hood", making Orphism one of the most striking manifestations of religious thought in classical antiquity: "one of the most impressive proofs," concludes Jaeger, "of a new upwelling of spiritual forces from the dim recesses of the mind of the people."<sup>112</sup>

Of course, a discussion of the complete spectrum of belief among the Orphics need not be examined, inasmuch as our present concern is limited to a consideration of the character of thought derived from their perception of nature's cyclic processes. In this perspective, then, the Orphic role is one the central importance of which may be discerned in reasons which we may here refer to:

(a) At the hands of the Orphic poets, the temporal ordinal cycle of nature is abstracted to the realm of transcendent or eternal time as personified in the god Phanes-Aeon, the primum mobile, whose eternal rhythm repeats itself in every cyclic microcosm of the natural world.

(b) Orphism effects the final and most complete development of the metempsychotic theory in Greek religion by associating the cycle of reincarnation with the purgatorial "wheel of generation", in which the non-initiated expiate their sins by traversing the circle of the Great Year--a four-fold phase of transcendent time--the duration of which is determined by the Zodiacal revolution of the planets.

(c) The Orphics developed a theogony and cosmogony--

based heavily on Hesiod's prototypal model--in which a quaternate succession of heavenly dynasties determines the phased development of human history. Though not the first presentation of the so-called Theory of Ages, it is important insofar as it mediates between legends of epochal successions and the mystic idea of cyclic time so that the four phases of the Great Year mystically correspond to the four ages of man in the macrocosm, and the four seasons of nature in the microcosm.

As a full comprehension of the significance of these developments is not possible outside the broader understanding of the Orphic movement per se, our examination should begin with an account of Orphism's mythic and historic origins.

The movement's eponymous founder was, of course, the legendary bard Orpheus, the son of the Thracian King Oeagros ("of the wild sorb-apple") and the Muse Calliope, from whom he is said to have inherited such a wonderful musical talent that his powerful notes had the force to reveal life eternally and stir religious emotion to the highest intensity. We should briefly recall the story of his death.

After Eurydice, his wife, had died from a snake bite, Orpheus in a state of extreme despair, descended into Hades to plead for her return. Pluto demanded to hear him play, and was so moved by his music that he granted his request, but on the condition that Eurydice follow behind and Orpheus never look back. But the urge to look back was too strong, and he gave one backward glance to see if she were all right, and

thereby lost her to perdition. He was so disconsolate that he vowed henceforth to forbear the company of women; but his resulting homosexuality so enraged the lascivious Maenades that they tore him to pieces and threw his bloody head into the river Hebros, though it continued to live and sing and prophesy.<sup>114</sup>

With this story in mind, we may draw several additional parallels between the life of Orpheus and that of Dionysus. Like the vine-god, Orpheus was a son of both earth (Oeagros) and spirit (Caliope); and like him also he journeyed into Hades to obtain the return of a loved one; and like Dionysus of the Zagreus mythos, he was torn apart in a bloody frenzy and yet, in some sense survived. His "immortality", coupled with a prophetic talent that rivalled that of the Apollonian oracle at Delphi, made Orpheus a figure obviously suited to the Bacchic mysteries which centered around the promise of life after death and divine inspiration. But lest we mistakenly assume that Orpheus himself was worshipped in the cult, we should make clear the fact that he was not a god, nor was he a cultic figure in the same sense as was, say Selene or Silenos for example; but, rather, he was a theologos, a prophet, a man who had learned by living, suffering and knowing the pain of death the secrets of deliverance. In his poetry he taught man the ways of communion with god.

Of course, it is doubtful that Orpheus ever really lived. The current belief is that he was a personification of a tendency. Nevertheless, we do know that ideas attributed

to him found a welcome in Athens during the floruit of the Peisistratidae, whom history records as having been the patrons of the movement's most famous disciple, Onomacritos, the author of a large number of poems which passed under the names of Orpheus and Musaeus, and to whom is credited the institution of Orphic rites in the cult of Dionysus in Athens.

There was no organized Orphic church per se, though the followers of Orpheus banded together in loosely structured communities or brotherhoods which attached themselves to the various cults. The distinctive thing about these affiliate communities was that they practised their own special initiations and purifications--as described in the Orphic rhapsodies--in conjunction with the normal rites and observances of their associate faiths. Orphism had no priesthood as such; no appointed clergy to mediate between god and humanity. The movement's creeds were promoted by individual "evangelists", called initiators, whose methods may be discerned in this account by Plato, which however derogatory, may yet impart some sense of the movement's vitality:

Begging priests and soothsayers go to rich men's doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors. . . . They are masters of spells and enchantment that constrain the gods to serve their end. And they produce a bushel of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, the offspring of the moon and the muses, as they affirm, and these they use in their ritual and make not only ordinary men but states believe that there really are remissions of sins and purifications for deeds of

injustice, by means of sacrifices pleasant sport for the living, and that there are also special rites for the defunct, which they call functions, that deliver us from evils in that other world, while terrible things await those who have neglected to sacrifice.<sup>115</sup>

Orphic conceptions of man's essential nature and of the afterlife of the soul were expressed in the cardinal anthropogonic myth of Zagreus who was associated with the chthonic Dionysus.<sup>116</sup>

Let us briefly recall this legend which, according to Pausanias, was first rhapsodized by Onomacritos in the sixth-century B.C.<sup>117</sup>

In this story, Zeus lay with Persephone from which union was born the star, Zagreus, a horned child, crowned with snakes, whose patrimony was the universe. But he did not occupy the throne for long; for in a fit of jealous pique, Hera contrived to murder the child, and to that end enlisted the aid of the Titans. Their faces whitened with chalk, they attacked Zagreus with knives, tore him to pieces and ate him, except, for his heart which was preserved by Athena. When Zeus found out what had happened, he blasted the murderers with his thunderbolt and burned them alive. From their ashes, however, arose the race of men who were composed not only of Titanic elements, but as the Titans had just eaten Dionysus, of a godly essence as well. Zeus himself ate the heart of Zagreus and conceived him a second time by mating with Semele, forming the basis of the myth described on pages 61 and 62 of this paper.

This version of the Titanomachia is largely adapted from the account in Hesiod's Theogony though it has been altered by the Orphics to fit their own needs. In both stories, the major results of the struggle are the same: The Titans are cast down; Zeus is firmly established as master of celestial and earthly events, and man begins his long descent into wretchedness. Humanity's loss of grace is presented in the form of a world series of degenerative ages each of which is symbolized by a metal in a scheme similar to that presented in Hesiod's Works and Days. Mankind's degenerative cycle--which we shall examine at some length in the next chapter--may be thought of as a collective reflection of the metempsychotic cycle of the soul. We should return to a discussion of this process.

Orphic anthroposophy is characterized by a psychophysical dualism--a body-tomb concept--which says that man's physical nature is evil and impure because of its Titanic origin. But the corrupt and ephemeral body imprisons a tiny weak soul, the immortal and pure part of man that is akin to god.<sup>118</sup> Because of its ante-natal contact with Titanic impurities, the tarnished soul is condemned to a cycle of births and deaths on the cathartic "Wheel of Generation" until it is purged of taint and made pure and divine once more.<sup>119</sup> We are thus brought back to a discussion of palingenesis, though here, for the first time, the doctrine is imbued with an ethical element, for only by leading a life of merit could the soul hope to be liberated from its

"tomb" before the close of the Great Year, the normal period of time taken by it to traverse the "Circle of Necessity".<sup>120</sup>

The **Great Year** was derived from astronomical theories of Babylonian origin which determined the length of time required for the heavenly bodies to return to their same relative positions in the Zodiac as were held by them at the beginning of time.<sup>121</sup> Empedocles gauged the duration of the Great Year to be "thrice ten thousand seasons",<sup>122</sup> which is substantially the same as Plato's measure of "ten thousand years".<sup>123</sup> Elsewhere, however, Plato speaks of a three thousand year cycle,<sup>124</sup> which corresponds to what Herodotus tells us about contemporary Egyptian theories of Metempsychotic durations.<sup>125</sup>

Whatever the constitutive millenia of the reincarnational cycle, the soul, if purified, could escape the "sorrowful wheel" and fly aloft "to the fiery heaven whence it came," thereby "regaining perfection and divinity."<sup>126</sup> But if it had not attained its ultimate development, then it would, at the beginning of a new aeon, sink once more into the physical sema 'tomb', and there remain incarcerated for another revolution of Great Time. The ancient sources are in agreement as to the horrifying vicissitudes of this grim cycle; Empedocles offers a vivid report:

The soul must wander thrice ten thousand seasons shut off from the abode of the blessed, during which period he is reborn in all sorts of mortal shapes, exchanging one grievous kind of existence for another. The force of air swirls him into the sea, the sea spits him out on dry earth, the earth tosses him into the beams of the fiery sun, and the sun flings him back again into the eddies of air. All seize him, and all reject him. Such a man am I, alas, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer.<sup>127</sup>



After having been rejected by the various elements, the soul, if it had led a just life, was sent to dwell in the meadows of Elysium; but, if it had committed misdeeds or was vile and impure for lack of initiation, it was consigned to the purgatorial realm of Hades to atone its sins by suffering.

Following this period of reward or punishment, the soul would be incarnated in a new body; but one not necessarily human. Proclus tells of the metamorphoses of souls into such animals as horses, sheep and snakes,<sup>128</sup> and Empedocles thought of himself as having been in prior existences "a boy, a girl, a bush, a bird and a dumb water-dwelling fish."<sup>129</sup> In the tenth book of the Republic, Plato describes how mortal souls chose by lot their individual destinies:

He said that it was a sight worth seeing to observe how the several souls selected their lives. He said it was a strange, pitiful, and ridiculous spectacle, as the choice was determined for the most part by the habits of their former lives. He saw the soul which had once been Orpheus choosing the life of a swan because from hatred of the tribe of women, owing to his death at their hands, it was unwilling to be conceived and born a woman. He saw the soul of Thamyras choosing the life of a nightingale, and he saw a swan change to a choice of the life of man, and similarly other musical animals. . . . and after it had passed through that, when the others also had passed, they all journeyed to the plain of oblivion, through a terrible and stifling heat, for it was bare of trees and all plants, and there they camped at eventide by the River of Forgetfulness, whose waters no vessel can contain. They were all required to drink a measure of the water, and those who were not saved by their good sense drank more than the measure, and each one as he drank forgot all things. And after they had fallen asleep and it was the middle of the night, there was a sound of thunder and a quaking of the earth, and they were suddenly wafted thence, one this way, one that, upward to their birth like shooting stars.<sup>130</sup>

But these incarnations are what the soul desired least of

all. Escape was its only goal: "to cease from the wheel and breathe again from ill";<sup>131</sup> to free itself "from the Titanic element and thus purified return to the god, a fragment of whom is living in him."<sup>132</sup> And the only way this could be achieved before the end of the Great Year was by purification and initiation into the Mysteries, and by leading the pious life three times. Pindar, in one of this most Orphic odes, the second Olympian, expresses this belief:

They who thrice on either side of death have refrained their souls from wickedness, travel on the road to the island of the blest.<sup>134</sup>

In the Orphic mystical philosophy, purity is not understood to be an inactive virtue. It does not merely consist in the avoidance of certain transgressions. It required an active involvement in the cult: for no one could be saved apart from the sacraments, which brought divine life and grace. The chief act by which god's power was communicated was the Dionysiac sparagmos--"the red and bloody feast" discussed before. In Orphic ritual, the sparagmos commemorated the death of Zagreus in illo tempore, and was the means by which man's weak inner soul was nourished; Willoughby explains:

In the sacrificial bull his god Zagreus was ritualistically incarnate; hence, in eating the raw flesh of the torn bull, he partook of a divine substance that nourished and strengthened the immortal life within himself. Just as the life of Zagreus entered the devotee physically when he partook of the flesh of the bull, so the man's entered more fully into the spiritual life of Zagreus by this physical process. In a mystical sense, god and man became one by the communion.<sup>134</sup>

The communion of flesh, however, did not constitute the

ultimate aim of the Orphic life, but merely the chief means through which god rendered himself available to his creatures. The sparagmos, then, was little more than a tool used in the attainment of life's ultimate aim; it was not the primary goal itself. The true aim of Orphism was release from the cycle of births and deaths, and the reunification with the god on a permanent basis, and ritual purity alone was not sufficient to secure this goal; as Rhode has said, "it is not only the sacred mysteries themselves, in the form in which Orpheus had ordained them, which prepared for the release; a complete 'Orphic life' must be developed of them. Asceticism is the prime condition of this pious life."<sup>135</sup> Only by sacrificing one's personal inclinations, and flying from the world, could the soul be fully prepared for the mystical union and final escape from the "sorrowful weary wheel".<sup>136</sup>

So then, instead of ritualistic purity and mere religious "piety", it was taught that union with god could best be attained through clean living, abstinence and concentration on certain secret life-rules. Plato tells us that the chief tenets of Orphic abstinence were the adikia, or dietary prohibitions,<sup>137</sup> which included, according to Diogenes Laertius, abstinence from "all food that was dead or had been kiled, and from mullet, and from the fish melanurus, and from eggs and from animals that lay eggs, and from beans and from the other things that had been forbidden for those

who had accomplished the holy ties of initiation"--excluding, we might add, the flesh of beasts offered in sacrifice to Dionysos.<sup>138</sup>

Though writing in a period much later than that under discussion, Ovid, in his Metamorphoses, preserved some words of Pythagoras, a devout follower of Orpheus, which shed light on the principles underlying Orphic vegetarianism:

Oh my fellow-men, do not defile your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples, bending down the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines. There are sweet flavoured herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied milk, or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches, of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter; only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of these, for horses, cattle and sheep live on grass. But creatures whose nature is wild and fierce, Armenian tigers and raging lions, bears and wolves delight in butchered food. Alas, what wickedness to swallow into our own flesh, to fatten our greedy bodies by cramming into it other bodies, to have one living creature fed by the death of another! In the midst of such wealth as earth, the best of mothers, provides, nothing forsooth satisfies you, but to behave like the cyclops, inflicting sorry wounds with cruel teeth! You cannot appease the hungry craving of your wicked gluttonous stomachs, except by destroying some other life!<sup>139</sup>

To this rationale we might add the concept that the adikia expressed the Orphic belief that all things shared in the unity of god's enlivening spirit, and because of this, were sacred and deserving of reverence. Consequently, to kill any living thing--in addition to unnecessarily upsetting the cycle of metempsychosis--gives sway to our evil Titanic natures by recalling the terrible act in the time before man's fall when in a single monstrous victory, flesh engulfed

spirit and doomed man to suffer the degradation of life separated from god.

The imperative of right living expressed in the adikia and in the general Orphic prohibitions against injustice, mark for the first time in Greek religion man's attempt to thwart his evil inclinations by making salvation to some extent dependent on the life and character of the individual. This change in attitude finds reflection in the way in which Orphism viewed the essential character of divinity. The gods of the old Pantheon were far too immoral, arbitrary, and incalculable for the Orphics, and were by them uprooted and denounced and replaced by a new pantheon of visible gods, the heavenly bodies, whose eternal, transcendent and immutably ordered movements fulfilled Orphism's requirements for a higher, purer and more absolute universal governing principle. For these reasons, the Orphics shifted their attention away from the round of seasonal nature, and its earth-bound Titanic associations, to the circling movements of the heavenly bodies which represent the soul of god.

In terms of the Orphic conception of god; their idea of the production of souls out of him and reabsorption into him, involves an implicit monism in terms of the universal soul-substance (this in no way contradicts Orphism's presumption of man's dualistic nature, as dualistic theories often make allowances for the possibility that one of Being's independent elements might owe its existence to the creative force of the other). This monistic pantheism is particularly evident

in the extant Orphic cosmogonies which though of relatively late origin draw on much traditional material predating the classical beginning of philosophical speculation.<sup>140</sup> In these accounts, the various divinities, whose personalities are virtually obscured by the accretion of symbolism, are substantially related and broadly interchangeable; even Dionysus is "but a new ingredient in the monotheistic melting pot."<sup>141</sup> I quote from Jane Harrison's Prolegomena to Greek Religion:

. . . we find ourselves at once in an atmosphere of mystical monotheism. We have addresses to the various Olympians, to Zeus and Apollo and Hera and Athena and the rest, but these are no longer the old, clear-cut departmental deities, with attributes sharply distinguished and incommunicable; their outlines are all blurred; we feel that everyone is changing into everyone else . . . for the most part, sooner or later all divinities greater or less, mingle in the mystery melting pot. All become 'multiform,' 'mighty,' 'all-nourishing,' 'first-born,' 'saviors,' 'all-glorious,' and the like. In a word, the several gods by this time are all really one, and this one god is mystically conceived as a potency rather than a personal divinity.<sup>142</sup>

Thus in the Orphic Pantheon--at least as it materialized in the 4th cent. B.C.--Adonis, Apollo, Asclepius, Zeus, Dionysus and even the minor vegetation god, Herakles are connected with one another and are especially associated with the sun, Helios, sometimes called Hyperion. Pan becomes identified with Zeus-Protogonos, "the marshaller of all things and the whole cosmos".<sup>143</sup> The former love-god, Eros, becomes not only a "principle of Light, but Light pursuing and penetrating Darkness."<sup>144</sup> Artemis also becomes a light bearer.<sup>145</sup> Zeus, Hera, Poseidon and Hestia are

are respectively identified with the four elements, fire, air, water and earth. Euridyce, whose demise may have at one time symbolized the death of nature, becomes a hypostasis of the moon's waning phase and is associated in that capacity with Semele, the mother of Dionysus.<sup>146</sup> Adonis--whose worship never ceased to be a favorite among the women--was also associated with the moon, and in his recessional phase, was linked to Dionysus-Hades as a king of the dead. Kronos is revived and set to rule over Elysium, considered by the Ophics to be an aetherial realm set quite apart from Hades. Aphrodite is decompartmentalized from a rather narrowly prescribed love goddess and is connected with Persephone and Demeter as a general principle of life and a personification of earth, who like Persephone, rises and falls with the passing of the seasons.<sup>147</sup> Demeter is more closely associated with Gaia, the daughter of Chaos and the mother of Uranos, heaven, and is thereby a source of Life. Demeter's daughter by Kronos, Kore, becomes the mother of the time god Aeon who brings together all cosmic potencies in the Circle of Divine Time so that they, and all they govern, relentlessly drift in the same cyclic arcs of birth, growth, decay and death followed by rebirth, at which moment the various gods are recreated anew from the substance of the supreme cosmico-ordinal deity, Dionysus-Phanes, who was born from the Cosmic Egg "which the time serpent had brought forth from within itself."<sup>148</sup>

The recreation of gods and cosmos by Phanes from out of

his own hypostatic elements followed the pattern of the Zodiak, the heavenly path extending about eight degrees each side of the ecliptic on which the seven planets known to ancient man, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn traversed. The Earth was at the center of this aggregate of planets and Saturn was the outermost luminary. The zodiacal belt circled the central Earth, and was itself bounded by the great non-astronomical fire, Helios-Dionysus, the outer "world". The Orphics speak, then, of three distinct worlds or spheres: the fiery outer sphere; the middle or heavenly sphere and the inner sphere, the material world.<sup>149</sup> Together they comprise the body of Zeus-Phanes, the beginning, middle and end of all things. This supreme personification of the divine universe was itself entwined by the Draco Caelestis, which, like Demeter's snake, was depicted as devouring its own tail, thereby representing the cyclic structure and eternal duration of time. The twelve signs of the Zodiak were created by the outer sphere's (Dionysus-Helios') division of himself and the other two worlds by "four through the Zodiak".<sup>150</sup> This quaternary division represents the four circles of the middle sphere: the Tropic of Cancer, the Tropic of Capricorn, the Equator and the Ecliptic. The twelve Olympians also derived from this separation. Each of them were in turn divided by the Three Graces into 36 hypostases which account for the gods and sprites that appear to man on earth. Moreover, the initial division of the three spheres (the tripartite Phanes) into four parts is the quaternary



expression that manifests in the earthly sphere as the "four-fold glory of the seasons, which express the changes of time."<sup>151</sup> The four seasons along with other quaternary coefficients (the four humors, elements, winds etc.), are personified in Aeon, the lifetime of Being, whose phases are the celestial cycles. Aeon's link to the great rhythms of nature may be gathered from the following description written by Hans Leisegang:

The circuit of the stars; the circling sun; the resulting cycle of the seasons with their changing winds; the earth that is rejuvenated in the seasons-- all this together is Aeon, the god of time, who is manifest in all these cyclical changes and is the cosmic law underlying them . . . arousing in man a sense of absolute dependence on a universe revolving in itself according to great eternal laws.<sup>152</sup>

Thus Aeon by interpenetrating and organically uniting the time flow of both lower and higher nature, adapted the same transcendent cyclic paradigm to all phenomenological events. The round of seasons, the succession of day and night, the cycle of metempsychosis and a broad range of other periodic events and repetitive patterns and occurrences, resulted from his temporal-ordinal emanations. In this way, Orphic cosmogony, for the first time in Greek religion, presents a sophisticated view interrelating earthly seasonal time with cosmic time and space that can be read from the macrocosmic and microcosmic standpoints. From the former we see the world soul of Dionysus-Phanes as being fragmented into a myriad of individual souls; from the latter, the differentiation of these souls into numerous personalities in the

metempsychotic succession of rebirth. The soul's ontogeny spans the transcendent Great Year, while the personalities in which it manifests its presence are caught up in the round of earthly time. This temporal dualism is evident in regards to states and qualities of Being as well. The quaternary phases of biological existence--birth, growth, decay and death--are seen to be in mystic sympathy with such archetypal astronomical phases as the appearance, increase, wane and disappearance of the moon, for example. These qualitative states are also manifest in the four seasons of the agricultural year and in the macrocosmic conception of the four world ages as determined by the birth, growth, decline and reabsorption of Aeon, the time god. Moreover, the Theory of World Ages has a general application to the development of human history, which, as we have said, is seen as a parallel to the fall of the individual soul. That is to say, that as men's souls had fallen from god in the beginning of time, so earth-bound man had fallen from the golden age of heavenly beginnings and would, like his spiritual analogue, be doomed to pass through a succession of Ages with every repetition of Great Time.

The further discussion of Orphic world ages, is best taken up in connection with the broader examination of non-philosophical schemes of epochal successions to which we now direct our attention.

CHAPTER I: FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Adolf Erman, Life in Ancient Egypt, trans. H. M. Tirard (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>S. H. Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in R. T. Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1960), p. 102.

<sup>4</sup>Erman, p. 307.

<sup>5</sup>J. E. Manchip White, Ancient Egypt, 3rd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp. 29-31.

<sup>6</sup>S. G. F. Brandon, Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East (London: Hodder and Stroughtone, 1963), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup>E. O. James, The Beginnings of Religion (London: Hutchinson Publishing House, 1958), p. 65.

<sup>8</sup>See Eric Uphill, "The Egyptian Sed-Festival Rites," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 35, No. 1 (1974), p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>Henri Frankfort, Mrs. H. A. Frankfort, John Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (New York: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 44.

<sup>10</sup>Georges Roux, Ancient Iraq (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 22-23.

<sup>11</sup>John Gray, Near Eastern Mythology (New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1969), p. 70.

<sup>12</sup>Hans Leisegang, "The Mystery of the Serpent," in Pagan and Christian Mysteries, ed. Joseph Campbell; trans. Ralph Manheim and R. F. C. Hull (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955), pp. 26-27.

<sup>13</sup>J. G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (1906; rpt. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1955), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>Clark, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet VIII, col. iv, ll. 37-38, in The Ancient Near East, vol. 1., ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 59.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Tab. X, col. iii, ll. 1-3.

<sup>17</sup>Isaac Mendelsohn, Religions of the Ancient Near East (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. William R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 50.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>20</sup>George Contenau, Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria (New York: Norton and Co., Inc., 1966), p. 266.

<sup>21</sup>Eliade, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup>Roux, p. 361.

<sup>23</sup>Frankfort, p. 214.

<sup>24</sup>Roux, p. 364.

<sup>25</sup>Gray, pp. 81-84.

<sup>26</sup>Cyrus H. Gordon, "Canaanite Mythology," in Mythologies of the Ancient World, ed. Samuel Noah Kramer (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 195.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>28</sup>Sabatino Moscati, Ancient Semitic Civilizations (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 113.

<sup>29</sup>Gray, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup>The Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World, ll. 7-10. in Pritchard's Ancient Near East.

<sup>31</sup>Pritchard, introd., Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>32</sup>S. Langdon, "Babylonian Mysteries," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, IX, (1955), p. 70.

<sup>33</sup>Gilbert Murray, The Five Stages of Greek Religion (1927; rpt., New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. vi.

<sup>34</sup>Jean Hatzfeld, History of Ancient Greece, Revised by André Aymard; Trans. A. C. Harrison (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966), p. 54.

<sup>35</sup>Arthur Fairbanks, A Handbook to Greek Religion (New York: American Book Company, 1910), p. 35.

<sup>36</sup>J. B. Bury, A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great, ed. Russell Meiggs et al. (1900; rpt., London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1971), p. 311.

<sup>37</sup>J. T. Marshall, "Regeneration," in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, X, (1955), p. 644.

<sup>38</sup>Stephen Herbert Langdon, Mythology of All Races, Vol. V., (1931; rpt., New York: Cooper Square, 1964), p. 273.

<sup>39</sup>Adolphe G. Horon, "Canaan and the Aegean Sea: Graeco-Phoenician Origins Reviewed," Diogenes, 58 (1967), p. 39.

<sup>40</sup>G. S. Kirk, "Sense and Common Sense in the Development of Greek Philosophy," The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 81 (1961), p. 106.

<sup>41</sup>H. J. Rose, Religion in Greece and Rome (New York: Hutchinson and Company Ltd., 1959), p. 44.

<sup>42</sup>G. S. Kirk, "Greek Mythology: Some New Perspectives," The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 92 (1972) p. 82.

<sup>43</sup>White, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup>James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed. (1922; rpt., New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 383.

<sup>45</sup>Arthur Fairbanks, A Handbook of Greek Religion (New York: American Book Company, 1910), p. 160.

<sup>46</sup>Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (1903; rpt., New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 146.

<sup>47</sup>Theocritus, Idyll XV, in Greek Literature in Translation, ed. George Howe and Gustave Adolphus Harrier, trans. C. S. Calverly (New York: Harper Row, 1924), ll. 40-46.

<sup>48</sup>Bion Idyll I, in Greek Literature in Translation, trans. Elizabeth Barret Browning, ll. 18-20.

<sup>49</sup>Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans., Mary M. Innes (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1955), p. 245.

<sup>50</sup>Bion, ll. 1-5.

<sup>51</sup>Theocritus, ll. 30-33.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., ll. 12-20.

<sup>53</sup>Langdon, p. 71.

<sup>54</sup>The Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld. ll. 64-69.

<sup>55</sup>F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 164.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery (New York: Crown Publishers, 1977), p. 206.

<sup>57</sup>Martin P. Nilsson "Early Orphism and Kindred Religious Movements," Harvard Theological Review, 28., No. 3, July 1935, p. 217; see also A. C. Pearson, "Transmigration (Greek and Roman)," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, XI (1955), p. 432.

<sup>58</sup>Quoted in Head and Cranston, p. 207.

<sup>59</sup>Plato, Phaedo, in Plato: The Collected Dialogues, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns; trans. Hugh Tredennick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 53.

<sup>60</sup>Head and Cranston, p. 207.

<sup>61</sup>James Adam, The Religious Teachers of Greece, ed. Adelia Marion Adam (1908; rpt., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1923), p. 133.

<sup>62</sup>Florence Bennet Anderson, "Cycles of Nine," The Classical Journal, 50 (1954), p. 131.

<sup>63</sup>Martin P. Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, ed. Arthur Darby Nock (1940; rpt., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 58.

<sup>64</sup>Leisegang, p. 46.

<sup>65</sup>Head and Cranston, p. 204.

<sup>66</sup>Lewis Richard Farnell, The Cults of the Greek States, Vol. V (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 81.

<sup>67</sup>P. Gardner, "Greek and Roman Mysteries," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, IX (1955), p. 78.

<sup>68</sup>Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 456.

<sup>69</sup>Isocrates, Panegyricus, in Greek Orations, ed. W. Robert Connor (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 31.

<sup>70</sup>Pindar, fragment 137, in Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup>Cicero, De Legibus, in De Republica, De Legibus, trans. W. A. Falconer (London: W. Heinemann and Company, 1928), II, 14.

<sup>72</sup>Plato, Phaedo, 69c.

<sup>73</sup>Fairbanks, p. 156.

<sup>74</sup>C. Kerényi, Dionysus, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 303.

<sup>75</sup>Plato, Statesman, in Collected Dialogues, 272e.

<sup>76</sup>Josiah P. Gould, "The Stoic Conception of Fate," Journal of the History of Ideas, 35 (1974), p. 16.

<sup>77</sup>Marshall, p. 646.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 646.

<sup>79</sup>Gardner, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>81</sup>Rose, p. 93.

<sup>82</sup>Euripides, Bacchae, in The Presocratics, ed. Philip Wheelwright (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1966), p. 28.

<sup>83</sup>Harrison, p. 480.

<sup>84</sup>Gilbert Murray, "Dis Geniti," Journal of Hellenic Studies, 71 (1951), p. 121.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>87</sup>H. Jeanmaire, Dionysos: Histoire du Culte de Bacchus (Paris: Payot, 1951), p. 337.

<sup>88</sup>Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, Vol., I (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), p. 104.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-105.

<sup>90</sup>Walter R. Agard, The Greek Mind, ed. Louis L. Snyder (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1957), p. 19.

<sup>91</sup>R. P. Winnington, Euripides and Dionysos, (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert Publishers, 1969), p. 29.

<sup>92</sup>Jeanmaire, p. 376.

<sup>93</sup>Harold R. Willoughby, Pagan Regeneration (1929; rpt., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 70.

<sup>94</sup>Graves, pp. 110-111.

<sup>95</sup>Farnell, p. 183.

<sup>96</sup>Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 62.

<sup>97</sup>Graves, p. 110.



- 98 Euripides, Bacchae, p. 28.
- 99 Farnell, p. 181.
- 100 Kerényi, p. 160; p. 301.
- 101 Harrison, pp. 474-475.
- 102 E. R. Dodds, "Maenadism in the Bacchae," Harvard Theological Review, 23 (1940), p. 165.
- 103 Ibid., p. 165.
- 104 Marshall, p. 646.
- 105 Erwin Rohde, Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks, trans. W. B. Hillis (1925; rpt., New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1966), p. 291.
- 106 Harrison, p. 474.
- 107 G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, The Presocratic Philosophers (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1957) p. 37.
- 108 Willoughby, p. 90.
- 109 Gardner, p. 80.
- 110 Arthur Darby Nock, "Orphism or Popular Philosophy?" Harvard Theological Review, 33 (1940), p. 301.
- 111 Nilsson, "Early Orphism," p. 230.
- 112 Werner Jaeger, Padeia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, Vol. I., Archaic Greece; the mind of Athens, 2nd ed. trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 166-169.
- 113 Graves, p. 144.
- 114 Ovid, p. 226.
- 115 Plato, Republic, Bk. II, 364c.

- 116 Nilsson, "Early Orphism," p. 221.
- 117 Rohde, p. 341.
- 118 Kerény, p. 242.
- 119 Adam, p. 100.
- 120 Ibid., p. 100.
- 121 Cornford, p. 179.
- 122 Empedocles, fragment 115, in Wheelwright, p. 141.
- 123 Plato, Phaedrus, 248e.
- 124 Ibid., 249a.
- 125 Herodotus, The Persian Wars, trans. George Rawlinson (New York: The Modern Library, 1942), p. 123.
- 126 Cornford, p. 179.
- 127 Empedocles, frag. 115, p. 141.
- 128 Proclus, quoted in Willoughby, p. 93.
- 129 Empedocles, in Wheelwright, frag. 117, p. 146.
- 130 Plato, Republic, Bk. X, 614e
- 131 Proclus, quoted in Willoughby, p. 99.
- 132 Rohde, p. 341.
- 133 Pindar, the 2nd Olympian Ode, quoted in Adam, p. 137.
- 134 Willoughby, p. 107.
- 135 Rohde, pp. 342-343.
- 136 Harrison, p. 660.

- 137 Plato, Laws in Collected Dialogues, Bk. III, 782c.
- 138 Diogenes Laertius, quoted in Willoughby, p. 103.
- 139 Ovid, p. 337.
- 140 Kirk and Raven, pp. 46-48.
- 141 Harrison, p. 654.
- 142 Ibid., p. 624.
- 143 Leisegang, p. 17.
- 144 Harrison, p. 654.
- 145 Ibid., p. 641.
- 146 Grace Harriet Macurdy, "Sun Myths and Resurrection Myths," The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 54 (1934), p. 165.
- 147 Harrison, p. 639.
- 148 Leisegang, p. 21.
- 149 Ibid., p. 10.
- 150 Ibid., p. 11.
- 151 Ibid., p. 11.
- 152 Ibid., p. 35.

## CHAPTER II

### THE "PHOINIKIKON PSEŪDOS":<sup>1</sup> CYCLO-EPOCHAL THEORIES IN GREEK LITERATURE

In the preceding chapter we saw how the early Greeks and their intellectual forebears conceived of the cosmos, nature and themselves in terms of the cycle as derived from the repetitiveness of phenomena in their environment. In our attempt to discover the experiential bases for these attitudes we learned that two recurrent phenomenological models, or archetypes, above all others, formed their foundation; they were, first, the renewal of seasonal nature; and second, the circular course of the sun, moon and stars. Our narrative largely concentrated on man's extrapolation of these perceptual events into basic religious tenets expressing a universal law on which hinged the individual destiny of the soul. In so doing, we deferred until the present from discussing the wide and deep historic perspectives derived from such attitudes--for in Greece, the ideas of social change and the development of civilization were inseparably bound to the life-cycle itself, and were given expression long before Dionysus had conquered Greece, in the belief of successive world ages echoed by nature's regular intervals; which gave man a sense of the orderly arrangement of time.

It will be the aim of the present chapter to examine

the historic unfolding of these various accounts and to explain their significant interrelation with the cyclic theory per se. In so doing, we will discover that for whatever particular scheme in question, the cycle of ages invariably represents the characteristic notion that the "historic moment, whatever its chronological position, represents a decadence in relation to preceding historical moments."<sup>2</sup> This concept has been called the doctrine of cultural primitivism and is characterized by present humanity's backward longing for a bygone golden age of blissful simplicity from which it has ingloriously degenerated through succeeding epochs.

This myth, though primarily derived from Eastern sources, was given as a permanent legacy to the West by the Greek gnomic poet and theogamist Hesiod (ca. 700 B.C.), who, in his Works and Days, presents the first "classical" exposition of the subject. His paramount importance to our field of inquiry has been remarked on by Professor Kirby Flower Smith:

The influence of Hesiod upon our theme is very much the same as was the influence of Homer upon the form and content of Greek literature. The account of the Ages which we find in his Works and Days is our earliest classical authority upon the subject, it is, also, to a remarkable extent the center and ultimate source of later development. There were several other accounts of the early history of man, and some of them were evidently folk legends of a high antiquity. None of them, however, is of any great importance to us. A few have contributed a detail here and there to the development of the Hesiodic norm, but most of them languish in comparative obscurity.<sup>3</sup>

In the Works and Days, Hesiod relates the degeneration

of man's history down from the distant Golden Age of Cronos to his own pernicious Age of Iron. It is a synchronic paradigm of human history, a "steady declension of nature",<sup>4</sup> in which men decline in moral character and fortune from the first to the final period. His story links the "good old days" of Cronos to the golden period of Eastern lore which like it, also is followed by succeeding periods of silver, bronze and iron, into which he inserts, however, an anomalous Heroic Aeon, in an attempt, claims Adams, to "idealized the life depicted in Homeric times."<sup>5</sup> Yet, despite this seemingly paradoxical intrusion, we shall find his account to be, in the main and general, metaphorically suitable and archaeologically correct.

Of his five Ages, the first two were created by the Olympian gods in concert, the final three by Zeus alone. Of the most ancient golden epoch Hesiod writes:

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympos made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived the life of gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth, unforced, bore them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.<sup>6</sup>

Eventually these favored beings passed from existence, though for what reason we are not informed. But the gods had been too pleased with the genus to have let them perish irrevocably, and they were transformed into a wandering tribe

of earth-bound spirits, "clothed in mist", who "kept watch over the judgements of men."<sup>7</sup> Brandon suggests this transformation represents an attempt by Hesiod to explain the origin of the genies, or daemones,<sup>8</sup> of popular myth and legend. These are the same creatures with whom Socrates communed and that Plato referred to as the "familiar conscience within."<sup>9</sup>

To fill the void left by the absence of the golden men, the gods proceeded to create a second generation, one of silver:

Then they who dwell on Olympus made a second generation which was of silver and less noble by far. It was like the golden race neither in body nor in spirit. A child was brought up at his good mother's side a hundred years, an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when they were full grown, and were come to the full measure of their prime, they lived only a little time and that in sorrow because of their foolishness, for they could not keep from sinning and from wronging one another, nor could they serve the immortals, nor sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones as it is right for men to do wherever they dwell.<sup>10</sup>

For their refusal to do homage to the gods, this genus is "hidden" by Zeus in the underworld, where they are known as the "blessed spirits" and though of the second order, were honored in that capacity by the gods and humanity in later ages.<sup>11</sup> It was followed immediately by yet a third generation of men. These were created by Zeus alone. They were of bronze.

Zeus the father made another generation. A brazen race sprung from the ash tree, and it was in no way equal to the silver race, but was terrible and strong. They loved the lamentable works of Ares and deeds of

violence; they ate not bread, but were hard of heart like adamant fearful men. Great was their strength and unconquerable the arms which grew from their shoulders on their strong limbs. Their armor was of bronze and their houses were of bronze, and of bronze were their implements of the home; there was no black iron . . ."12

The fact that the bronze genus sprung from the "ash tree" (a tree known for its tough wood) indicates Hesiod's awareness of an ancient though indigenous aspect of Greek folk-lore in which men were viewed as having been borne from trees, an argument given force in some lines from the Odyssey in which Penelope says to Odysseus in his disguise, "tell me who you are and where you come from. Your father was not a tree or a stone as they say [in the old legends]."13 And though Plato refutes the legend elsewhere, in his Timaeus he gives one very definite statement concerning the close association of men and trees. He tells us that the gods had "mingled a nature akin to that of man with other forms . . . and thus created another kind of animal. These are trees. . . ."14

Professor Eisler, writing on the anthropological nomenclature in the various epochal scenarios, found considerable evidence in Greek popular legend for the belief among classical era Greeks that their yet existed in their day a number of rude and savage descendants of this tree born race. The rustic Askanians (Ash-people) from the island south-west of Thera were identified thus, as were the Ascamani (Ash-men) of Illyrian lore; and the Asguzi (Ash-people) who were known to Greeks in Asia Minor, were



the most mysterious and warlike of all.<sup>15</sup>

The deep roots of the legend can be discerned in the prevalence of tree-worship in classical times and in late myths which tell how the various vivifying and fertilizing gods--who also represented the soul of man--had sprung from trees: Adonis from the Myrrh,<sup>16</sup> Tammuz from the Almond, Attis from the Pine, Osiris from the Erica and Dionysus from trees in general.<sup>17</sup> The tree of life in Egyptian lore usually manifests itself in human form; it is a feature of Egyptian paradise from which the gods eat and feed the deified dead. Moreover, in a number of classical Greek and Roman tales, the roots of especially large trees are described as reaching down to Tartarus where men and semi-divinities dwell after death. We are also well informed that tree worship had as its origin some characteristics or qualities of ancestor worship, the tree perhaps being in prehistoric times, in certain locales, the final dwelling place of departed souls.

It will be obvious to the informed reader that the examples cited above are merely indicative of countless others, but to mention more than a limited number of such connections would be impossible within the limits of this thesis. As I do not wish to be taken too far afield, we should return to our examination of the Hesiodic myth.

We left our narrative with a discussion of the Bronze Race. Most of us are familiar with their fate. Like the

genea before it, they were destined to depart from the world, but unlike the previous generation, the bronze men were not destroyed by Zeus; but, as they had turned to war as their means of livelihood "they annihilated themselves" and so perished miserably, passing with rare exception into the "dank house of chill Hades unhonored and unremembered."<sup>18</sup>

These brazen men were followed by a nobler, though it would seem an equally belligerent race, the Heroes of Epic fame, who would fight for Helen's honor before the walls of Troy.

Zeus the son of Cronos, made yet another, the fourth, upon the fruitful earth, which was nobler and more righteous, a god-like race of hero-men who were called demi-gods, the race favored our own, throughout the boundless earth. Grim war and dread battle destroyed a part of them some in the land of Cadmus at seven-gated Thebes when they fought for the flocks of Oedipus, and some, when it had brought them in ships over the great seas to Troy for rich-haired Helen's sake; there death's end enshrouded a part of them. But to the Heroes father Zeus the son of Cronos gave a living and an abode apart from men, and made them dwell at the end of the earth. And they lived untouched by sorrow in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, from the deathless gods, and Cronos ruled over them; for the father of men and gods released him from his bonds. And these last have equally honor and glory.<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Heroes were an interlude in the process of descent. They were clearly superior to their immediate predecessors and were not typified by a metal. As such, they represent a clear departure from the metallurgical myth which forms the basis of Hesiod's account. It is clear, as has often been remarked, that the Heroes were interpo-

lated into the old legend of four ages by Hesiod to harmonize, albeit, clumsily, the theory of successive human generations with the Homeric account of epic Heroes, interrelating them so that such an obviously important race might not be left out of the world cycle of generations. Smith elaborates:

According to the old four-fold system, the Brazen Age immediately preceded our own. On the other hand it was also generally accepted that the Heroic Age immediately preceded our own. Consequently, the Heroic Age of the one scheme ought to coincide with the Brazen and Iron Ages. This, however is impossible, as any one may see by comparing the two. Hesiod, therefore, inserted the Heroic age between the Brazen and Iron Ages of the old scheme, and renumbered them accordingly. The result was system of five Ages, the inconsistency of which was usually clear enough to the ancient critics themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, the later proponents of the theory--Plato, Aratus, Ovid, the Orphics, Stoics and others--smooth out this incompatible intrusion by eliminating it altogether and by reducing the over-all number of epochs to four, three or even two, as shall be shown later.

Though Smith's interesting explanation of the rationale behind Hesiod's inclusion of the Heroic genus is sound, it seems to me, he somewhat misses the point when he declares the Heroic and Brazen races to be so obviously incongruous, when on closer inspection one may find any number of common characteristics. It is reasonable to think, for example, that the Heroes, like the Bronze Men, "loved the lamentable work of Ares," and were want to annihilate themselves in combat as were the men of the previous epoch. This glaring similarity has led scholars such as Toynbee,

for one, to wonder whether or not the race of Bronze was not, in fact, the race of Heroes "described over again, in terms not of sombre Hesiodic fact but of glamorous Homeric fancy"; and to wonder also why Hesiod did not realize that the two genea were really dual representatives of a single period.<sup>21</sup> This case is convincingly pressed by Rhodes who argues that the two ages represent the same period from "another point of view," the Heroic romanticized and glorified, and the Bronze as it really was:

As Hesiod's Bronze Age preserves a genuine, if not entirely accurate, memory of the later historical Bronze Age, roughly 1400-1000 B.C., so the age of Heroes carries the legendary and epic tradition of that time. Hesiod did not realize that the two genea were really two representatives of a single period.<sup>22</sup>

It is worth while observing how modern archaeology justifies Hesiod's perception of a warlike preceding age, which itself had declined from the prior splendors of Minoan and Mycenaean civilization. As Burn has observed, this period is marked by a rapid advance in the tooling of the implements of war; and the signs are clear that these arms were used frequently and to great effect. It was a harsh age where power was founded upon force and secured by the weapons of death.<sup>23</sup> It was also a period of decline and of incipient recovery; a confusing era of conflicting trends and counter-current impulses, of "technological" development and cultural decay. It is little wonder, then, that Hesiod without the benefits of historical or archaeological knowledge, saw in the counteracting evidence not one period

of decline, but two periods, the one suffering in comparison to the other.

It would appear that one reason for Hesiod's grim perception of social decline was the result of his comparison of the indisputable martial glories of the preceding Heroic Age with the declining military fortunes of his own day. In a clear misconception of historical fact, Hesiod believed that the olden monarchs had sacked great cities and waged war on a grand international scale. Conversely, he saw that the petty kings and princes of the present were really little more than tribal chieftans, who went about the grim business of slaughtering their foes as assiduously as had the Heroes of old, but on a greatly reduced and ignoble scale. Accordingly, their wars, he believed, amounted to little more than tribal struggles; their battles, petty border raids undertaken not for the sake of a beauteous Helen, but to acquire a few head of cattle or bushels of wheat. This, for him, was the final proof of the debased state of humanity; this Age he called Iron.

In this sorry period the process of degeneration continues as if it had never been interrupted. As the final age of the quinary cycle, it is a time in which men live lives "the reverse of that of the race of gold."<sup>24</sup>

For now truly is the race of Iron, and men never rest from labor and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even they shall have some good mingled with their evils.<sup>25</sup>

Like the genea that preceded it, the fate of the Iron Race has been foreordained by omnipotent Providence from the moment that chaos had been transformed into order. It is doomed to wane into a kind of wretchedness unknown to earlier ages--a pathetic world in which

the father no longer agrees with the children, nor children with their father; when guest is no longer at one with host, nor companion to companion; when your brother is no longer your friend, as he was in the old days.<sup>26</sup>

The "death" of this race is mandatory, for its continuance precludes a rebirth of earthly time and the Age of Gold. This simple belief is familiar to us from our study of the mysteries, which taught that the individual must die to be reborn. Similarly, collective humanity must know an end before it can be recreated anew in the golden trappings of a young race--one united with divinity reiterating the paradise lost of old.

Hesiod's prophetic declamation concerning the decline and passing of the present Age is partial evidence of his cyclic understanding of nature; that he anticipates a happier period in the future; a return to the times of Cronos. This belief is betrayed in his famous wish that he had not been born of the fifth generation, "but had died before or been born afterward."<sup>27</sup> Here is the incontrovertible proof that Hesiod's scheme is "extended both in the present and to the future."<sup>28</sup>

It is clear from what we have been saying that the vera causa of Hesiod's world series of epochal degenerations

is the pure necessity of god's directing will. He does not intrude a standard of moral idealism into his story of racial decay. The men of the different genea are not brought down because of any inborn tendency for evil or propensity to choose suffering and distress. They were good or evil, strong or weak, precisely because they were made so by divine providence.<sup>29</sup> As Smith has said:

Neither morality nor moral responsibility is of much account. The Golden Age is a replica of heaven, a mortal reflexion of the glory of the immortals. The men of those days were superior to us simply because they were made so. They were nearer to the gods than we. Their position was a matter of powers and privileges. The causes of it are in the will of the gods themselves. The idea of moral responsibility as a factor in the problem belongs to a period of more mature reflexion, though we see the first beginnings of it in Hesiod's own account. Peace and plenty in the first Age are followed by brutish anarchy and violence in the second. The third sees organized violence and deliberate cruelty; the fourth, crimes of every sort and description. The steps, however, are none too clear, and the old description of the Ages was not yet in harmony with the new standard.<sup>30</sup>

As I've said, Hesiod's conviction that the past was better than the present was an idea not new with him. The human propensity to esteem antiquity seems as old as man himself. It is all too easy to be seduced to this view, and the Greeks of the Classical period were well aware of the tendency. Aristotle cites a simple and straightforward argument in his Metaphysics where this psychological trait was assumed in proof of a major cosmological proposition. The gods swore by water, "to which they give the name Styx"; and "for what is oldest is most honorable, and the most

honorable is that by which one swears."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the belief in a superior past is expressed already in Homer's Iliad:

For already I have consorted with men better even than you, and never did they belittle me. For I never have seen such men nor shall I ever again, as Pirithous and Dryas, shepherd of the people and Caeneus and Exadius and godlike Polyphemus and Theseus, son of Aegeus, like to the deathless gods. Strongest were they of men upon the earth; they were strongest and they fought with the strongest, with the wild men who dwell in the mountains and they entirely destroyed them.<sup>32</sup>

The idea of cultural primitivism is expressed in Orphic thought as well, as is evidenced by their food prohibitions which derived from their belief in a perfect past when men lived off the fruits of the earth disdaining in every case the shedding of blood, "as was the case in the bounteous time of Cronos."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, one finds in Plato an insistent admiration for the days of a mythical past, "the age of Cronos . . . a very happy one," which, he felt, was "reflected in the best of the present day communities."<sup>34</sup> In the Laws he envisions, like the Orphics, a golden period in which men

shrank from tasting even the flesh of oxen, and offered no animals in sacrifice; they honored their gods with cakes and meal soaked in honey and other such "pure" sacrifices, but abstained from flesh, counting it criminal to eat it, to pollute the altar of the gods with blood. Man's life in those days conformed to the rules known as Orphic, universal insistence on vegetarianism, and entire abstention from all that is animal.<sup>35</sup>

The belief is also expressed in the Timaeus, where we find a description of the proto-Athenians, the offspring of



the gods, splendid in art, war and government. He developed the idea even further in the Critias where the marvelous men "of old," were "produced from the soil." They descended in part from gods, in part from men, and were at first "comely, kind, true and noble;" but as time went on the limited divine strain was crowded out by the human, and the noble qualities were lost:

But when the gods' part in them began to wax faint by constant crossing with much mortality, and the human temper to predominate they could no longer carry their fortunes, but began to behave themselves unseemly. To the seeing eye they now began to seem foul, for they were losing the fairest bloom from their most precious treasure . . . they were taking the infection of wicked coveting and pride of power.<sup>36</sup>

The primal age of bliss lingered in the popular memory also as can be seen in the Attic celebration of the Kronia, a sort of harvest festival and rite de passage which extolled the gifts of nature and recalled the imaginary memory of the lost Paradise of Cronus's Golden Age (the Saturna regna of Roman poetry).<sup>37</sup>

Wherever the myth of World Ages occurs in classical literature, whether used to impart historical perspective or as mere poetic ornament, the fall of the primal Golden Age is invariably linked to a dynastic change on Olympus. Zeus was not, as we have said, a king in this period. Cronus reigned supreme. The overthrow of Cronus by his son, Zeus, who establishes the rule of the Olympian gods, and changes the fortunes of the world, is but one such revolution in the genealogy of the gods who come into and go out of power or being in a successive series of heavenly

procreations and/or conflicts.

Recent scholarship has determined that the Hesiodic succession myth owes much to the Hittite epic of Kumarbi, itself based, apparently, on a Hurrian original.<sup>38</sup> Both versions reflect Babylonian and Phoenician connections that perhaps point to an unknown Sumerian prototype.<sup>39</sup> Certainly an extended discussion of possible connections is beyond the province of this paper, though certain aspects should be clarified.

The central feature of the Greek succession story is the violent overthrow of first Uranos by Cronus, and then of Cronus by Zeus. The triumph of Zeus recalls the Babylonian Enuma Elish in which the younger gods, led by Marduk, overthrow Tiamat and the old gods, instituting a new cosmic order which is renewed annually, as we learned, in the ritual combat of the Akitu. In the Hurrian epos, Kumarbi (El-Kronos) is overthrown by the weather god Teshub (Dēmarūs-Zeus) who like Olympian Zeus, was born from inside his father. In this victory Teshub attains his full powers as king of the gods, and brings the Golden Age to an end. This is also the case in Hesiod's Theogony and is confirmed in the Works and Days where the story of world Ages is related to the change of rule in heaven.

It should not, however, be construed that each dynastic change in heaven sees a corresponding shift in worldly Ages. There is no direct parallel. Whereas the

earthly Aeons alternate according to the cyclic principles of cosmic time; no such law regulates the heavenly successions. So that we see in the various cosmogonies any number of godly dynasties (five in Hesiod's Theogony; six in the Orphic accounts, for example) in which only the penultimate and final reigns have any bearing on earthly history, such that the former establishes the primal Golden Age, and the later brings it to a close.

As mentioned earlier, the various poets and philosophical schools seldom agreed as to the number of Ages in human history. Some reduced the five ages of Hesiod to two, "the age of Cronus and age of Zeus, the old reign and the new, the happy past and the unhappy present" (such is the case in Plato's cyclo-epochal scheme in the Statesman and in the several late Orphic stories).<sup>41</sup> Still others envisioned a tripartite division of Great Time; as in the Phaenomena of Aratus and in the Orphic tale of Epimenides. In the common imagination, however, and among the later Stoics especially, the old four-fold scheme of metallic ages maintained its popularity. We shall examine severally the chief representatives of these various tales in due course, but first, we should study the allegorical and archaeological significations of the World Ages Myth so as to help us determine its etiology.

The weight of evidence strongly suggests that Hesiod did not invent the metallic metaphor to the Ages, but that he superimposed on an indigenous folk belief certain Asian

motifs relating to metallic ages or races derived from traditions concerning the origin and uses of the various metals. The allegorical significance of the metals seems to me to be transparent. Preller's remarks very ingeniously sum up the legend's metaphorical utility:

The metals in this sequence are named not only according to their value but also with a definite allegorical significance so that though through them, at the same time, the character of the separate races is more closely defined: gold and silver as the two precious metals simply of which, however, silver, either because of its dim lustre or its greater softness or some other reason, already denotes a lower grade of honor and a decline; bronze and iron as the two metals of practical utility, since the former according to heroic custom is connected with weapons, war, and warlike equipment, and so the bronze race is depicted in the same way, where as iron on the other hand, as the hardest metal and the most troublesome to work, which was also known latest, suited best to typify the present age of hard work.<sup>43</sup>

The metaphorical interpretation of the tale clearly preponderates in the post Hesiodic literature, especially in regards to the symbolism of gold, the noblest metal. This was a widespread belief that persisted into advanced Roman, and even late Byzantine times. In every case, gold always expresses the best, the most sacred and most innocent of times. Witness the opening lines of Pindar's First Olympian Ode in which the yellow metal signifies the "radiance of life, good fortune, blessedness, and the fairest and the best."<sup>44</sup>

Best of all things is water;  
but gold, like a gleaming fire by night,  
outshines all pride and wealth beside.<sup>45</sup>

And though not strictly relevant to our present

discussion of cyclic ages, Plato borrowed Hesiod's phraseology to describe the character of the three natural castes into which he had divided the men of his ideal state:

Yet for god in fashioning those of you who are fitted to hold rule, mingled gold in this generation, for which reason they are most precious but in the helpers silver, and iron and brass in the farmers and other craftsmen.<sup>46</sup>

But it was not only the figurative resemblances of the metals to the degenerate races of man that assured the lasting appeal of the tale. For the story expressed an almost forgotten history of some of the spectacular aspects of the late Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, and finally the tumultuous period just following the Greek Middle Age; it presents a unique record of man from before he first learned to extract ore from metals by smelting--from his chance discovery of gold and silver--(in the most primitive "idealized" past) through the Mycenaean, post-Mycenaean periods which Hesiod correctly assumed to be characterized by the same metals that modern archaeology has used to categorize the course of man's existence upon earth. The archaeological connections of the account were first alluded to in Sir John Meyers' book, Anthropology and the Classics, published in 1908, in which he wrote:

Hesiod presents us already with a standard scheme of archaeology in which Ages of Gold, Silver, and Bronze, succeed each other, classified by their respective artifacts, and succeeded, first by an Age of heroes--an anomaly, partly of Homeric authority, partly genuine tradition of the Sea Raiders and the Minoan debacle--and then by an Age of iron. More than this,

the observation that primitive man was a forest dweller, who grew no corn, and subsisted on acorns and beach mast, presumes observation, and inference besides, which were perhaps obvious enough among men of the Balkan fringe, ancient and modern.<sup>47</sup>

That gold first and silver second were the oldest metals known and used by men has been impressively substantiated by the work of R. T. Forbes who more than anyone has determined the views of recent scholars on the subject. His arguments are based largely on the identification and dating of various metallic artifacts and on the a priori assumption that as gold and silver were found in natural states they could be used without a knowledge of something; therefore, it is, he concludes, likely that they were used first.<sup>48</sup> Next a knowledge of mining, smelting, and casting copper ore was acquired. Soon, it was learned that a relatively small amount of tin could transform molten copper into the much harder metal, bronze. Finally, around the 9th cent. B.C., a knowledge of iron-making was introduced to Europe from somewhere in the East.

From his archaeological investigations Forbes managed to extract a chronicle of metallurgical uses encompassing the entire Greco-Oriental sphere of development. He suggests that in Iran and Mesopotamia gold was known first, and was one of the oldest metals used by the Egyptians, though "not so old as copper"<sup>49</sup> (already in the Old Kingdom goldsmiths and engravers possessed substantial skills working with gold).<sup>50</sup> In ancient Mesopotamia he finds the historic

sequence of metallurgical development to follow the discovery and use of gold, silver, bronze lead and iron. However, in Egypt, as alluded to above, he holds the sequence to be one of copper, gold, lead, and silver followed by bronze and iron--though texts from the New Empire usually mention gold as the oldest in the same way as does the literature of the Greeks and Mesopotamians. His conclusions are generally supported by the broad spectrum of didactic literature of the ancient Near East so that we may safely assume that at least a morsel of genuine history is preserved in the generalized mythic sequence of gold, silver, bronze, and iron races of man. And though it is altogether possible that careful scholarship done through the years by competent researchers will one day force us to alter this prevailing scenario, it is highly improbable.

As the myth of World Ages enjoyed wide currency throughout the Orient in the latter half of the first millenium B.C., it is necessary to examine the several examples of the genre so that we might determine, which, if any, either directly or indirectly influenced the Hesiodic tale. What follows are several interpretations of the relevant literature of the Egyptian, Hebrew, Persian, Indian and Mesopotamian peoples. Such an examination necessarily contains many oversimplifications and lacks nuances and qualifications that would satisfy the philologists of the respective tongues, however, such qualifications would take us far beyond the logical bounds of this thesis.

Let us begin by studying the allegorical significance of gold in Ancient Egypt, where, at least as far back as the 11th Dynasty (c.a. 2160-2000 B.C.) the metal was considered to have been endowed with a peculiar but undefined property. Special protection was extended by the Pharaoh to those who washed and otherwise worked with it.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, an integration of extensive references to gold from this period indicates that it was esteemed at such a high value that its possession in the hands of the private citizenry was prohibited under the penalty of death.<sup>52</sup>

The divine nature of the metal and the manifold meanings of its symbolism can be discerned in Egyptian iconography and religious writings where it is closely associated with the various gods. Hathor, the goddess of beauty and love was especially linked with gold and gold was the color of her radiant sky disk.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Re, in the opening lines of The Deliverance of Mankind, is described as having "flesh of gold" and "bones of silver."<sup>54</sup> Other gods are described thus elsewhere, and especially interesting is the description of Horus, who, we are told, has gold as blood.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the Pyramid Texts speak of a "star of gold", and the Leiden papyrus makes reference to a "sky of gold."<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps, however, the best illustration of an Egyptian idea of cultural primitivism as linked to the concept of metallic ages can be discerned in the Heliopolitan genesis of Osiris, which describes how divine order was established by the god who emerged out of the primeval waters, and set




Osiris to rule on earth as king over a golden age of peace and plenty. The tale is preserved in a poem from c.a. 1850 B.C.

He establishes justice throughout both banks,  
 he puts the son in his father's place,  
 overthrowing the adversary with might and power.  
 Earth saw how excellent he was and entrusted the  
 kingship to him to lead the two lands into prosperity.  
 His crown clove the sky and consorted the golden  
 stars.<sup>57</sup>

We recall that the idyllic order of the Golden Age of Osiris was destroyed by Set, his younger brother, who cast the world into a less desirable and prosperous state. Whether or not man can expect to return to his original condition is unknown, as there is no evidence for the present "regime's" duration. But quite apart from this question, there is a priori no improbability to the circularity of the scheme-- though it must be admitted, to the contrary, that there exists no evidence that the tale is inspired by the clear conception of a cycle of alternating heavenly dynasties.

It is not until the 7th century B.C. that a fully developed myth of Ages emerges in Egypt. Our only account of this story derives from the 25th Ethiopian Dynasty and it gives so few indications of its origin, and those few so vague, that it is quite hopeless to reconstruct the legend with anything like certainty. The views of scholars who have investigated the story have diverged widely, but recently many have come to respect the findings of Robert Eisler. He argues that the roots of the story may be inferred from the

racial and ethnic appellation used by the Egyptian's, and other Asians, which derived from and were connected with gold, silver, bronze (or copper) and iron.<sup>58</sup> There were four such peoples, Nubians, Hittites, Cypriots and Chalybes.

First were the Nubians. They were associated with gold and considered by New Empire Egyptians to be the most ancient and primitive of races, representing "the original ideal state of ever youthful unaging mankind."<sup>59</sup> That the Nubians should be associated with gold is not surprising as their land was the richest source of that metal in all of North Africa. It was from Nubia that Egypt got the prodigious quantities of gold that made her the unquestionably richest country of the Near East. The people of Kush, were called after the word nub, meaning "golden people", written in the sacred script "with the pictograph of the instrument for panning gold,"<sup>60</sup> .<sup>61</sup>

Second were the younger pre-Indo-European, or Aryan, Hittites (Hatti) of Asia Minor who derived their name from the native word hath, borrowed by the Egyptians in the form hd "silver".<sup>62</sup> We know that Egypt imported much of its "rarer white kind of gold"<sup>63</sup> (nub hetch) from Asia Minor, though it was also imported in large quantities from points elsewhere in the Near East.

Third in descent from the golden men, according to the story, were the Cypriots who derived their name from the Elamic cūpar (copper) which also stood for bronze as did the the Greek word χαλκῶς, and the Hebrew nechôsheth. Cyprus

was the chief source of supply for copper from the Middle Kingdom on, though the country of Bedja also produced the metal for Egyptian consumption.<sup>64</sup> Other sources existed as far south as the Sudan whose black inhabitants were known to the Egyptians as nhsy, "bronze people".<sup>65</sup>

Finally there were the Chalybes of Asia Minor who derived their name from chalyps the hardened iron they mined and smelted. They were known to the Arabs as the Haleb, to the Greeks as the Chalybon to the Assyrians and Babylonians as Halwan and to the Egyptians Hr bw, "steel men".<sup>66</sup> They were, in the Egyptian mind, the most corrupt of people, having many "shameful" customs, being rude, gross and somewhat depraved.

The central thesis derived by the Egyptians from their understanding of the metallic origin of the separate genea was that the various races represented successive stages of degeneration from the innocently primitive Nubians of Kush, to the hardened and rude Chalybes of Asia Minor.

As I've said, the myth appeared late in Egyptian history and is thought to have been propagated during the reigns of the Nubian Pharaohs Shabaka and Taharka, "the Son's of Kush". Under these pious and dynamic monarchs Nubia exerted its influence over Egypt from about 730 to 656 B.C.

This coincides reasonably well with the floruit of Hesiod (c. 675); however, caution is advised to those who would see this as firm evidence of an Egyptian (Nubian)

provenience of the story. For inasmuch as we are unable to trace the story to a period ante-dating Hesiod, it is perhaps wiser to regard the legend as having derived from some older Near Eastern tradition, or from the Greeks themselves, who, at about this time, were establishing military colonies at such places as Daphne in the Eastern Delta and at far off Elephantine near the first cataract in Upper Egypt. After all, it is not hard to imagine how such a story might have appealed to the Nubians who may have been familiar with similar indigenous legends, such as the aforementioned account of the Age of Osiris, and, owing to its general agreement to their own folklore, adopted it. It is barely possible that several of the tales in this essay may be explained in a similar manner.

Such is probably the case with the various accounts in the Bible, which is a rich source of stories concerning the metallic races or qualities of man. In Jeremiah (vi, 27) for example, God tells the prophet: "I have made you an assayer for my folk, to learn and to assay their life--rebellious creatures, all of them slandering me up and down! Base metal, all of them wholly depraved! The bellows make a blast, the fire consumes the lead; but vain it is to smelt them for the slag cannot be purged away. 'Refuse silver' is their name; for the eternal refuses to have them." In Ezekiel (xiii, 17-23) the metaphor is repeated and in Malachi (iii, 3) the Lord is likened to the "fire of smelters and the acid used by fullers; he will sit down to smelt and

and purge, purging the sons of Levi, refining them like silver and gold, until he finds them men who will bring honest sacrifices."

For our purposes, however, the best account is found in the Book of Daniel in which a tree composed of five metals symbolizes the successive decline of kingdoms (some see here a possible connection with the Sumerian "Cosmic Tree"-- common to many ancient cosmogonies--which united the corrupt world below with the divine world of heaven above).<sup>\*</sup> In this story Nebuchadnezzar has a mysterious vision of which it is said of in Moffat's translation:

The head of this image was made of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly iron and clay.<sup>67</sup>

Daniel interprets the gold to stand for Nebuchadnezzar himself, the silver and bronze to denote future debased kingdoms; the admixture of iron and clay stand for a "divided kingdom", the weakest link in the chain, which will be followed by a restoration of God's Kingdom. In this parallel, the metals are as those in Hesiod's account, apart, that is, from the clay-iron mixture, and their succession parallels chronologically his as well, indicating an ongoing state

<sup>\*</sup>Echoes of the Tree of Life are found in ancient Indo-Iranian lore, where the sap of the Asvattha tree refreshes the rivers of the world. The Persian Vourukasa story tells of the tree Gaokerena which is analogous to the Biblical tree of Knowledge. Homer compares human lives to the leaves of trees (Il. 14, 288). And the symbolism of the fruit bearing tree is an important element in the legend of the Golden Age in general. Finally, the mythical tree of the Hesperides, with its golden fruit, is clearly related to the Sumerian Tree of Life.

of human degeneration; however, as Griffiths has pointed out, the Biblical scheme of "regnal" successions represents a sequence of mortal dynasties in a clear departure from the transcendent "epochal" sense of the Hesiodic tale.<sup>68</sup>

Other parallels may be drawn between relevant Hesiodic tracts and Biblical passages, as is the case with the former's description of future evils in the Works and Days and these lines from the Book of Micha (viii, 1-6):

Alas for us, alas! As when the fruit is gathered, and the vintage gleaned, there is no bunches of grapes to eat, no choice morsel of fig, so the devout have vanished from the land, not one lone soul remains; everyone lurks for bloodshed, each man preys upon his fellow. They have quick fingers for foul play; the judges must handle a bribe, the high official acts as he pleases and between them they baffle justice the best of them are no better than briars, the straightest are like thorns twisted in a hedge. Their hour of punishment is coming; it will be wrack and ruin. Never trust your fellow never confide in a friend; keep your secret close from the wife of your bosom. For sons insult their fathers, girls defy their mother-in-law, and a man's household are his enemies.<sup>69</sup>

A similar fate is predicted in Isaiah (iii, 5-6):

Tyranny between man and man, between very neighbors insolence from youth to old, from low to high; men shall seize clansmen crying . . .<sup>70</sup>

Other examples could be cited, but these best illustrate my point.\*

Certainly, the Biblical parallels are striking. But they pose the same problems as did the Egyptian story; that

\*It is interesting to note that the symbolism of the "end time" is common not only to Hesiod and the Bible, but also to later manifestations of Orphism and Stoicism, and especially to Christian millenarianism which held out the hope that the corrupt present age would be destroyed after a thousand year period, and replaced by a heavenly kingdom on earth--an era of happiness and perfect government.



is to say, they present difficulties in both dating and derivation. For example, the Book of Daniel, which affords the best evidence of a possible connection, is usually dated to the mid-second-century B.C. and can certainly be no older than the floruit of Nebuchadnezzar (d. 562 B.C.) which is still too late. And though the account in Micah predates Hesiod, it shows every indication of having been derived from yet an older more fully developed cataclysmic myth which had, as we might infer from a contextual analysis, no connection with cosmic events. We must, therefore, reject at once the idea of a possible Hebraic provenience for the legend, especially in face of the lack of materials for tracing in detail the development of the idea in the Biblical tradition. It is far more likely that the Hebrews--like the Egyptians and the Greeks, a race highly endowed with a creative imagination--seized on the symbolism and imagery of an older tale of perhaps Mesopotamian, Persian or even Indian origin and fit it to their own needs. Therefore, it will be useful, in the long run, to pursue the matter a little further.

A Persian incipience for the myth has been proposed by Nock, Teggart, Sinclair and others, who cite as evidence of their hypotheses certain elements of Sassanian Avestan mythology which speaks of a degenerate succession of worldly ages closely paralleling the Hesiodic norm in number, chronology and metaphysical significance. In the following discussion the views of Hinnels have been adopted. But they



cannot be considered as finally established. Consequently, the possibility exists that some of the minor details of our reconstruction could be subject to future amendment in light of new investigations.

On the basis of Hinneles interpretation of the extant Mazdayansian account, we are led to believe that the Persian view of time is eternal; but that it is delineated by a repetitive four-fold epochal scheme spanning some twelve thousand years in total duration. Each of the four sub-ages span some three thousand years in length. The first period is the time of creation. The second is the Age of Man. It was a perfect world, an ideal society in which all men were brothers: "The tree was without bark and thorn, the ox was white and shining like the moon and the archetypal man, Gayomart was shining like the sun."<sup>71</sup> This perfect world was shattered by the onslaught of the evil Ahriman so that the ensuing third age declines into a period in which good and evil are coeval. The final age is one of increasing evil. Earthly life becomes a profound abyss of utter misery. However, Ahura Mazda patiently endures this pernicious increase in wickedness so that he might draw evil into the open so that it might be destroyed once and for all. For a time the insolent and haughty Ahriman seems to gain the upper hand and prepares for the moment of triumph; good creation is in the wane, though in the final battle, Ahriman is undone:

Just as the sky, the waters (sirius), the ox and man thus waged battle with the Destructive spirit so, too,



did the plants, the earth, the fires and other components of creation. Life was triumphant. Death, the work of the Evil Spirit, stood defeated, for out of death came life, and life more abundant than before. From the one ox came the different species of animals, and from man came the parents of the human race.<sup>72</sup>

At the moment of victory, amid great rejoicing among the forces of good, all who ever lived are judged and accorded weal and woe in the everlasting future:

Every man is judged entirely on his own life. If the good thoughts, words and deeds outweighed the evil, the soul passes to heaven; if the evil outweigh the good, then the soul is sent to hell, but if the two are exactly equal the soul proceeds to an intermediate place, Hamestagen.<sup>73</sup>

This completed, the world is restored to the perfect state it enjoyed before the intrusion of evil; Ahura Mazda reigns supreme and, for the moment, Ahriman is no more.

Of the four periods, the final age, which was thought to have begun with the birth of Zoroaster (c. 700) is the most important to us, as it unfolds in a series of lesser ages, four in number, each symbolized by a metal: gold for when King Gushtasp ruled and mankind held communion with Ahura Mazda; silver for the period when men received the religion of Zoroaster and King Ardashir separated the demons from men and scattered them; steel for the Sassanian period, "marked by what the Judeo-Christians call the signs of the end,"<sup>74</sup> and iron for the final age of corruption and wickedness, when religion is destroyed by Ahriman and wisdom leaves the world.<sup>75</sup> Finally, when evil is destroyed and only the righteous are left living, there will follow the renovation referred to above.

In this account, as in the Greek, the Golden Period is a time of purity and simplicity when man and god are closely united. In the following Silver Age men seem to turn away from god to worship unnamed "daemons"; these are the same spirits that Ardashir "separates and scatters," in a theme similar to the one in the Works and Days where Zeus hides the silver genos under the earth, whence separated from humanity, they become the weird and terrifying spirits that haunt the underworld. The succeeding Age of Steel may be a later interpolation taking the place of an original Copper or Bronze Age, or so scholars have traditionally assumed. And finally, the Iron Age is depicted as a time of social revolution, when all existing institutions are in collapse, the established order is toppled and confusion reigns with no visible hope for the living, as the Persian sage tells us:

Men will become cheaters and deceivers . . . great friends will become different parties . . . the affection of the father will depart from the son, and that of the brother from his brother.<sup>76</sup>

These lines are strikingly similar to the sentiments expressed in lines 182-184 of the Works and Days quoted earlier in this chapter.<sup>77</sup> A similar correspondence in detail can be discerned in Ahura Mazda's prediction that "in this last age righteous men will come to poverty and want," and Hesiod's warning that "the righteous and good men shall give their praise to violence and the doer of evil."<sup>78</sup>

Yet despite such remarkable correlations, the weight of evidence strongly suggests that the Zoroastrian tradition

appeared in a time following that of Hesiod and developed as a result of foreign influences. It is indeed difficult to try to date the Avestan account. The extant narrative, found in the Pahlavi Bundahisns, dates to the sixth-century A.D. though it is based on a fourth-century original which itself contained material from a much older period. The Mazdayasnian tradition itself places the doctrine in the seventh-century B.C., the traditional floruit of Zoroaster, a date which finds collaboration in Pliny's understanding of a "second" Zoroaster who lived shortly before the sixth-century B.C.<sup>79</sup> Other Greeks placed the sage in hoary antiquity, due to a misinterpretation of the Zoroastrian scheme of history. Such is the case with Eudoxus the Pythagorean, who posited the notion, preserved by Pliny, that Zoroaster was born some "sex millibus annorum ante Platonis mortem."<sup>80</sup> Yet, despite such clear misapprehensions, a good number of educated Greeks were quite familiar with the prophet's teachings.

"Plato is said to have wanted to travel to the Orient and learn from his pupils, the magi. There is even a tradition, claims Hinnels, "that Socrates had a magus for a teacher"; Aristotle was familiar with the Zoroastrian idea which explained life as a conflict between the gods of good and evil; "and a number of books apparently circulated throughout the Greek world under the name of Zoroaster."<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, there exists no evidence indicative of a Greek awareness of the Zoroastrian prophecy

before the later part of the fourth-century B.C., a period obviously much too late for our purposes.

An even greater impediment to ascribing the Greek World Ages myth to a Persian commencement is that, as Griffiths has said, the sequence in the Avestan narrative is "transferred to the future . . . a vital difference," indicating, as we might assume, that the tale was borrowed from a pre-Zoroastrian tradition and altered to Avestan purposes as had been the case with the Egyptian and Hebraic accounts discussed earlier.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the lack of detail and elaboration concerning the "metallic" qualities of the men of the separate periods reflects the superfluity of the story when related to the over-all Persian narrative of the Divine Ages and thus strengthens the argument that the tale is of a relatively late and foreign origin.

It has been thought that Zoroaster received the salient features of his story from the Hindu doctrine of the four Yugas (ages), though it must be urged that nothing beyond thematic similarities really justifies such an assumption, which antecedently, is improbable. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties which Griffiths finds in associating these accounts, many feel that it is legitimate to seek some connection in their possible common origin from an even older source. We should briefly examine the relevant characteristics of the Indian doctrine.

First of all, it must be admitted that the Indian Yugas

roughly correspond to the gold, silver, steel and iron ages of the Bundahishn, as Rudolf Roth was, I think, the first to point out. Yet the Indian ages--Krta, Treta, Dyavra, and Kali--are not named for metals at all, but each is associated with a distinctive color, white, red, yellow and black respectively. These chromatic epochs are but the internal divisions of the Mahayuga, a recurrent eon which like the Zoroastrian "Great Year" was some 12,000 solar years in length.<sup>83</sup> As in the previous narratives, the successive ages are interpreted as a sequence of degeneration from the first age, in which virtue is fully present, to the fourth age, a time of deepening darkness and moral decrepitude.<sup>84</sup> The Persian "kinship" to the Indian story, it has been argued, is revealed, according to Fontenrose, in the latter's descriptions of the final Kali Age, which like Hesiod's Iron Age, is "the opposite of the first Age."

It is a time of avarice, deceit, rage and lust. The virtuous become poor and short-lived, but the wicked live long in prosperity (cf. WD 190-92). Men hate and murder one another; sons rob and kill parents; wives kill husbands and sons (cf. WD 182-184). There is a striking similarity between the Kali and iron ages in the features of early senescence: in the Kali decrepitude and decay come upon men at the age of sixteen (Mah. 3. 188); the iron age in Hesiod will end when at birth men are already gray-haired.<sup>85</sup>

As in the Avestan narrative, the final age of the Indian Mahayuga is terminated by a cosmic dissolution, or Pralaya, at the close of the 12,000 year cycle. However, unlike the Persian belief--or any other for that matter--the 12,000 year long Mahayuga is only the basic measure of cosmic time;

it was considered to be merely a single divine year in a series of 1,000 which constitute an even greater cycle of cosmic time, the Kalpa; fourteen kalpa made a Manvantava or a fortnight in the life of Brahma, who lived some 4,320,000 divine years before death and reincarnation in infinite repetition of the cyclic eons.

The fact that the Indian account of chromatic ages parallels the Zoroastrian metallurgical scheme--at least insofar as the respective ages of man are but lesser epochs in a longer span of cosmic time--has, as I've said, been advanced as evidence of an Indian derivation for the general motif. Such a conclusion is most questionable. Some of the important details do not bear close scrutiny. The metallic allegory, for example, which is central to the symbolism in the Egyptian, Hebraic, and, Persian doctrines, is altogether absent from the Indian story, so that the parallel lacks sufficient detail. Moreover, archaeological evidence indicates that the development and knowledge of metalurgy in India differed in several respects from what we know to have been the case in Europe, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Iron, for example, did not appear there for some three centuries after it appeared in Persia. And bronze, though known from an early date, was not commonly used until about 500 B.C. However, a free use of copper, zinc, lead and brass (an alloy of zinc and copper) is evident throughout India soon after 3000 B.C. And though it is true that gold and silver were known from an even earlier period, a



paucity of golden artifacts in comparison to silver ones throughout the period in question points to a succession of metals in order of familiarity and use as follows: silver, gold, copper, brass, bronze, and iron. This obviously deviates from the Hesiodic norm and should further inhibit the careless assignation of Vaisnava Hinduism as a locus or commencement for the general myth.

Finally, as with the other doctrines discussed before, the appearance of the Indian tale cannot be dated with any degree of certainty to a period ante-dating the arrival of the myth in Greece and Persia. And though it is barely possible that the doctrine originated in India in the later part of the eighth-century, and in the span of a single lifetime entered the folk lore and literature of the various Hellenic-Oriental peoples, thereby influencing Hesiod, such a conclusion is highly tenuous at best, and should be taken with the appropriate reserve. Far more likely is the prospect that the Indian, Persian, and Hebrew accounts--which appear relatively contemporaneously to one another in the general period from the late seventh, through the sixth-centuries B.C.--derived from a single much older tradition, which the symbolism of the metals predominates. Such symbolism would have to be, as I've said, archaeologically correct and metaphorically appropriate. It must include a golden age of heavenly concourse, and a final iron period of decay and worldly destruction. It must be cyclic and should be bound up with the life of the god of creation. And although the

foregoing accounts have to varying degrees met some, or even most of these requirements, none meets the criteria so well as the Sumero-Babylonian doctrine of World Ages. All the major aspects of the myth--the metallurgical anthropogony, the destruction of the world resulting in the resurrection of the Golden Age, and the idea of cosmico-ordinal dynastic successions are illustrated here in classic fashion.

The corpus of evidence supporting the Mesopotamian beginning of the myth is vast; indeed, far too extensive to be covered here in detail; yet, we should endeavor to present the most salient aspects of this information and especially those aspects to which the Babylonians attached the most significance.

We have already shown that the knowledge and use of metals in ancient Mesopotamia follows the Hesiodic succession of gold, silver, bronze, and iron; and that gold was used there before it was known in Egypt (see pages 114-115). As early as 6,000 years ago, gold ornaments appear among micro-lithic and normal sized flint and obsidian blade tools and other polished stone ornaments. And whatever the real origin of the metallic allegory, the mystical significance of the yellow metal is as old as Mesopotamian literature itself.

The oldest Sumerian inscriptions betray a "lively consciousness" of the metal's special qualities; "traces of this folk lore are apparent, not surprisingly," claims



Griffiths, "in the extant literature from a period antecedent to that in which the parallels . . . originated."<sup>86</sup> These early traditions leave little doubt but that gold held a special metaphorical significance for men and gods alike.

A case in point is the Sumerian tradition surrounding the god Oannes, a fish-like sea creature who became in later times associated with the water god Enki or Ea. He was a god of intelligence and wisdom and founder of the arts and civilizations of humanity. He had profound purifying and fertilizing properties. He ruled supreme in the earliest period of human development when men were free from misery and lived among the gods. His association with gold can be seen in his epithet, "lord of gold" and in the fact that he was the special protector of goldsmiths and smelters.<sup>87</sup> He was the conqueror of fire and the one who "purified gold and silver and mixed copper and tin."<sup>88</sup> Of gold were his cups and plates, his chariot and all his ornaments; his house beneath the waters was wrought of gold.

In later times Oannes was also associated with Nabu, a fertility god and divine scribe, whose personality was subsequently embraced by Marduk. In this roundabout process of assimilation, Marduk, originally an obscure god of Babylon, became the lord of gold and eventually, in a process that will be described later in detail, a personification of the "golden sun"; the lord of creation; "the victor over the powers of darkness," and the eponymous monarch of the primal Golden Age.<sup>89</sup>

Further metallic symbolism can be discovered in the old Sumerian epic cycle of Enmarkon where we are told of the god's difficulty in obtaining gold, silver, lapis-lazuli and other metals and stones from the lord of Aratta (thought to be a city in western Iran). In one of these tales, there is a suggestion of a "heroic age" in the pre-historic past which, in turn, had devolved from an earlier period of peace and plenty (perhaps the time of Oannes?) when precious metals and gems were less highly valued owing to their general abundance and ready availability.<sup>90</sup>

Another vestige of the incipient legend might be discerned in a mutilated text of unknown title (translated by Jacobsen and discussed, lucidly and I think most recently by Griffiths), which tells of an argument between silver and copper as to which of them possessed the greater merit. Copper asserts that it was more useful than the more ostentatious and highly valued silver, and thus more deserving of a position of honor in the royal court. Copper's argument, as Jacobsen translates it, is too engagingly told to be omitted here:

When the cold weather has set in, you cannot provide  
 an adze which can cut firewood (?);  
 when harvest time has come, you cannot provide a sickle  
 which can cut the grain.  
 Therefore man will take not interest in thee.<sup>91</sup>

Though lower in rank than silver due to its relative youth, copper betrays in this dispute its contentious nature; its willingness to topple the established order and strive for that which is clearly beyond its appointed destiny. Although

these qualities are somewhat analogous to those of the bronze men of the later parallels, one **should** be suspicious that copper's strivings in this instance are indicative of an early manifestation of a general myth of metallic succession-- a determination we might have made were we able to reconstruct silver's reply to copper's impertinence. However, as the latter part of the text is, most unhappily, beyond restoration, its value to us rests chiefly in its reaffirming the fact, that as far back as the Early Dynastic period in Sumer (2800-2400 B.C.), men were at least generally cognizant of the historical progression or metallurgical development and had recorded that knowledge in the language of mythology.

Unfortunately, the records of legends incorporating metallic symbolism are not continuous. Asside from the Sumerian accounts just mentioned, the best evidence belongs to two widely separated periods, the "Old Babylonian" (c. 1800-1600 B.C.) and the "Seleucid" (c. 312-64 B.C.)-- though, of course, bits and pieces of relevant material survive from the intervening periods as well.

One of the most useful essays written on the difficult subject of the Babylonian World Ages is that of Professor Jeremais, to which the ensuing discussion is largely indebted.

Like all ancient peoples, the Babylonians represented their gods and their actions in physical terms. For them, the motions of the celestial bodies reflected the movement of the divine ones on high, who were represented in the highly stylized Babylonian iconography by the metals, gold,

silver, copper, lead and iron.

In their religious planetary lore, gold--depicted as the chief ornamentation of the gods in general--is identified specifically with the sun-god Shamash (Marduk in the later traditions). Silver is the metal of Sin (called Nanna by the Sumerians) who was the moon hypostasis, and whose daughter, Ishtar, representing the planet Venus (identified after the later Roman fashion) who was associated with copper (Ninmah, who had no celestial connection, was lead). The perceived revolution of these planetary bodies--worshipped as the "rulers of the Zodiac"--regulated the cyclic flow of time so that the four seasons of the solar year reflected in the microcosm the Transcendent Year whose four phases are the Ages of the World. Jeremais elaborates:

The rulers of the Zodiac are the sun, the moon and Venus. In a mythological text (WAI iv. pl. 5) we are told that Bel placed them to rule supuk same. The four remaining planets, Marduk-Jupiter, Nebo-Mercury, Ninib-Mars and Nergal-Saturn, correspond to the quarter appearances of the three, and have their special place of revelation at the four quarter points of the cycle, or, speaking in terms of space, at the four corners of the world. . . . in a like manner they are representatives of the course of the cycle of nature (Tammuz in the upper and under world), which runs parallel with the astral phenomena in the changes of the year. Marduk and Nebo as the embodiments of the spring harvest phenomena, or Ninib and Nergal as the embodiments of the phenomena of summer and winter, could occupy the place of Tammuz in both halves of his cycle . . . the change in the arc of day and the arc of night the summer and winter courses of the stars, and the related change of life and death in nature, result in the doctrine of the change of the Ages. The change of the seasons corresponds to the succession of day and night. According to the principle that the microcosm everywhere reflects the macrocosm, the year is a copy of the greater period of time, in which the evolution of the world is consummated, and the seasons correspond to Ages of the World.92

In the oldest version of this story--confirmed by cunnieform writings dating to the 3rd millenium B.C.--there are only three ages: gold, silver, and copper; however, the age of perfection, as in the Hesiodic account, lies in the beginning, but, it is not an age of gold, but of silver, for before the ascendancy of Marduk, it was Sin, god of the moon and of knowledge, who was of the greatest importance, while his son, Shamash (the sun) was not supreme in his own right because at his zenith he was, as Contenaue explains: "no longer the benefactor of mankind, but a murderer, parching all growing things, and making a desert of the plain, causing sunstroke and bringing death and suffering."<sup>93</sup> His rule was followed by that of his sister, Ishtar (Venus) the third most luminous planet, whose ascendancy heralded the age of copper. Although a channel of fertility to men, Ishtar was conceived of as being immoderately passionate in all ways; the ancients recognized that her emotions often overwhelmed her suddenly and completely and the tenor of her rule generally reflected her appetitive propensities; consequently, the men of her age were miserly, and rapacious. From their greed, however was spawned fear, and their lives were ones of increasing misery and woe. The Artaphases Hymn from the 3rd millenium B.C. describes the death-throws of the copper race in a now familiar litany of tears:

Oh father Bel . . . Oh lord of the land, the ewe rejects her lamb, the she-goat her kid. How much longer in they faithful city shall the mother reject her son, the wife her husband? Heaven and earth are laid low, there is no light with us. The sun does not rise with his radiance over the land, the moon does not

rise with the radiance over the land.<sup>94</sup>

The copper age is the final period before the great dissolution in which all things are destroyed by flood. Sin reasserts himself, reiterating the original cosmogonic act; cyclic time is renewed and the pristine age of blessedness is recalled to the human sphere.

In any discussion of this process, it must be remembered that the basic structure of the universe was constructed and maintained by this endless repetition of generations and destructions. From this cosmological understanding, grew the notion that mankind, in its development down from the original age of perfection, was destined to degenerate, both physically and morally, continuously throughout the wheel of eternal time. This degenerative cycle is that substantially reproduced in the later poem of Hesiod. However, the account in the Works and Days disagrees with the old Sumerian prototype in both the number of epochs and their chronological succession. Instead of the four metallic ages of Hesiod, we are presented with three in the Sumerian story; and in the latter account, the primal age of perfection--though appropriately in the beginning--is not typified by gold, but by silver, in a concession to the beneficent Sin. However, by the late twenty-first-century B.C., this schema is substantially altered to accord with calendrial reforms instituted under the rule of Hammurabi, so that the whole story closely prefigures the tale in the Works and Days.

The Silver and Golden Periods are reversed and a fourth Age of Iron is added to the existing triade in a complete departure from the old astronomical archetype.<sup>95</sup> Other parallels should be noted.

Marduk, for example, once identified with Jupiter, becomes associated with Saturn, now identified as a hypostasis of the sun.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, the Golden Age in the Babylonian narrative is called the Age of Saturn (Marduk) anticipating the later classical fashion.<sup>97</sup> Jeremais' observation of this important identification seems worth quoting:

The Golden Age is also called the Age of Saturn. Owing to the change of the heptagram into a pentagram, Saturn is represented by the sun, as Mars is by the moon; and an astronomical text of the Babylonians, which has been handed down to us from the times of the Arascids, expressly says that Saturn and the sun are identical . . . therefore, the relation of the course of the moon to that of the sun (27: 360). . . .<sup>98</sup>

The periodicities of the seven known "planets" relative to the background of the stars, and more particularly the revolution of the sun, were utilized for the measurement of both seasonal and transcendental time. Marduk, the "golden one", followed the path of the sun through the Zodiac (referred to in the texts as the "circle encompassing things" and as the "life giving circle").<sup>99</sup> He was worshipped as the bearer of New Time whose epiphany--commemorated, as we recall, in the vernal Akitu--was celebrated in accordance with the appearance to man as the spring sun which brings forth the New Year. As far as the other planets are concerned, they each represent a particular manifestation

of the godhead and present themselves to man as the "chief points of the sun's track," corresponding to the quarter appearance of the sun's course.<sup>100</sup> "They can thus be designated", writes Jeremais, "sun gods, but they can equally well be represented as forms of the moon or Venus" (the two remaining rulers of the Zodiak), "as they appear in their course."<sup>101</sup>

Regrettably, we know very little about the degradation of human character which accompanies each downward step in the cycle of epochal change. In this connection it is of outstanding interest, that the Sumerian kings lists record the regnal events of ancient monarchs whose life spans sometimes exceed thirty thousand years or more. This, no doubt, reflects the widespread conception of a primal Golden Age when men lived much longer than now and were imbued with certain divine attributes. It is not coincidental that these golden kings ceased to be after the Great Deluge. And in the later Chaldean story of the World Ages, their reigns are skillfully joined to the Age of Marduk which is ended by the force of watery chaos. We know nothing of the human condition in the Age of Silver; and the Bronze Age men cannot be fully characterized for the lack of extant literary material, which when available is often of the poorest quality, fragmentary in nature or of dubious authenticity. Fortunately, however, a few good descriptions of the final, vexing Age of Iron have survived in good condition.



One of these speaks of the present as a time when the order of nature has been reversed, when the planets have lost their bearing on worldly events and human affections have turned to hatred--when everything verges on being enveloped by blind chaos:

Under his rule (?), the one will devour the other, the people will sell their children for gold, the husband will desert his wife, the wife her husband, the mother will bolt the door against the daughter.<sup>102</sup>

Other omens speak of the Iron Age as a time of tribulation and cursing; a time of pervasive wickedness when "the clear become dull, the pure dirty, the land will fall into confusion, prayers will not be heard and the signs of the prophets will become unfavorable."<sup>103</sup> A similar theme is preserved in the Ira myth which tells of a coming deliverer after the time of earthly strife and conflict:

The sea coast shall not spare the seacoast,  
Mesopotamia shall not spare Mesopotamia nor Assyria  
Assyria, the Elamite the Elamites, the Carsite the  
Carsites, the Sutean the Suteans, the Cutean the  
Cuteans, the Lulubean the Lulubeans, one land  
another land, but they shall strike each other  
dead. But after that shall come the Akkada, who  
shall lay them all low and overwhelm them severally.<sup>104</sup>

The later commentaries of Berossus, a priest of Marduk, remain consistent with the ancient tradition and are reliable evidence that the motif was continuously influential throughout the third-century B.C.<sup>105</sup> Berossus modernizes the story somewhat, and tells us that after the planets run their course through the Zodiak, humanity will be destroyed by a deluge and a conflagration that will burn away the impurities of the Iron Age, and prepare essential (spiritual?)

Being for a return to the Golden Age of new beginnings.

In a philosophical dialogue on the Problems of Science,

Lucius Annaeus Seneca has this to say about Berosus' concept:

Berosus says that everything will take place according to the course of the stars; further he affirms this so confidently that he assigns times for the conflagration (conflagrationi) of the world and the flood (diluvio). For he asserts that the world (terrena) will burn, when all the stars, which now pursue diverse courses, come together in the (constellation) of the Crab, thus positioned under the same sign so that a straight line may pass through all their orbs. As to the future inundation, (it will happen when the same body of stars meet in (the constellation of) Capricorn. The former constellation denotes the summer solstice, the latter the winter solstice: they are signs of great powers, since in them the turning-points of the year lie.<sup>106</sup>

The reiteration of the Golden Age corresponds, claims Jeremais, "to the fashioning of the world after the original chaos", when Marduk had upheld order by defeating Tiamat and proceeded to create the universe; this, he continues, corresponds "to the primal world after the creation;<sup>107</sup> it is a return of the "happy time of the beginning."<sup>108</sup> As I have already indicated, the Babylonian texts are mute about this blessed age; it is only from the description of the rule of primal kings, when peace and love reigned supreme (see page 140), that we can "extract" a feeling for the period.<sup>109</sup> One such description follows:

Since the time of the gods in their friendliness did set me on the throne of my fathers, Ramman has sent forth his rain, Ea opened the springs; the grain was five ells high in the ear, the ears were five-sixths ells long, the harvest was plentiful, the corn was abundant, the seed shot up, the trees bore rich fruits, the cattle multiplied exceedingly. During my reign there was great abundance under my rule rich blessings streamed down.<sup>110</sup>

To sum up, then, this aspect of our analysis, it seems clear that in the broad spectrum of didactic literature of the Ancient Near East there exists a tendency to depict the development of man in terms of a sequence of declining periods from a perfect beginning. There is a strong kinship of atmosphere among these various narratives, especially regarding their descriptions of the first and final periods. In fact, in points of detail the number of analogies are sufficiently numerous and impressive to warrant the high probability that they derived separately from a common prototypal model. Though this is not to say that certain elements of the individual tales are not indigenous in nature. Such is not the case. For example, in Hesiod's story the metallic scheme seems to be imposed on a far older bit of native folk lore concerning the bounteous Age of Cronus. It is highly unlikely, however, that this could have happened if there had not been an indigenous system of thought into which the foreign model could have readily fit.

All in all, assuming the proposition to be true that the various traditions derived from a single archetypal model, we are led by the thrust of our study to conclude that the myth's locus of commencement was ancient Babylon or her intellectual forbears--this on the basis of the story's proven antiquity there, and for the other reasons which I have elaborated elsewhere.

Finally, whatever the rights and wrongs of the preceding

arguments, it is manifestly clear that the idea of the degeneration of World Ages provided a nearly inexhaustible source that furnished the raw material for important aspects of the great religious literatures of the Near East, and through them the letters of Greece, and ultimately exciting even the poets of Rome and Byzantium. It is to the incalculably various and unpredictably fertile sway of this doctrine on the post-Hesiodic literature of Classical Greece that I should next like to draw your attention.

First, however, I should explain that the legend had a profound influence on Greek thought in two different directions. One is almost wholly literary, mainly poetic and religious though to a lesser extent dramatic; the other producing a great deal of philosophical literature. It is to the former that we devote the remainder of this chapter, while the next chapter will concern the philosophical treatment of the subject.

From the literature of the sixth and fifth-centuries B.C. there has come down to us no fully developed treatment of the Age Cycle per se--aside, that is, from the Orphic and philosophic examination of the doctrine--though reflection on the Golden Age seems to have been a fairly common literary motif throughout the period. It is a fairly common theme, for example, in the lyric poetry of Theognis, and in the comic parodies of Cratinus, Pherecrates, Nicophon, Grates, Teleclides, Timotheus and Aristophanes.<sup>111</sup> Let us briefly consider what some of these poets and wits have

said about the "golden past" and what their statements share in common.

The idea of civilizational decline is given repeated expression in the poetry of Theognis (late sixth-century), who held that human progress entered into its decline with the advent of democracy and tyranny. It was his self-appointed mission to teach the "old-time" aristocratic manners and morals of the golden past to the present race, one he held to be "predestined to precipitate decay. He warns his readers of a future doomsday reminiscent of the Hesiodic Iron Age, in which Aidos and Nemesis abandon earth so that only the goddess Hope will remain among men; even Good Faith, Moderation, and the Graces will flee to high Olympus.<sup>113</sup> In his Maxims he sings of the present Age's woeful lot and employs an indirect analogy to the metals:

A trusty partisan, faithful and bold,  
Is worth his weight in silver or in gold,  
For times of trouble.--But the race is rare;  
Steady determin'd men, ready to share  
Good or ill fortune!--such, if such there are,  
Could you survey the world, and search it round,  
And bring together all that could be found,  
The largest company you could enroll,  
A single vessel could embark the whole!--  
So few there are!<sup>114</sup>

Elsewhere he laments the disappearance of honesty, self-control, piety and respect for law and order.

His is clearly a serious lament for the lost past and a warning of future doom, yet others took great delight in lampooning what they considered to be nothing more than a sanctimonious old tale of human decadence. Such were the

comic poets of the fifth-century, those irreverent humorists who inventively parodied the common idea of a golden past much as a wag of the enlightenment might caricature the popular Christian Heaven--after all, Heaven and the Age of Cronus had much in common, the chief difference between them being the eternality of the former, and the periodicity of the latter. We need not individually examine each and every satirical passage as a similar theme is common to all. Typical of these parodies is this passage from the Birds of Aristophanes in which we find an implicit condemnation of the present rule of Zeus, who in overthrowing his father had brought an end to a time when things were far better:

So elect us as your gods  
and we, in turn, shall be your weathervane and Muse,  
your priests of prophecy,  
                  foretelling all,  
winter, summer, spring and fall.

Furthermore, we promise we'll  
give mankind an honest deal.  
Unlike our smug opponent, Zeus,  
we'll stop corruption and abuse.  
NO ABSENTEE ADMINISTRATION!  
NO PERMANENT VACATION  
IN THE CLOUDS!

And we promise  
to be scrupulously honest.

Last of all, we guarantee to  
every single soul on earth  
his sons and their posterity:

HEALTH  
WEALTH  
HAPPINESS  
YOUTH  
LONG LIFE  
LAUGHTER  
PEACE  
DANCING

and  
LOTS TO EAT!

We'll mince no words.  
Your lives shall be  
the milk of the birds.  
We guarantee you'll all be  
revoltingly  
RICH! 115

The idyllic life led by men in the earthly paradise of the Golden Age, when all the fruits of the earth were theirs, is a theme dwelt on by the humorists Pherecrates, Nicophon, Crates and Cratinus. The comments of Cratinus concerning the lost paradise are preserved in the Deipnosophists of Athenaeus, and are representative of a genre:

Cronus was their king in ancient days, when men played dice with wheaten loaves, and Aeginetan barley cakes all cooked were thrown into the arena streaming with curds (?). 116

A similar satirical bent is to be found in the extant works of Metagenes, while Teleclides and Cratinus parody the peaceful and spiritual blessings of the Golden Age, as we see in this fragment from the Chirones of Cratinus:

Blessed was the life of mortals in those days as compared with that of today. Men lived in peace of mind and sweet voiced wisdom exceedingly fair beyond all mortals. 117

Aristophanes is responsible for a description of the metallic qualities of men in his comedy The Frogs, where certain of the metals are associated with the different classes of Athenian society:\*

I have often noticed that there are good and honest citizens in Athens, who are as old gold is to new

\*We have already noted a like analogy in our earlier discussion of the general metaphorical uses to which the Hesiodic scheme was put. I am, of course, speaking of the

money. The ancient coins are excellent in point of standard; they are assuredly the best of all moneys; they alone are well struck and give a pure ring; everywhere they obtain currency, both in Greece and in strange lands; yet we make no use of them and prefer those bad copper pieces or silver alloyed with copper quite recently issued and so wretchedly struck . . . petty rubbish, consisting of strangers, slaves and lowborn folk not worth a whit more, mushrooms of yesterday, whom formerly Athens would not have even wanted as scapegoats.118

If the preceding passages prove anything, they show that the metallic ages myth enjoyed a robust vitality in the fourth and fifth-centuries B.C. and suggest also the means by which the legend was preserved and passed on to later generations. Furthermore, such views served, no doubt, to reinforce the sense of decline evident in most of the literature of the period, though they were not sufficient in and of themselves to create such a sense.

Plato gives repeated expression to the tradition. His eminence as a philosopher requires that we leave for later the discussion of his theory of cosmic cycles; yet, as he brings together in his writings all the aspects of world cycles previously developed, the inclusion here of his treatment of world ages seems mandatory.

But first this caveat: Plato's treatment of the theme should not be taken as proof of his literal conviction, for the myths, even while they may embrace truths of high seriousness, are always figurative and often ironic in character.

(cont.) three ideal states typified by metallic strains, into which Plato fit the natural castes of his ideal Republic (see page 113).



Of highest importance to our discussion is the cyclo-epochal scheme found in the Statesman. No better summary of the idea after it had attained its fullest development can be found anywhere else in the literature of the fourth-century. It will be obvious that the Hesiodic tradition is manifest, but it is significant that the tradition is no longer spoke of as Hesiodic, but as Orphic.

In his attempt to discover the statesman's art, Plato tries to reach a definition of government. In doing so, he is led to the tentative conclusion that human imperfection is somehow related to divine action. To impart a sense of this relationship he presents a myth that alludes not only to the Hesiodic conception of the Golden Age of Cronus, but also to the counter-current cycle of Empedocles.

According to this myth, the historical development of the world is determined by two counter-current cycles, one in which time flows in a normal forward manner, while in the other, motion is reversed. Woven into this account is the story of man's genesis and degradation. When god is in control of the world, earth-born man enjoys a good period without war or strife; free from poverty and want.<sup>119</sup> But when god abandons the world, the cycle begins to roll backwards and mankind enters a period of strife and disarray:

When man is guided by the divine pilot it produces much good and but little evil in the creatures it raises and sustains. When it must travel on without god, things go well enough in the world immediately after he abandons control, but as time goes on and forgetfulness of god arises in it, the ancient condition of chaos also begins to assert its way at last; as this

cosmic era draws to its close, this disorder comes to a head. The few good things it produces it corrupts with so gross a taint of evil that it hovers on the very brink of destruction, both of itself and the creatures in it.120

In this story there is also a suggestion that after the lowest point of human degeneration has been reached, the pilot will take the wheel again, reversing the motion and bringing the world back into regularity.

Other variations of the tradition found in Plato more closely follow the general Orphic trend of the day in speaking of the ages of man as set phases of development which occur within the circle of the Great Year. This concept is alluded to in at least four dialogues besides the Statesman, namely in the Timaeus, in the Phaedo, in the Laws, and in the Republic. Despite his fascination with the idea, however, historical circularity is not a consistent part of his philosophy. My conviction on the subject arises from his own statement concerning the metallic allegory found in Book III of the Republic, where he presents his "noble lie". This is nothing more than a condensed version of Hesiod's story. In this case, however, it is not presented as a serious exposé of man's derivations, but is used as a popular justification of class differentiation within the ideal state. The following passage illustrates his lack of sympathy with story in general, while also imparting a sense of his keen awareness of the tale's allegorical virtue:

How, then, said I might we contrive one of those opportune falsehoods of which we were just now speaking,

six hundred years or more. Traces of Orphic thought can be found in all the great cyclic cosmologies--from those of early Ionians in the fifth-century B.C., to the fourth-century A.D. musings of the Emperor Julian.

Though the adequate discussion of the minute aspects and relevant questions concerning the various Orphic systems of world degeneration transcend the possible limits of this paper, yet an injustice to our theme would be perpetrated without at least commenting in a general manner on some of the more important or else representative aspects of the movement's cyclo-epochal speculation. Up to this point, I have endeavored to present the history of our subject in a chronological arrangement; unfortunately, this arrangement breaks down when discussing the Orphic doctrines.

Nilsson's reconstruction of the history of Orphism is now accepted by most scholars in its general outline though there are still many points which must be regarded as highly uncertain. One such problem concerns the satisfactory resolution of questions regarding Orphic derivation--a problem exacerbated by our failure to identify with any degree of certainty the date of inception of the fully developed Orphic doctrines of cosmic circularity.

One theory holds--on the strength of some early Orphic tomb tablets--that the movement's idea of worldly recurrence was formulated in large part by "philosophers" in the sixth-century B.C. Though a more attractive theory stipulates that much of what we understand about Orphic circularity

derives from the later hellenistic period though this material reflects a much older system of thought that may have been current in the fifth and fourth-centuries B.C. in much the same form that has come down to us. The fourth-century date has been championed by M. Lefort and J. A. Phillip,<sup>122</sup> and most vocally by M. L. West, who maintains that material contained in the extant cosmologies probably goes back to Epigenes who must have dated to the fourth-century B.C., or to the early Pythagoreans, Brontius, Zopyrus or Cecrops. In a similar vein, Kirk and Raven, whose authority in this regard seems widely respected, agree that developed "orphic visions" date probably from no earlier than the fourth-century B.C., though certain cosmogonies bearing the names of Orpheus, Musaeus and Epimenides, "may have been attached to fifth or sixth-century theogonies." Nevertheless, they also conclude that the "eclectic reports that survive are Hellenistic at the earliest" (the best of these, according to Smith, are contained in the reports of the Neo-Platonists and still later scholiasts from the second and third centuries of our era and from the so called "gold-leaf" eschatological hymns and Hiero Logoi concerning the life of Orpheus).<sup>123</sup> Other theories have been suggested, but as the explanation of all such possibilities is outside the scope of this paper we should now move from the largely speculative to what is confirmed by existing evidence and examine more closely the substance and character of Orphic attitudes towards the concept of world ages.

Orphism's extraordinary sympathy with periodic recurrence and the regular cycles of nature gave rise to the conception of the universe that foreshadowed that of man. In this connection, the Orphic understanding of the macrocosm and the microcosm is one of the most important items in the legacy of ancient philosophical mysticism.

The Orphic vision of the macrocosm was of something which stands just beyond the realm of our experience but that gives shape to the passing flux of immediate things. It was an expression of the life-time of Aeon, the supreme personification of time, and the living embodiment of universal flux. A single incarnation of his metempsychotic life played itself out in the span of the Great Year, whose seasons expressed Aeon's birth, growth, wax and wane. In Orphic cosmology, these four seasons are the Great Ages of Man, which mark the measured passing of the collective life of human civilization.

Aeon's quaternary ontogeny finds infinite parallel in the microcosm. The four winds, the four seasons, the four compass points, the human body's four major organs implied to the Orphic Theosophers that the quintessential principle of all things in the material substratum was the essence of the "Divine Quaternion". Later Orphism, under the influence of natural philosophy, added to this list of mystical tetrads the four cardinal astronomical points (the two solstices and the two equinoxes), and the four elements, earth, air, fire and water. From the Hippocratic physicians they

borrowed the concept of the four humors which gained or lost in dominance over the human body according to the cycle of the seasons; and, of course, from Hesid, they adopted the four-fold metallic scheme of human degeneration. It is worth quoting the words of Professor Smith from his essay on "World Ages", concerning the symbolism inherent in these elemental quaternions:

The line of development followed was largely suggested by the fact that there were four elements, four seasons, four Ages of man. The four seasons of the ordinary year are spring, summer, autumn, and winter--a series which has always been associated with man's own descent from youth to hoary eld, from strength and happiness to weakness and sorrow. So the four seasons of the Great Year are the four Ages of man, another series with which the idea of descent had always been assigned. As the springtime of the little year of our life is the golden youth of man, so the springtime of that greater year was the golden youth of all mankind.124

The following diagram graphically depicts the World Year in relation to the macrocosmic and microcosmic worlds:



The conception reflected in this diagram is that the four elements (the outer circle), the four seasons (the middle circle), and the four humors (the inner circle), are connected in such a way that they hold together the changing and the permanent by separating them into three distinct worlds--the elemental, the reflective and the biological--mediated by the cycle of transcendent time. This picture comes down to us from the sixth-century A.D. work De Responsione Mundi et Astorum Ordinatione by Saint Isidore of Seville, though as Charles Singer has said, "it would have been acceptable and intelligible from somewhat before the Christian era to the seventeenth century."<sup>126</sup> However, somewhat less detailed ontological analogies were fairly common in Orphism as far back as the late fifth-century B.C. and were especially popular with the Pythagoreans for whom the mystical correspondence of microcosm and macrocosm, of man and cosmos were mirrored in the endless chain of number.

The Orphic division of human history into four Ages was predicated by a dynastic change in heaven. As in the Hesiodic story, the Golden Age was looked upon with yearning admiration as a period of perfection when Cronus ruled and when humanity itself was essentially divine. This period of youth, brotherly love and miraculous bounty was brought to a close when Zeus supplanted Cronus. The succeeding Ages were all increasingly degenerate copies of the perfect state of the golden past. Each generation is less happy and virtuous than before and the entire race

is destined to decline into complete obscurity.

The oldest Orphic theogony is that of Onomacritos. It shows great resemblances to Hesiod's Theogony and much of the matter of the poem suggests obvious parallels with Hebrew Genesis, though it is remodeled according to Orphism's mystic propensities. The many gaps in the story may be filled in from references made to it in the floating Orphic poems assigned to Musaeus, Hieronymos and Hellanicos and by inference from the famous Orphic cosmogony parodied in the Birds of Aristophanes. Other references are found in the commentaries of Proclus, Pausanias and in the testimonia of the Roman Nigidius Figulus. I quote here from Morford's reconstruction:

The first principle was Chronus (time), sometimes described as a monstrous serpent having the heads of a bull and a lion with a god's face in between; Chronus was accompanied by brooding Adrasteia (Necessity), and from Chronus came Aether, Chaos and Erebus. In Aether Chronus fashioned an egg that split in two and from this appeared the first-born of all the gods, Phanes, the creator of everything, called by many names, among them Eros. He was a bisexual deity, with gleaming golden wings and four eyes, described as possessing the appearance of various animals. Phanes bore a daughter, Night, who became his partner in creation and eventually his successor in power. Night then bore Gaea (Earth) and Uranos (Heaven) and they produced the Titans. Next Cronus succeeded to the rule of Night and subsequently, as in the Hesiodic account, Zeus wrested power from his father Cronus whom he mutilated and imprisoned. 127

This account was not given the sanction of "canonical" acceptance since there was no solidarity of Orphic religious thought. A number of variants are extant from a later date; but, of names associated with these accounts only one is



worth recording here, namely, Olympiodoros, the Neo-Platonist, who in his commentary on Plato's Phaedo offers a systematic account of the genealogy of the gods and the events leading to the kingship of Dionysus-Phanes.<sup>128</sup> His importance to our theme rests in the fact that he reduced the usual number of heavenly dynasties in his theogonic schema from six to four, the latter comprising the rules of Ouranos, Cronus, Zeus and Dionysus. What's more, he informs us that it is Dionysus and not Zeus who governs the present world.

It is clear that the ordered procession of Worldly Ages does not unfold in exact parallel to the succession of heavenly dynasties--there is no direct correlation. In the Hellenistic cosmologies, for example, there is tremendous disagreement as to the coincidence of heavenly rule and earthly eon. Only the Age of Gold is consistently associated with the reign of Cronus. Furthermore, the various accounts do not always agree as to the number of periods comprising the measure of a single phase of transcendent time. One school of thought asserts that there are only two ages, the time of Cronus-Phanes and the time of Zeus.<sup>129</sup> Another postulates a tripartite Great Year, and yet another champions the five ages of Hesiodic fame.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the great majority of the older and a good number of the later Orphic writers divided the history of the world into four periods designated by metals in accordance with the biological analogy and the Hesiodic norm.

In general, the main evidence for the tetradic interpretation of the Orphic theory of World Ages--apart, that is, from a great number of references to it found throughout Greek literature in general--is derived from the account of Nigidius Figulus as preserved by Servius. In this story the primal Golden Age is linked to Cronus and the three succeeding periods to Zeus, though Neptune and Pluto rule respectively over the Bronze and Iron Ages as representatives of his sovereignty. These periods are ordered according to their degree of imperfection from the absolute purity of the Golden Age to the common and baser Age of Iron. The entire succession is periodic and eternal and linked to the flow of transcendent time. The cycle repeats itself when things get so bad in the Iron Age that the world is threatened by destruction, forcing Cronus to reassert his authority and reiterate the golden past.<sup>131</sup>

Another tetradic account is preserved by Lactantius who speaks of the four Ages of Man as being **associated** with the four elements of the philosophers. It may be that this theory is loosely derived from the Triagmoi ascribed to Ion, which dealt with the Orphic trinity of elements, earth, water and fire. At any rate, Lactantius tells us that the primal Golden Age was typified by fire; the second Silver Age by air; the tertiary Bronze Age by water, and the final Iron Age by earth. The cyclic character of the story is nowhere very clearly stated by Lactantius. It is, however alluded to in a passage which speaks of a cycle of develop-

ment embracing the life time of Cronus-Phanes who is born from the cosmic egg, and to which he returns to be reformed, as it were, when the earth is destroyed by fire.<sup>132</sup>

A more famous variant of this account is preserved by Dio Chrysostom, and though he writes in the first-century A.D. it is widely, and correctly, believed that his story contains material of a far greater antiquity. Smith recounts Dio's report:

The Lord of the world rides in a chariot drawn by four horses which are sacred to Zeus, Hera, Poseidon and Hestia respectively. In other words the four horses are the four elements fire, air, water and earth. As a rule they are tractable. Now and then, however, the first steed becomes restive and sets fire to the other three. This is the origin of the story of Phaeton, told by the Greeks. Again, it is the steed of Poseidon that becomes restive and the drops of his sweat are sprinkled upon the other three. This is again the source from which the Greeks derived their story of Deucalion's flood.<sup>133</sup>

Summing up our analysis so far, we can say that the cyclo-epochal myth plays a central role in Orphism's philosophy of nature. They used the archetype as a mode of theological expression that illuminated man's relationship to nature on the one hand and to the gods on the other. Of course in the Orphic view, both the gods and nature are merely polarized aspects of the all-encompassing World-Soul, Aeon-Phanes whose movements are manifest in all the cycles of nature, and particularly the heavenly cycles; and since these movements are visible, then god is not incomprehensible; and thus the fate of the world is not by any means hidden or concealed. In this respect, it is not difficult to trace Orphic indebtedness; as their cyclo-destructive point of

view has much in common with Babylonian theories alluded to earlier. I am of course speaking of the common Greco-Oriental notion that the end of the world will be precipitated by solar fires and lunar waters. It is important to understand this theory properly, and in some detail.

As we have learned, the Mesopotamians derived their cyclo-epochal theory through their observation of the circling planets. From these movements they extrapolated the length of the Great Year as the period of time after which all heavenly bodies return to the starting points in the Zodiac as were held by them at the moment of creation. According to Berosus, this alignment occurs in the constellation of the Crab, considered by him to be the Magna Solstitium of the Great Year, the hottest and driest time of all when everything is destroyed by fire.<sup>134</sup> Conversely, Capricorn is the transcendent winter solstice and the alignment of the planets there causes the world to be engulfed by the floods of watery chaos. In either event, the destruction of the world is based on the principle that the microcosm everywhere reflects the macrocosm, so that the meteorological extremes of the Great Year's Magna Solstitia end the world by alternately burning and drowning it.<sup>135</sup>

The wide diffusion of this idea, and particularly its influence to Orphism is attested by Olympiodoros who informs us that Orphic mystagogues taught that the "winter and summer of the solar year were mere reflections of the seasons of the

Great Year; that the 'great winter' occurs when all the planets are in a winter sign e.g. Aquarius or Pisces; a great summer, when they are all in a summer sign e.g. Lion or Crab."<sup>136</sup>

As we might expect, the whole scheme is given added theological emphasis by the Orphics to suit their mystic propensities. Accordingly, the heat of the Great Summer Solstice does not merely destroy the world, but takes on the added significance of burning away the gross impurities of the material (Titanic) substratum. The ensuing flood further cleanses and purifies what remains, until all that is left is the spiritual essence of the cosmos as contained in the primordial egg.<sup>137</sup>

The Cosmic Egg is a central feature of Orphic cosmogonic thought and therefore an important element of their cyclic theory. It is both the beginning and the end of the cosmos; and that from which all things issue forth into existence and into which they must eventually be resolved.

There has been a great deal of conjecture as to the originating source of this idea. Some authorities have attempted to connect the concept to the mythology of Canaan where the egg is depicted as the first principle that contains the whole universe and binds it together. Another Canaanitish tale suggests that the egg was the product of Wind and Chaos and that it contained within itself the waters of life.

Other scholars argue that the concept derives from an

Egyptian tradition.

In Egypt, the generation of the Egg was regarded as having occurred in the time of "non-being", when the great cackler, Geb, and the sky goddess Nut joined above the "great Yawning gulf."<sup>138</sup> From the resulting primogenial embryo emanated first light, then air.<sup>139</sup>

Other references to the World Egg are common throughout Egyptian literature. The authors of the coffin texts, for example, assert that the egg was the first created thing. This accords with an old Memphite cosmogonic myth which tells how the father of beginnings, Ptah, created the egg and then split it in two to form heaven and earth. An even older version suggests that the two halves of the egg went to form the sun and the moon. A completely different story is told by the Egyptian writer Herapollon, who relates how the Phoenix (a symbol of resurrection) gave birth to three cosmic eggs, but hatched only one, and broke the other two. Finally, it is of some interest to note, that numerous illustrations exist depicting the egg floating over a mummy, signifying, we might suppose, the hope of life in the hereafter (however, the context of the image is lost, and it is difficult to conjecture what its exact significance may have been).

The idea of the Cosmic Egg is certainly one of the oldest elements of Orphic thought, dating back at least as far as Aristophanes (c. 450-c. 380 B.C.) who parodies the belief

in his Birds, though it probably is as old as Orphism itself.

It is clear that the Cosmic Egg is cast for a role of some importance in Orphic thinking. It really belongs to both worlds, the higher one of the spiritual plain and the lower one of the material. The canopy of heaven is the egg itself; it is composed of seven enfolding layers which represents the seven heavenly spheres of the central world. Two layers of the egg are perhaps allegorical to the first and fourth of the World Ages. The Golden Age is modeled upon the inner sphere of the egg's golden yolk, which is the purely spiritual plain where the gods and the purified souls of humanity reside. This was sometimes referred to as the "golden heart of Phanes". Conversely, the hard outer strata, the shell, in which the non-Titanic material elements are concentrated, is likened to the Iron Age which is most distant from the golden essence in both the spiritual and the temporal sense. Moreover, the "arrangement of shell and skin (and presumably also of white and yolk)," was used by the Orphics "as an analogue for the arrangement of sky (outer heaven), aether and so on."<sup>140</sup> Regarding this point, I quote the following extract from Achilles' commentary on the Phaenomena of Aratus:

The arrangement which we have assigned to the celestial sphere the Orphics say is similar to that in eggs; for the relation which the shell has in the egg, the outer heaven has in the universe, and as the aether depends deepens in a circle from the outer heaven, so does the membrane from the shell.<sup>141</sup>

So much for the role played by the idea of the Cosmic Egg

in Orphic cyclic theory. But apart from such a belief, we have still to consider some further cyclo-epochal themes that seem to derive much of their character from the Orphic stories and make relatively free use of the movement's symbolism, which apparently responded well to the temperamental inclinations of the poets of the fourth and third-centuries B.C. who liked mysticism and were ripe for a cosmology that blended sense perception with mystic religious philosophy.

One such account was offered by Dicearchus of Messene (ca. 330 B.C.) who in his Bíos Ἑλλάδος--if we are to believe Porphyry's brief summary of his thought--conceived of all subsequent development down from the Golden Age as a constant increase in culture, accompanied by a steady diminution of human happiness.<sup>142</sup> Obviously Dicearchus had read Hesiod's Works and Days and had heard the Orphic theories concerning the recurring sections of historic time. He followed both in his description of the Golden Age, which he characterized as a time when men lived the best sort of life, "free from care about the satisfaction of their needs, or health and peace and friendship."<sup>143</sup> It goes without saying, that he fell victim to the belief that the present time was the most inferior and severe of all. From the fall of the Golden Age he traces the decline of man through the subsequent pastoral to the agricultural periods of development. The following extract from Guthrie's In the Beginning is, I think, not an unfair rendering of this history:



From this beginning, as Porphyry tells us very briefly, Dicearchus went on to trace the subsequent stages of human development. The next was the pastoral. It was forced on men's attention that some animals were dangerous and others harmless, and they learned domestication of animals introduced the notion of property. Here were possessions worth having. It was not long before some men began to covet those of others, and so fighting and war began. Then as time went on and men continued to master what appeared to them the most useful arts, they entered the third, or agricultural stage of life.<sup>144</sup>

Here the account breaks off and we are told nothing of the agricultural era nor of man's final destiny. Nevertheless, the general tenor of the narrative convinces me, as it did the ancient authorities, that the process of decay would continue to some future point when the world would witness barbarism and moral disintegration to an un-heard of extent. On the other hand, whether or not this climax of decay would excite a process of inner change, preparing civilization for a new Golden Age is unknown.

After Dicearchus, the most influential and fully developed exposition of the Theory of Ages was presented by the Cilician poet Aratus (c. 315-c. 240 B.C.) whose version of the legend in his Phaenomena, was one of the "best known in the ancient world."<sup>145</sup>

The Aratean tale, is taken directly from Hesiodic material, as mediated, it is commonly held, by the Orphic treatises on Astronomy or Astrology, mentioned by Suidas, about which, however, we know next to nothing. It is even simpler in form than the Hesiodic story, and is certainly far more effective to read. Numerous differences will be apparent to the thoughtful reader, though two should be

mentioned here: one is that the degradation of humanity is not the result of divine whim, but is the consequence of mankind's declining moral and physical fiber by a process that is never quite explained. The other concerns Aratus' reduction of the four metallic ages of Hesiod to three-- gold, silver and bronze in an attempt to reconcile his predecessor's discrepancies. Here, in translation, are the verses that treat his conception of the Ages:

Beneath both feet of Boöts mark the Maiden, who in her hands bears the gleaming ear of corn. Whether she be the daughter of Astraeus, who, men say, was of old the father of the stars, or child of other sire, untroubled by her course! But another tale is current among men, how of old she dwelt on earth and met men face to face, nor ever disdained in olden time the tribes of men and women, but mingling with them took her seat, immortal though she was. Her men called Justice; but she assembling the elders, it might be in the market-place or in the wide-wayed streets, uttered her voice, ever urging on them judgements kinder to the people. Not yet in that age had men knowledge of hateful strife, or carping contention, or din of battle, but a simple life they lived. Far from them was the cruel sea and not yet from afar did ships bring their livelihood, but the oxen and the plough and Justice herself, queen of the peoples, giver of things just abundantly supplied their every need. Even so long as the earth still nurtured the Golden Race, she had her dwelling on earth. But with the Silver Race only a little and no longer with utter readiness did she mingle, for that she yearned for the ways of the men of old. Yet in that Silver Age was she still upon the earth; but from the echoing hills at eventide she came along, nor spake to any man in gentle words. But when she had filled the great heights with gathering crowds, then would she with threats rebuke their evil ways, and declare that never more at their prayer would she reveal her face to man. "Behold what manner of race the fathers of the Golden Age left behind them! Far meaner than themselves! But ye will breed a viler progeny. Verily wars and cruel bloodshed shall be unto men and grievous woe shall be laid upon them." Even so she spake and sought the hills and left the people all gazing towards her still. But when they, too, were dead, and when, more ruinous than they which went before, the Race of

Bronze was born, who were the first to forge the sword of the highwayman, and the first to eat the flesh of the plough-ox, then verily did Justice loathe that race of men and fly heavenward and took up the abode, where even now in the night time the Maiden is seen of men, established near to far-seen Boötes.<sup>146</sup>

Aratus makes no statement as to the future of the Bronze Race, nor does he forecast a return to the natural kindness and contentment of the Golden Era. But that he intended his reader to assume the series to be cyclic is, to my mind, exceedingly likely. Scholars have long conjectured that he implies as much in later passages which clearly indicate the author's typically Stoic (he was one of the pupils and followers of Zeno) conception of an all inclusive cyclic law that sustained in axiomatic conformity that which had been originated in the beginning.<sup>147</sup> Numerous passages in the Phaenomena abound in references to divine circularity-- "the circular hours", the "circular seasons", the "four circles of the cosmos", the "terrestrial circles", the "circular Gaia", "the waxing and waning of life", the "belt of the Zodiak", and so on.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, it is clear from these references that Aratus felt that the process of change in the visible world would neither slow or stop; but would recede in cycles from the form of the unchanging metallic archetypes which serve to clarify his basis for humanity's moral decline.

Though Aratus used the story of World Ages mainly in the interest of poetry, and is far less directly concerned with actual human history than Dicaearchus, his plea for

justice strongly resembles that in Hesiod's Works and Days.

But I lay myself open to the charge of self-contradiction when I speak of his belief in the process of circular history and then announce that the purpose of his tale is to urge men to higher aims so that justice might prevail over evil. For after all, how can justice triumph when the eternal decree of pre-destination--a corollary to cyclic time--has deemed from the beginning that all things shall pass, and that mankind should fall? To answer this charge we must understand how Aratus conceived of justice.

As a Stoic, Aratus assumed that the justice and harmony which he sought emanated from the archetypal stability of natural law. He thought, as Rist informs us, that "all things must go through their appointed seasons, and that each successive phase of Being must enjoy a relative period of persistence in time."<sup>149</sup> He held that the ideal life was one led in conformity to this rule, and that it was only humanity's inborn ignorance of this law that had caused its decline from the blessed past. As a good Stoic, Aratus also understood that men could not control the events of this world but only their personal reactions or attitudes towards these events. To him, then, and to those who thought like him, a man's success was viewed as having been determined by his commitment to his will to be just and to live in accordance with the dictates of reason. Thus, if an individual wills to do his duty, despite the prevailing

mood of the age, he is fulfilling his obligation, for this is all that men are often able to do. If, however, enough men strive to do their duty, and willingly submit to the incontrovertible laws of nature and god, then an island of justice and morality might be created in an otherwise improvidential age of sordidness and debauchery for which Aratus's observation of the Bronze Race serves well as a description. In short, Aratus, claims Sarno, "tried to remind men that they alone of all beasts created of god had the ability to recognize their divine nature and strive against the worsening tendencies of the age."<sup>150</sup>

In later antiquity, the Aratean view of World Ages was the cause of much speculation and commentary. Achilles Tatius, Hipparchus and Eratosthenes are known to have commented at length on his presentation. Hipparchus made much of the poem. Other Stoics carried his ideas to Rome, where Cicero, Caesar Germanicus and Festus Avienus translated them into Latin. The well known account of Hygenius, itself based on an interpretation of Eratosthenes is probably the source from which Ovid drew his version of the tale in the Metamorphoses. And from the first century A.D. to the end of the Empire Romans were continually obsessed by the idea of cosmic revolution and its attendant themes of the Magnus Annus, the Saturna Regna, the end of Rome and its renovatio and the return of the Aurea Aetas.

Juvenal looked to a Golden Age of modesty and justice in the past, and Horace in his Epode XVI expresses his fear

of Rome's decline.<sup>151</sup> Tarn tells us that Cleopatra aimed at world rule in line with a nameless Greek oracle that she would throw down Rome and then raise it up again, inaugurating a Golden Age of peace and universal brotherhood in which East and West, Asia and Europe, would be reconciled."<sup>152</sup> Virgil and Tibullus were no less drawn to the lulling myth; and in Virgil's fourth Eclogue we are led to believe that, based on an ancient Sibylline prophecy, the return of the Golden Age was imminent; and that the cosmic cycle of decay had been arrested by the triumph of Augustus. A similar thought is presented in the Aeneid:

Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet  
Saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva  
Saturno quandam.<sup>153</sup>

The idea outlived the Empire itself and was given a peculiar ethical guise and developed by the Christians into a prophecy of the coming of Christ and a return of a new age of peace and plenty as was enjoyed by the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden.

In summary we may say that by the end of the fourth-century B.C. the legend of World Ages was already transformed from a purely rhetorical and mythical theme to a philosophical and theological doctrine in which the influence was shifted from an emphasis on divine will to the mechanical ordinations of natural law as mystically bound to the spiritual essence of man. Gone is the notion that the four separate races and ages of man are the result of divine caprice; gone also the serious assertion that man in a real sense is akin to

a metallic archetype. For these are elements of a superstitious age steeped in mysticism and myth. But such ideas were rapidly giving way to the rational and scientific interpretations of the philosophers. And though these men of logic differed widely in their views concerning eternal recurrence and the development of man, there is one element common to all, for they seemed instinctively to follow the poets in placing the good life in the past, and strove to prove as the poets taught, that time must run back again and retrieve the taintless state of the lost Golden Age.

CHAPTER II: FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, 547a.
- <sup>2</sup>Eliade, Eternal Return, pp. 131-132.
- <sup>3</sup>Smith, p. 192.
- <sup>4</sup>Brandon, p. 180.
- <sup>5</sup>Adams, p. 77.
- <sup>6</sup>Hesiod, The Works and Days, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), ll. 112-120.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., ll. 124-125.
- <sup>8</sup>Brandon, p. 180.
- <sup>9</sup>Plato, Apology, 40.
- <sup>10</sup>Hesiod, ll. 127-138.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., ll. 140-143.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., ll. 143-150.
- <sup>13</sup>Homer, Odyssey, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1937), p. 216.
- <sup>14</sup>Plato, Timaeus, 77a.
- <sup>15</sup>Robert Eisler, "Metallurgical Anthropology in Hesiod and Plato and the Date of the Phoenician Lie," Isis, 40 (1949), p. 111.
- <sup>16</sup>Ovid, pp. 233-238.
- <sup>17</sup>Frazier, The Golden Bough, p. 449.
- <sup>18</sup>Joseph Fontenrose, "Work, Justice and Hesiod's Five Ages," Classical Philology, 69, No. 1, (1974), p. 8.



<sup>19</sup>Hesiod, ll. 157-169

<sup>20</sup>Smith, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, Vol II., an abridgment of Volumes VIII--X, (1954; rpt., New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965), p. 158.

<sup>22</sup>Rhodes, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup>Andrew Robert Burn, The World of Hesiod, 2nd ed. (1936; rpt., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Frederick J. Teggart, "The Argument of Hesiod's Works and Days," The Journal of the History of Ideas, 8 (1947), p. 57.

<sup>25</sup>Hesiod, ll. 175-178.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., ll. 182-184

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., ll. 175; see also: E. R. Dodds, The Ancient Idea of Progress, (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup>Dodds, p.3.

<sup>29</sup>Smith, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 193

<sup>31</sup>Aristotle, Metaphysics, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, Inc., 1947), Bk. I, Ch. iii, ll. 30-36.

<sup>32</sup>Homer Iliad, trans. Samuel Butler (Roslyn, New York: Walter J. Black Inc., 1942), Bk. I, ll. 260-268.

<sup>33</sup>Nilsson, "Orphism", p. 200.

<sup>34</sup>Plato, Laws, in the Collected Dialogues, p. 1304.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 1357.

<sup>36</sup>Plato, Critias, in the Collected Dialogues, p. 1224.

<sup>37</sup>Kirk, Myth and Religion, p. 233.

<sup>38</sup>P. Walcot, "The Text of Hesiod's Theogony and the Hittite Epic of Kumarbi," The Classical Quarterly, 5 (1955), pp. 198-199.

<sup>39</sup>Edmund S. Meltzer, "Egyptian Parallels for an Incident in Hesiod's Theogony and an Episode in the Kumarbi Myth," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 33 (1974), p. 154; see also R. O. Barnett, "The Epic of Kumarbi and the Theogony of Hesiod," The Journal of Hellenic Studies; 65 (1945), p. 100, notes; also Clyde Morley, "Cycles of Nine," op. cit., p. 4; and P. Walcot, Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>40</sup>Nilsson, "Orphism", p. 200.

<sup>41</sup>Smith, p. 193.

<sup>42</sup>Friedrich Solmsen, Hesiod and Aeschylus (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), p. 83, n. 27.

<sup>43</sup>quoted by Gwynn Griffiths, "Archaeology and Hesiod's Five Ages," Journal of Hellenic Ideas, 17 (1956), p. 110.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>45</sup>Pindar, First Olympian Ode, as found in The Greek Poets, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 202.

<sup>46</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. III, ll. 417-420.

<sup>47</sup>quoted in Griffith's "Archaeology", p. 111.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>50</sup>E. A. Wallis Budge, The Dwellers on the Nile (1921; rpt., New York: The Dover Press, 1977), p. 196.

<sup>51</sup>Herman Kees, Ancient Egypt: A Cultural Topography, Ian F. D. Morrow, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 136.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>53</sup>Griffiths, p. 119.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>57</sup>Clark, p. 103.

<sup>58</sup>Eisler, p. 109.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>61</sup>Budge, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup>Kees, p. 136.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>65</sup>Eisler, p. 109.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>67</sup>Dan. Ch. 2, ll. 32-33.

<sup>68</sup>Griffiths, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup>Micah. Ch. 7, ll. 1-6.

<sup>70</sup>Isa. Ch. 3, ll. 5-6.

<sup>71</sup>John R. Hinnels, Persian Mythology (New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1973), p. 56.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>74</sup>N. Soderblom "Zoroasterian Ages of the World," ERE, p. 206.

- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 206.
- <sup>76</sup>Hinnels, p. 92.
- <sup>77</sup>Fontenrose, p. 3.
- <sup>78</sup>Hesiod, Bk. XIII, ll. 181-182.
- <sup>79</sup>Soderblom, p. 208.
- <sup>80</sup>quoted in Soderblom, p. 208.
- <sup>81</sup>Hinnels, p. 91.
- <sup>82</sup>Gwynn Griffiths, "Did Hesiod Invent the Golden Age," Journal of the History of Ideas, 9 (1958), p. 81.
- <sup>83</sup>Eliade, Eternal Return, p. 113.
- <sup>84</sup>E. N. Adler, "Indian Ages," ERE, p. 200.
- <sup>85</sup>Fontenrose, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>86</sup>Griffiths, "Archaeology," p. 118.
- <sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 118
- <sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 118.
- <sup>89</sup>A. Jeremais, "Babylonian Ages," ERE, p. 186.
- <sup>90</sup>P. Walcot, Hesiod and the Near East (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), p. 201; 109 ff.
- <sup>91</sup>Jacobsen, p. 179.
- <sup>92</sup>Jeremais, p. 184.
- <sup>93</sup>Conteneau, p. 249.
- <sup>94</sup>Jeremais, p. 187.
- <sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

- <sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 187
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 186.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 184.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 184.
- <sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 184.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>105</sup>Brandon, p. 111.
- <sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 117.
- <sup>107</sup>Jeremais, p. 185.
- <sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>111</sup>George Boas and Arthur O. Lovejoy, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1965), pp. 38-41.
- <sup>112</sup>Theognis, Maxims, in Greek Literature in Translation, J. H. Frere, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1924) p. 141.
- <sup>113</sup>quoted in Ludwig Edelstein, The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 117-118.
- <sup>114</sup>Theognis, ll. 39-45.

115 Aristophanes, The Birds, William Arrowsmich, trans. (New York: A Mentor Book, New American Library, 1961), p. 69.

116 Lovejoy and Boas, p. 38.

117 Ibid., p. 41

118 Aristophanes, The Frogs, in The Eleven Comedies, Vol. 1, trans. unknown (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1943), p. 227.

119 Plato, Statesman, in The Collected Dialogues, trans., J. B. Skemp, p. 1036.

120 Ibid., p. 1037.

121 Plato, Republic, Bk. III, 414c.

122 J. A. Phillip, Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 136; see also: David H. Hahm, The Origin of Stoic Cosmology (Akron: Ohio State University Press, 1977), p. 86, n. 24.

123 G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, The Presocratic Philosophers (1957; rpt., London: The Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 148; see also: Smith, p. 121.

124 Smith, p. 135.

125 Charles Singer, A Short History of Scientific Ideas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 135.

126 Ibid., p. 135.

127 Morford, p. 258.

128 Kerenyi, p. 242.

130 Smith, p. 121.

131 Leisegang, p. 22.

132 Smith, p. 199.

- 133 Smith, p. 199.
- 134 Brandon, p. 117.
- 135 Ibid., p. 117.
- 136 quoted in F. M. Cornford, Principium Sapientiae (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), p. 183.
- 137 Leisegang, p. 22.
- 138 Clark, p. 56.
- 139 Ibid., p. 56.
- 140 Kirk and Raven, pp. 47-48.
- 141 quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 47.
- 142 Edelstein, p. 134.
- 143 Ibid., p. 134.
- 144 Guthrie, p. 75.
- 145 Smith, p. 196.
- 146 Aratus, Phaenomena, trans. G. R. Mair (1921; rpt., Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960), Bk. II, ll. 96-136.
- 147 Moses Hadas, A History of Greek Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 212.
- 148 Aratus, pp. 243, 202, 245, 252.
- 149 J. M. Rist, Stoic Philosophy (Cambridge: The University Press, 1969), p. 282.
- 150 Ronald Sarno, "Hesiod: From Chaos to Cosmos to Community," The Classical Bulletin, 26 (1969) pp. 19-80.
- 151 Juvenal, Satires, trans. G. G. Ramsay (London: W. Heinemann, 1928), p. 56.

<sup>152</sup>F. B. Marsh, The Roman World From 146 to 30 B.C.  
(London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1911) p. 442, note 2.

<sup>153</sup>P. Vergili Maronis, Aeneidos, Bk. VI, ll. 792-4;  
these lines may be translated thus: "Augustus Caesar, son  
of god, shall set forth the Age of Gold in Latium over  
fields that were once in Saturn's realm."



## CHAPTER III

### SOME PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCIENTIFIC, OR LOGICAL CYCLIC THEORIES

The religious material of the first chapter, and much of the poetic material of the last, were significant preludes to our present discussion of how Greek Philosophy attempted to answer metaphysical questions in nature's own terms. For both mystic and metaphysician shared much in common: both sought truth and personal transcendence, and both relied heavily on sense perception to discover the unchanging reality that lies behind the structure of this transitory world. In this connection, the earliest philosophers depended greatly on the departing mythopoetic mode of expression--for philosophy did not completely, nor even largely uproot the theological viewpoint; their use of reason to discover natural truths achieved for them only a shade closer relationship with the evidence of the senses than was enjoyed by the poets and prophets of old. And as we shall see, in Greek philosophy, both traditions maintain their positions side by side, curiously interwoven into the texture of a new viewpoint that combined the material conception of the universe with a vague mysticism that produced a thought model of exceedingly great utility that seemed a good way to solve the riddle of the universe.

One important element in this legacy was the translation of the worship of heavenly bodies into a rational belief in the laws of cosmic regularity. The circling planets represented an a priori regularity to which the empirical facts of the living world were joined, arguing thereby the ordinal control of a higher unity. As we have seen, to the Orphic philosophers, this principle was the godhead, Aeon-Phanes, but to the physiologoi the idea of god was nonsense. For them the world processes pointed to a godless universe in which the largely material essence of Being formed the edifice of the cosmos which was disturbed and restored not because of its supposed sympathy with the divine life-time of god, but rather because it was compelled by some blindly mechanical law to repeat endlessly, and by repeating disturb and restore "the stability or balance" of Being "which was considered to be fundamentally static."<sup>1</sup> I have read with interest what the philosopher Edwin Hussey once had to say on the subject:

The observable world-order is, for them, a bounded system of earth, seas, murky lower atmosphere, translucent sky, and the heavenly bodies, together, probably, with a hard outer shell to which the fixed stars may have been thought to be attached. This system behaves, in broad outline, with regularity, the principle changes repeating themselves in daily and yearly cycles. These easily observable cycles must have been the best guarantee for the Milesians of the existence of a controlling law in the universe: the parallel with the periodic rotation of political offices necessary among equals was close at hand.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter we shall study the structure and evolution of the various cosmological systems in which the

cyclical motif is elaborated and explored with a view to its intellectual consequences to the subsequent development of our theme.

As this chapter is oriented toward particular figures and schools, the chronological arrangement of our subject will be pursued only insofar as it is practicable--though thematic and chronologic approaches are not always in harmony so that adjustments from time to time will be necessary. Our discussion will follow the three major areas of analyses into which I have divided this chapter. They may be set forth thus:

1. The presocratic cosmologies of Anaximander, Xenophanes, Heraclitos, Democritos and Empedocles; and ideas derived from the Orphic-Pythagorean sphere of thought.
2. Cosmic circularity in Plato and Aristotle.
3. The Hellenistic cosmologies of the Stoics and Neo-Platonists.

### THE PRE-SOCRATICS

The earliest philosophic fragments we possess were composed sometime in the sixth-century B.C. by three renowned sons of the small Ionian city of Miletos, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. In the story of intellectual pioneering these names hold a deep fascination as the first truly clear-thinking minds in the Western World to seek fully rational explanations of the workings of the universe.

The most important figure in this triad was Anaximander

(611-547 B.C.) a pupil of Thales who achieves his fame partly because his conception of the cosmic processes is the only one "we can more or less accurately define."<sup>3</sup>

According to West, his thought was deeply "influenced by conceptions prevailing in his time among peoples of the East."<sup>4</sup> His famed introduction of the gnomon (a kind of sundial), for instance, and his influential "universal cartography" were derived from Mesopotamia where such concepts and other useful ideas had long been employed by the Babylonians. The gnomon was particularly important to the development of the cyclic theory as it was used to measure the movements of the sun and therefore the two solstices, the two equinoxes, the seasons and a whole list of related astronomical phenomena. We may speculate that it was his observation of these processes--as mediated by the Orphic treatises on astronomy--that led him to his understanding of a basic law prevailing throughout the universe.

Although his astronomical observations are external considerations, they yet betray the basis of his cyclic law and should be mentioned.

Anaximander was the first in a long and continuous line of Greek philosophers to view the cosmos as a perfect sphere.<sup>5</sup> He believed that the sun, the moon and the stars floated along circular paths surrounding the central earth:

The sun is in the largest circle around the earth: the moon in a smaller much nearer to the earth; and and the **fixed** stars as well as the five planets are nearest to the earth in the smallest circles.<sup>6</sup>

He describes the sun and the moon and the stars as rings of fire, however, the earth is said by him to be cylindrical, or columnar in shape, with a height of one-third of its width. He tells us that it holds a central position in the cosmos and cannot deviate from its location, not because anything is supporting it, but because it is compelled by some unexplained necessity to remain in the middle.<sup>7</sup> This stability was explained by Theon of Smyrnaeus as due to the earth's immersion in a "tensional pool" of air and liquid which engendered an all-around equality of pressure.<sup>8</sup> However, this interpretation may be a bit misguided as it is not supported by the fragments themselves, nor by corroborative remarks elsewhere in the doxographical literature. A somewhat better hypothesis is offered by Hippolytus in his Refutatio, where he speaks of the earth as being "suspended in the sky, not resting on anything else but keeping its position because it is the same distance away from all extremities."<sup>9</sup> Whether or not this is a statement of uniform magnetic attraction is the cause of much debate, and cannot be resolved here. But at least in many respects this view represents a clear advance over Thales' naive assertion that the earth floats on water like an island, and over such common-sense notions as the one which held that the earth must have some solid foundation to explain its apparent stability.<sup>10</sup>

Of course the metered movements of the heavenly bodies implied to Anaximander an orderly cycle of change manifesting

throughout all the processes of the universe. The act of creation itself is not exempt from this movement and change. The cycle, for him, represents an eternal source of motion. Consequently, all things develop, according to him, out of "concentric rings" after the fashion of the perfect, i.e., circular, heavenly bodies themselves. Of the several obscure and faulty passages describing this process, the following from Theophrastus best illustrates the idea:

He says that, at the origin of this world system, that which, coming from the Eternal, was generative of hot and cold was separated off, and that this produced a kind of ball of flame which formed around the moist in the region of the earth, like bark around a tree.<sup>11</sup>

Pseudo-Plutarch informs us that this bark-like sphere "became broken into parts, each of which was a different circle; which is how the sun, moon and stars were generated."<sup>12</sup>

Anaximander projected this spherical pattern of becoming upon an even greater process, ascribing it to the very workings of the world's originative substance itself, the Apeiron (the unlimited) which he believed surrounded and included the totality of things. He described it as a singular unqualified unity, indestructable and infinite (in duration though not spatially) containing in its vast but limited mass the infinite plurality of Being.<sup>13</sup> He held it to be the very cause of the "coming to be and destruction of the world,"<sup>14</sup> and as such, the primary substance and source of all things: "a kind of ontological 'storehouse' or 'reservoir' of qualities from which the

perceptable qualities of things have separated off and into which when their contraries come forth in turn, they will go back; the process being repeated in reverse, and so on and on in never ending cycles.<sup>15</sup>

He visualized the motivation for the genesis and transformation of qualitative Being as resulting from the Apeiron's eternal circular motion as generated by the ceaseless hostilities of the cosmological opposites. In this respect, Anaximander is the first in a long line of philosophers to hold the process of being and becoming to be the result of the opposition of elemental substances. In his system, the bases of all physical matter are the primary elements of popular lore, earth and water, or what Simplicius calls "the hot and the cold."<sup>16</sup> The interaction of these compounds keeps the orderly cycle of change going and "moves the heavenly bodies in their courses."<sup>17</sup> This is the result of a regular sequence of cause and effect due to the aggressive interchange of the primal contraries, collectively resulting in a sort of cosmic balance.<sup>18</sup> This equilibrium is highly tenuous though, and is doomed to dissolve when one contending elemental type commits an injustice by usurping another (the sin of pleonoxo--taking too much). In due course, however, each offending element must atone for its unjust aggression and be usurped in turn by its own contrary, so that in the long run, "a balance of justice is maintained."<sup>19</sup> Theophrastus gives this account of the cosmogonic circle of slight and revenge:

And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens 'according to necessity', for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for the injustice according to the assessment of time.<sup>20</sup>

Properly speaking then, Anaximander is a transformist in as much as the Apeiron is a "homogeneous special stuff in its own right, a unique stuff that changes into the other stuffs by genuine transformation, by alliosis."<sup>21</sup> The range of qualities or things arising from these transformations is without limit.

One of the most important implications of this notion is the idea that ours is not the only world, but merely a fragment of the unlimited potentialities of the Apeiron. This belief is expressly assigned to Anaximander by Augustine in his Civitas Dei:

He believed the worlds were infinite in number and they contain everything that would grow upon them by nature. He held further that those worlds are subject to perpetual cycles of alternating dissolution and regeneration, each of them lasting for a longer or shorter period of time, according to the nature of the case.<sup>22</sup>

Again Simplicius writes:

Those who believed in an unlimited number of worlds as Anaximander and his associates did, regarded them as coming-to-be and passing away throughout unlimited time. There are always some worlds in process of coming-to-be, others in process of passing away, they hold such motions to be eternal.<sup>23</sup>

Cicero in his De Natura Deorum, also speaks of Anaximander's belief in countless worlds, an idea more recently supported by Charles Kahn who goes a step further and contemplates the possibility that Anaximander's astronomical cycles were "accompanied by catastrophic transformations of the



of the earth" which were perhaps regulated by the passing seasons of the Megas Eniautos.

Like Xenophanes, Anaximander may have taught that the progressive drying up of the sea would eventually be reversed, so that the earth will sink back into the element from which it has arisen. This would constitute the necessary "reparation" required by a fragment for any type of excess.<sup>24</sup>

It would be idle to pursue too far the possibility that Anaximander accepted the old idea of the Great Year and its concomitant notion of successive World Ages, let alone to speculate as to whether or not this apocalyptic cycle comprehended in any significant way the flux of the Boundless. Nevertheless, just such an idea was ascribed to him by a number of late authorities known to have been familiar with his De Physica. One such commentator was Pseudo-Plutarch who maintained that Anaximander held that earthly "destruction and much earlier coming-to-be have happened from infinite ages since they are all occurring in cycles."<sup>25</sup> Certainly the mythological and literary precedents for this idea were sufficiently well-known to Anaximander to have served as a conceivable motive for him to have incorporated the concept into his cosmological system. But as the aim of this chapter is limited, and as our source material is wholly inadequate for the task, we are unable to satisfactorily resolve this question and should move on to other philosophers for whom the evidence of such beliefs is more likely to bear fruit.

One individual who clearly meets this criterion is

Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 576-480 B.C.), who though generally regarded as a theologian was at least casually interested in logical and scientific questions. As the first "apostle of radical monotheism" he proposed that god, (Heis Megistos) is single and transcendent, eternal, unqualified, unchanging; the ultimate reality. However, he is not a god in the Biblical sense, as he is not the creator of the world ex nihilos, but is in essence, the world itself, or if separate from it, coextensive with it. In this regard, Xenophanes' god approaches the Parmenidean notion of "Being" in which plurality, motion and change are impossible. Aristotle speaks of Parmenides' debt to Xenophanes and emphasizes the monistic dimension of their views:

Xenophanes, who first upheld the doctrine of the one, and whose pupil Parmenides is said to have been, produced no definite doctrine and does not seem to have grasped either of these (types of causality), but contemplating the universe in its entirety he declared that the oneness of it is god.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly enough, Xenophanes reverts to a seemingly primitive idea of earth, or earth and water, as the primary stuff of Being, the substrate of god.

All things come from earth and they reach the end by returning to earth at last.<sup>27</sup>

According to this doctrine, the human race and the cosmos will return to the mud from which they first evolved; consequently, the qualitative entities of the material strata will perish and a new beginning will commence.

This is, of course, nothing less than a formulation of a logical cycle which comprehends a succession of infinite worlds, all perishable, "arising from and returning to the mud which is the cause of change in them all."<sup>28</sup>

Hippolytus definitely takes Xenophanes to be a proponent of a cosmic cycle; in his Refutatio he gives an account of the world's rhythmic rise and fall as a process destined to repeat endlessly:

He says that at length the earth will sink into the sea and become mud again, at which time mankind will be destroyed and afterward a new race will begin to be. A similar transformation he regards as taking place in all (successive) worlds.<sup>29</sup>

Hippolytus recalls that these earthly metamorphoses are the result of the transmutation of the elements earth and water (sea). And though the latter is surprisingly potent, it never entirely supercedes the former, but permeates it, bringing about its instability but not altering its basic nature which persists forever.

It seems likely that Xenophanes believed in a circular pattern of historical necessity in which human history is linked in some way to the revolving circle of time. However, there exists no firm evidence regarding his theorizing on the matter; but after all, as West reminds us, "regularity and periodicity were what he expected to find everywhere. . . ." <sup>30</sup>

Our next subject, Heralitos (ca. 500 B.C.) does not represent a radical departure from Xenophanes' conception of the universe. His central aim is still to explain the

unity of Being and the apparent cause of multiplicity and change. Thus, like his predecessor he seeks a "material substrate, a common corporeal, against which to exhibit alteration."<sup>31</sup> For him the primary substance is the Pyr Aeizon, the "ever-living fire" to which he assigns a directive capacity.<sup>32</sup>

This universe, which is the same for all has not been made by any god or man, but it always has been, is, and will be--an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures.<sup>33</sup>

Heraclitos teaches that fire is the material hypastasis of the Logos. It is divine and immortal and as such it is that which regulates things by flaring up and dying down; it is the "objective and transhuman truth."<sup>34</sup>

As he develops his account of the genesis of things, Heraclitos comes to the conclusion that objects are created due to an exchange of fire, and to this extent he partially retains Anaximenes' idea of the transmutation of substances through a process of condensation and rarification in which fire is transformed into the lesser elements, causing plurality in the perceptible world. I quote here from Heraclitos' own words concerning the cycle of physical changes:

These are the transformations of fire: first, seas, and of sea, half becomes earth and half the lightning flash.<sup>35</sup>

Again in fragment 76:

Fire lives in death of earth, air in death of fire, water in death of air, and earth in the death of water . . . for all things are exchanged for fire and fire for all things, as for gold goods and goods gold.<sup>36</sup>

Finally in fragment 126, he speaks of qualitative opposites which are brought about due to fire's ceaseless quest to consume the lesser elements earth and water:

Cold things grow warm, warm grow cold, wet grow dry, and parched grow moist.<sup>37</sup>

The begetting of element by element takes shape in the natural two-fold movement of the ontological cycle, the so-called "upward and downward path," on which all things change. But the opposing directions of this path are really "one and the same" as the circumference of the circle has, properly speaking, "no beginning nor end"--but is one and continuous. For this reason, Heraclitos envisioned cosmic time as a reflection of the flux of Logos; as such, it was for him a repetitive process of pure change, "everything is in a state of flux and nothing is at rest," is the central axiom of his philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

The key to understanding Heraclitos' cyclic theory lies in his explanation of the genesis and dissolution of things, the continuous action of which he proposes to be the result of the conflict between extremes. His conception of this titanic process is much the same as that worked out by Anaximander, although certain important distinctions should be set forth.

In his model, the destructive phase of the cosmic cycle is characterized by concord or peace, while that phase which involves the birth and growth of things is called war or strife, as we learn from these lines from the Cosmic

Fragments:

It should be understood that War is the common condition, that Strife is justice, and that all things come to pass through the compulsion of Strife . . . War is both father and king of all; some he has shown forth as gods and others as men, some he has made slaves and others free.<sup>39</sup>

The result of this metaphysical dialecticism is a sort of universal stability or harmony, as Kirk explains in light of the eternal conflict described above:

Strife or War is Heraclitos's metaphor for the dominance of change in the world. It is obviously related to the reaction between opposites; most kinds of change (except e.g. growth, which is the accretion of like to like), it may be inferred, could be resolved into change between opposites. At all events, change from one extreme to the other might seem to be the most radical possible. The 'War' which underlies all events and is responsible for different and indeed opposed conditions of men and for their fate after death is called δίκη, the "indicated way" (from the same root as σεικνύμι, of the normal rule of behavior. Heraclitos points out that if Strife--that is, the action and reaction between opposed substances--were to cease, then the victor in every contest of extremes would establish a permanent domination, and the world as such would be destroyed.<sup>40</sup>

This persistence of ontological Being through change is elaborated upon by West:

Hot, cold, wet, dry, are not absolutes: cold things warm up, a hot thing cools, a wet dries, a dry thing gets wet (fr. 42). Living and dead, awake and asleep, young and old, the same thing persists there, for these by changing become those and those by changing become these.<sup>41</sup>

In the transformation of elements there is a slight upward overbalance, so that all is finally reabsorbed in the Pyr Aeizon, whose fiery inhalations and exhalations regulate the macrocosmic cycle of the Great Year, which involved a fully developed theory of recurrent world cycles and universal conflagrations.<sup>42</sup> The earliest testimony

attributing this belief to Heraclitos is found in Aristotle's De Caelo:

That the world was generated all are agreed, but, the generation having occurred, some say that (the generated world) is eternal, others say that it is destructible like another natural formation. Others again, with Empedocles of Acragas and Heraclitos of Ephesos believe that there is alteration in the destructive process which takes now this direction, now that, and continues without end.<sup>43</sup>

Again in book three of his Physica Aristotle quotes Heraclitos as saying that "at some time all things become fire."<sup>44</sup> This idea is corroborated in the Eclogues of Stobaeus and in the commentaries of Simplicius, however, the most straightforward and clear testimony is that of Theophrastos as preserved by Diogenes Laertius, which I quote below in extenso:

All things (Heraclitus says) are organized out of fire and resolved into it. And all things come into being according to fate, and are harmonized by conversion into their opposites. . . . Fire is the element and all things are an exchange for fire and are brought into being by rarefaction and condensation. But nothing is clearly expounded. And all things are born through opposition and all are in flux like a river. And the whole is limited and the cosmos is one. It arises from fire and again is consumed by fire in certain periods throughout all eternity. And takes place in accordance with fate. And of the opposites, that which leads to the genesis is called war and strife, and that which leads to the ecpyrosis concord and peace. And change he calls the way up and down, and the cosmos is produced through this. For fire when condensed grows moist and forms water, and water when congealed is turned into earth. And this road is said to be the way down. And again earth is liquefied and from it water arises, and from this the rest, virtually all things being referred to evaporation from the sea. And this the road up.<sup>45</sup>

D. Laertius himself tells us that Heraclitos believed

. . . the all to be limited, constituting a single world, which is alternately born from fire and dissolved into fire, and the succession of their endless cycle of alternating periods is fixed by destiny.<sup>46</sup>



Censorinus (De Die Nat. xviii, II) states explicitly that Heraclitos believed in a Great Year "with a winter consisting of an all-engulfing deluge and a summer consisting of an ecpyrosis."<sup>47</sup>

Cius anni hiemps summa est cataclysmos, quam nostri diluvionem vocant, aestas autem ecpyrosis, quot est mundi, incendium.<sup>48</sup>

It has been argued by Popper, Cleves and many others, that Heraclitos's Great Year resulted from the "flaring up and dying down" of the Pyr Aeizon "in accordance with the measure of fuel provided . . ."<sup>49</sup> It is not known what this "measure" was, nor, therefore, the length of his Great Year. However some light might be shed on this question based on what Aetius tells us about the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon who based the length of his Magnus Annus directly on the computations of Heraclitos, coming up with a duration of some 10,800 years, which he derived by multiplying the days of the year, (360, a common Greek assumption) by the average number of years in a generation (30) defined by him as the time between "a son's birth to a grandson's."<sup>50</sup> It seems that this is the interpretation on which Kirk bases his view, for he tells us there are "three known cycles involved" in the Heraclitean concept of cosmic periodicity: (1) the human cycle of the generation, 30 years; (2) the shortest obvious natural cycle, the day; (3) the largest obvious natural cycle, the year of 360 days. From the ratios of these three cycles he deduces a fourth, that of the Great Year, which he tells us is merely a human



cycle "bound up with the circular metempsychotic path on which the vaporous Heraclitean soul traversed before it could become heroic, daimonic, or even fully divine."<sup>51</sup>

That Heraclitos believed in reincarnation might be inferred from the comments of Sextus Empiricus in his Outlines of Pyrrhonism, where he asserts that Heraclitos taught that during "life our souls are dead and buried within us, and that when we die our souls revive and live."<sup>52</sup> However, of the Cosmic Fragments themselves, only two could possibly be used as evidence for the belief: fragment 62, where we are told that "immortals become mortals, mortals become immortals" because "they live in each other's death and die in each other's life;"<sup>53</sup> and fragment 43, where souls are described as living in a "ceaseless flux".<sup>54</sup> But whether or not Heraclitos held the view is of little consequence as it is certainly not fundamental to his philosophy, but, if held at all, is clearly subsidiary to his doctrine of universal flux.

To sum up. The weight of evidence strongly suggests that Heraclitos held a cyclic world view comprehending an ontological cycle devoid of temporal distinctions, or phases, and a world cycle characterized by a definite time sequence that regulates the phenomenological world by the earth's periodic births and deaths. Finally, this world cycle represents nothing less than a classic version of the Megas Eniautos complete with divisions into a cosmic summer and winter representing the methodic victories of hot and cold

over each other in the Logos directed war of contraries.

A younger contemporary of Heraclitos, Leucippos, shared the Ephesian's rhythmic sense of periodicity and also his belief that the infinite universe is continuously worn out and renewed. However, beyond these very general similarities the atomistic philosophy of Leucippus presents some very different perspectives from those of Heraclitos. These ideas must be considered.

One will sense that Leucippos, like his forbears, believed he had a theory which would be consistent with sense perception in that it seemed to support the ideas of creation, destruction, qualitative variation and motion.<sup>54</sup> He contended, writes Wheelwright, "that since movement exists there must be a vacuum, but since vacuum cannot really be, it must be identified with not-being (this in reaction to the Eleatics who denied the possibility of void and thus both motion and plurality).<sup>55</sup>

The ideas of Leucippos were amplified by his famous pupil, Democritos of Abdera (c. 470-c. 400 B.C.) who concluded ex hypothesi, that Being is not one, (or comprised of two, three, or even four elements), but infinitely multiple, composed, that is, of an infinity of "atoms" which vary not in substance, but in texture and form; in the words of Aristotle, "having all sorts of forms shapes and different sizes."<sup>56</sup> It is the combination of these substantially similar but qualitatively different atoms in vacuous space that creates the multiplicity of forms



of the phenomenological world.

The philosophy of Democritos and his most distinguished follower, Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) were given precision and extended range in the poem De Rerum Natura by Lucretius, who set forth five primary assumptions concerning the atomic universe, which are as follows:

1. Ex nihilo nihil fit, "from nothing nothing becomes" (borrowed from Parmenides).
2. Matter is indestructible.
3. Being is comprised of atoms and only of atoms.
4. Aside from these atoms there exists nothing but vacuous space.
5. Atoms are indestructible.

Though Lucretius and the early atomists believed that the fundamental nature of the universe was inexplicable, they, nevertheless, offered a detailed explanation for worldly creation and genesis of life in all its profuse variations. Their arguments can be summarized thus: objects are created by the collision and coagulation of the atomic particles, which according to Leucippos and Democritos flowed in perpetual vertical circles (Lucretius differed from this view, holding instead that the atoms rained incessantly downward in parallel motion, though from time to time individual particles might swerve from this downward path, colliding with others thereby giving rise to creation).<sup>57</sup> In either of these formulations, the original cause for atomic motion is not given as there can be no first

cause in an infinite universe--the atoms fall or circle in perpetuum precisely because they have done so according to some "immutable law from eternity."<sup>58</sup>

This same seminal cause, then, may be applied to the production of all things including the world and a certain general order. This earthly genesis is described in a doctrine formally attributed to Leucippos although it was accepted by Democritos and the later Atomists as well. According to this view, the earth came into being because the ever-circling atoms formed a conglomeration in the vortex of the atomic whirl, these atoms form a sphere that becomes the earth. The following lines written by Diogenes Laertius aptly describe this process:

Leucippos holds that the whole is infinite . . . part of it is full and part void . . . hence arise the innumerable worlds, and are resolved again into these elements. The worlds come into being as follows: many bodies of all sorts and shapes moved by abscission from the infinite into a great void; they come together there and produce a single whirl, in which, colliding with one another and revolving in all manner of ways they begin to separate apart, like to like. But when their multitude prevents them from rotating any longer in equilibrium, those that are fine go out towards the surrounding void as if sifted, while the rest 'abide together' and, becoming entangled, unite their motions and make a first spherical structure. This structure stands apart like a membrane which contains in itself all kinds of bodies; and as they whirl around owing to the resistance of the middle, the surrounding membrane becomes thin, while contiguous atoms keep flowing together owing to contact with the whirl. So the earth came into being, the atoms that had been borne to the middle abiding together there. Again, the containing membrane is itself increased, owing to the attraction of bodies outside; as it moves around the whirl it takes in anything it touches. Some of these bodies that get entangled form a structure that

is at first moist and muddy, but as they revolve with the whirl of the whole they dry out and then ignite to form the substance of the heavenly bodies.<sup>59</sup>

The earth reaches the penultimate state prior to its dissolution when it can no longer absorb any more of the atoms that constantly bombard it, at which point, owing to the earth's ponderous weight, it hurtles helplessly toward the gravitational graveyard at the center of the vortex where it collides with other worlds, is pulverized--literally to atoms--and by the resulting torrent is forced back into the cosmic traffic constituting the cosmic whirl.

We may well assume that in his lost work, Megas Eniautos, Democritus bound this destructive process to a cycle of creation and destruction in accordance to the common cyclic traditions of the sixth-century--though we are far from being able to reconstruct the details of such a process. Nevertheless, that he believed in the round of transcendent time seems more than plausible, especially in light of the subtle meaning of the entire tradition of pre-Epicurean atomic thought.

A disguised continuation of the thought of Heraclitus can be found in Empedocles' (c. 500-c. 430 B.C.) theory of cyclic succession which offered a "plausible explanation of the relation between the unchanging real and changing appearances."<sup>60</sup> Empedocles has received very great praise for his comprehensive and sophisticated thinking. We are fortunate in having over one hundred and fifty surviving

fragments of his two poems On Nature and Purifications (the latter based on the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis). Moreover, extensive discussions of his theories are preserved by Aristotle, Plutarch and Simplicius, which, together with a large body of somewhat less reliable doxographical information, enables us to reconstruct the important temporal and spatial features of his cyclic theory of cosmogony and the evolution of life.<sup>61</sup>

His major contribution to Western philosophy consists in his reconciliation of Parmenides' principle of a changeless motionless Being, with the ever-changing appearance of things in our world of motion and flux. To this end, he accepts the Eleatic ex nihilos doctrine and also their denial of void; but he vigorously rejects the doctrine that the universe is one and unchanging--a notion he felt completely out of line with the evidence of the senses.<sup>62</sup> Instead he proposes that the totality of existing things is made up of the four commonly acknowledged elements, or semi-divine "roots" (rizomata), earth, air, fire and water--the only truly "immortal and indestructible things in existence."<sup>63</sup> In doing this he diffused the Eleatic conception of unqualified Being among each of the four elements, thereby preserving the Eleatic dictum that Being is and "cannot not-be" while allowing for divisibility, motion and changeability within the over-all unity of the rizomata. Since the four elements are (i) unchanging and indestructible, (ii) qualitatively unalterable, and (iii) homogeneous through-

out, they are perhaps best understood as the "Parmenedean One multiplied by four."<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that all problems have been resolved. Enormous differences remain, most of them stemming from cosmological dissimilarities between the two systems we have tried to link in effect. But in regards to their shared perception of the unity of the universe--this remains undiminished.

With Empedocles all things are engendered by the temporary combining of the indestructible root-substances which come together and separate at the impulse of Philia ("Love", the principle of attraction) and Neikos ("Strife", the principle of repulsion). These two eternally distinct directive powers comprise the cosmic glue that holds the elements in balance--giving rise to the material reality which is one yet many. The incessant strivings of Love and Strife for domination constantly churns the elemental soup, causing motion and change; throwing the elements together in an infinite number of creations and tearing them apart in an equal number of disintegrations. In regards to this process I quote the following lines from Simplicius:

He makes the material elements four in number, fire, air, water, and earth, all eternal, but changing in bulk and scarcity through mixture and separation; but his real first principles, which impart motion to those, are Love and Strife. The elements are continually subject to an alternate change, at one time mixed together by love, at another separated by Strife; so that the first principles are by his account, six in number.<sup>65</sup>

It is widely believed that Empedocles' notion of the mixing of the elements is the result of his familiarity with

then current medical ideas concerning the due mixture (krasis) of the four humors of Hippocratic medical thought-- which we briefly discussed in the preceding chapter.

While the full elaboration of the details of this process is beyond the present limits of this thesis, certain general features have already emerged which are likely to enhance our understanding of the Empedoclean system; and these we wish now to recapitulate.

As I roughly stated in the last chapter, the Hippocratic doctrine of humors postulates four bodily fluids each identified with one of the four seasons: (i) blood with summer, (ii) yellow bile with spring, (iii) black bile with winter and (iv) phlegm with fall; they were also associated with the four primal qualities, hot, cold, dry, and wet respectively.

The first characteristic of the medical doctrine concerns the flow and free intermixing of the liquids in the human body. A proportional mixture in the healthy body promotes isonomia (an equality of powers). But an overbalance of any one of the humors results in "pain and illness, both by its excessive presence in one place and by its absence from the place it has left."<sup>66</sup> The same principle holds true for the seasonal characteristics. When the elements are duly proportioned, the year-long climate is temperate, but when this delicate balance is disturbed, then nature is marked with excessively hot summers, dry springs, cold winters or wet summers.<sup>67</sup> Polybos, the son-in-law of



Hippocrates, conceived of these elemental relationships thusly:

The body of man always possesses all of these (the four humors, characterized by the four primary opposites), but through the revolving seasons they become now greater than themselves, now lesser in turn, according to nature. For, just as every year has a share in all, in hot things as well as cold, in dry things as well as wet (for no one of these could endure for any length of time without all of the things present in this κόσμος; but if any one of these were to cease, all would disappear; for from a single necessity all are composed and nourished by one another); just so, if any one of these components should cease in man, the man would not be able to live.<sup>68</sup>

This same "equality of power" (or volume) is operant in Empedocles' cosmic cycle where the dissimilar elements are drawn together from their separate states into a condition of maximal integration under the rule of Love, though the contending power of Neikos--which is responsible for uniting similar substances--soon brings about a "maximal disintegration in which the elements separate from one another dissolving the unity of the many; and then grows apart to form many from one."<sup>69</sup>

The maximal integrative and disintegrative states are the polar stages representing the beginning and terminal conditions of the Empedoclean cycle, i.e., the creative and destructive phases.<sup>70</sup> There are also two intermediate or transitional states which are merely incipient phases of the world process of coming-into, or going-out-of being. Thus the unfolding of the cycle consists of four periods: (1) the age of Love, (2) the disintegration of Love's unity by Strife, (3) the tyranny of Neikos and the separation of

the elements, (4) and the re-integration of the rizomata under the reviving impulse of Philia.<sup>71</sup> This exchange is described by Simplicius:

I shall tell a double tale, at one time one grew to be alone out of many, and at another time it grew apart to many out of one. Double is the birth of mortal things, and double their decline. For the coming together of all things both begets and destroys the one (viz. birth and decline), having been nurtured by things growing apart again, fled away. And these things never cease from continuous exchange, at one time uniting all of them into one by means of Love, and at another time carried apart again as individuals by the hostility of Strife. So, insofar as one learned to grow from many, and many spring up when the one grows apart again, in this respect they come into being and have no lasting life; but insofar as they never cease from continuous exchange, so far they are for ever stable in their revolution.<sup>72</sup>

A thoughtful discussion of the philosophical implication of the process is provided in Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle by D. O'Brien who argues convincingly that the starting point for this tetratic round begins during the first age of Love, when all things are perfectly amalgamated in the cosmic Sphairos (which, by the way, betrays a hint of Xenophanes' Heiros Megistos as well as a trace of Anaximander's Apeiron before the intrinsic qualities have separated off). The best evidence for this "spherical" interpretation are the words of Empedocles himself as have come down to us in fragment 27, ll. 113-4, which follows:

In the condition (harmony) neither can the sun's swift limbs be distinguished, no, nor shaggy mighty earth, nor the sea; because all things are brought so close together in perfect circularity of the sphere.<sup>73</sup>

Surrounding the sphere, forming an "envelope", is

Strife, which, in due time, flows into the sphairos producing a vortex-like movement causing the harmony of the Love-guided sphere to disintegrate, thus fracturing the One into many. Simultaneously, "motion begins, and cosmogony, in the natural sense, is initiated."<sup>74</sup> Simplicius quotes Empedocles in this connection:

But when Strife began once more to prevail, then there is again motion in the Sphere for all the god's limbs in turn began to quake.<sup>75</sup>

As the elements begin to separate, air rises above the earth forming the firmament; the waters separate from dry land forming the sea, and fires spring up spontaneously wherever too much water has been drained off. The violent rejection of dissimilar substances causes the embattled sphere to rotate spinning off fiery sparks that become the sun, stars and planets. Next, the first living creatures come into being, but they are monstrosously deformed owing to the overbalance of Strife. There is a description of these freaks in Aeleian that merits quotation here:

Many creatures were born with faces and breasts on both sides, man-faced ox-progeny, while others again sprang forth as ox-headed offspring of man, creatures compounded partly of male, partly of female, and fitted with shadowy (sterile) parts.<sup>76</sup>

In this intermediate age of confusion, Love is gradually driven to the center of the world as Strife, compelled by its rapacious nature, relentlessly conquers all before it. Finally, when Love is compressed and collected at the center of the universe and Strife reigns triumphant, the third age,

the age of Neikos, commences. Under its rule the elements are completely separated from one another and phenomenological multiplicity is sharply reduced to the four substances, earth, air, fire, and water which exist in circles or spheres one within the another.

The idea that the four elements formed four concentric spheres arranged in space is supported by Denise O'Brien and G. S. Kirk based on their interpretation of the fragments and the doxographical literature. They seem convinced that the lighter elements, fire and air, comprise the outer circles, while the heavier substances of earth and water form the inner spheres.<sup>77</sup> Further implications of the rule of Strife are difficult to conjure, though we may reasonably assume that when the elements are separated there can be no motion in the universe, since there would be no clash of differences from which movement could arise.

In time Love retaliates and the world as we know it comes into being:

But now I shall go vack again over the pathway of my verses already set forth, drawing a new word out of the old. When Strife had fallen to the lowest depth of the vortex and Love had reached its very center, then all things come together so as to be one single whole. This unity was gained not all at once, but according to the wishes of the things that were uniting, as they came some from one direction some from another. Yet along with the things that became mixed and unified there were many thngs that remained unmixed--all, in fact of which Strife retained possession; for Strife had not yet retreated entirely from them to the outermost limit of the circle, but in the same degree that Strife was flowing out a gentle immortal stream of blemessless Love was pouring in. Straightway what had previously been immortal became mortal (i.e., what had been unmixed became mixed--an exchanging of paths. And as the mingling

went on, innumerable kinds of mortal creatures in great diversity of forms were produced and scattered forth a wonder to behold.<sup>78</sup>

The creatures of this generation are those of our present world and are formed from the primal matter by Amity, who gives them life and fits them into the complex structure of the universe which it now governs. These children of Love are "whole natured" as they are in possession of "developed shapely limbs, voices and generative organs" due to the proportional attraction of desirable substances.<sup>79</sup> To be sure, Strife is not wholly banished from this creative process--to the contrary--its potency, though diminished, is integral to the existence of life as we know it, as it is the force that sorts out the elements, and prevents Love from aggregating them into the distinctionless matter of the sphere.<sup>80</sup> And though Neikos is still active, its power is in the wane, it cannot produce the monstrocities and fiery heavens that it had engendered when it first assaulted the Sphairos at the opening of the second age (the first intermediate period).

In due course, Philia, having enjoyed the upper hand throughout this period, unleashes a final assault on the remaining forces of Strife which have collected in the center of the cosmos (at the location of our earth), casting them to the outer firmament. Love then "sucks" the elemental fragments into the original unity of the Sphairos by which means the cosmic cycle begins over again.

Empedocles' cyclic theory provided him with a canvass on

which to paint his other-worldly theory of metempsychosis as is disclosed in his religious poem Katharmoi (Purifications). In this lost work he laid out in a direct and systematic manner, his foundations of morality. The important aspects of his theorizing in this regard were apparently derived from his acquaintance with the inner circle of the Orphic-Pythagorean school, for which the evidence is overwhelming. Like them, he was concerned with the idea of spiritual purity and the quest for definition of the morally virtuous life.

Empedocles' argument in briefest form is this: Man has fallen from divine grace because of an inborn propensity to do evil. His soul is destined to traverse the transmigrational wheel until it is cleansed and purified of sin, for only then can it be free to return to god.

The central tenets of his eschatological system are presented in such inspired lines as these from fragment 115, part of which we have previously quoted:

There is an oracle of Necessity, an ancient decree of the gods, eternal and tightly sealed by broad oaths: that whenever anyone defiles the body sinfully with blood, or has fallen into the way of Strife, or has broken his oath, such a man, (when he becomes) a daemon with a long stretch of life, must wander thrice ten thousand seasons shut off from the abode of the blessed, during which period he is reborn in all sorts of mortal shapes, exchanging one grievous kind of existence for another. . . .81

Evidence for his doctrine of original sin has been inferred from fragment 119:

From what high place of honor and bliss have I fallen, so that I now go about among mortals here on earth?



Like the Orphics, Empedocles also believed in something like the universal kinship of living creatures. As we learned in the first chapter, he thought himself to have already existed through five incarnations (fr. 117), only two of which were human; in the following lines, he argues that men of quality will be born again into the highest and noblest forms of the plant and animal kingdom:

The very best men were reincarnated as animals become lions, such as make their lairs on the hill, sleeping on the bare ground; or they become laurel trees with goodly foliage.<sup>82</sup>

Conversely, we may reasonably assume that a greater number of souls, because of their wretched and inexcusable existences, will be reborn from time to time in the visible shape of beasts from the lower orders of the animal kingdom--an interpretation which though plausible and widely accepted, is not sufficiently supported by the fragments and ancient authorities to be embraced without question. Be that as it may, it seems clear that all personalities (described in the Purifications as gods, or as "sacred minds") no matter their vices or virtues, are destined eventually to cease from the cycle of births, as the wheel of metempsychosis is annulled by the dissolution of the spirit, soul and body when all return to the unity (harmonia) from which they had fallen in the cycle's beginning age before all had been sullied by the gross impurity of Strife. To be sure, an immortal part of the soul survives the singularity of the primal sphairos, but it is little more than a non-sentient elemental

admixture, without individual characteristics or identity.

Thus we see that the Empedoclean soul is comprised of two distinct aspects, a material, though mortal, essence and an immaterial part, the personality (this concept crudely anticipates Plato's bifurcated soul, described in the Timaeus, which is composed of an immaterial self--created by the Demiurge--and a mortal sentient self "which is added by the created deities at the moment of the union with the body").<sup>83</sup> At any rate, it seems clear that the soul per se, i.e., in its composite form, does not live forever, but only through one, though perhaps several cyclic durations, though on this point the exact meaning of the fragments are particularly elusive.

Other details of Empedocles' doctrine of transmigration lie beyond the scope of this chapter, though related aspects will be taken up later in connection with our examination of the Orphic-Pythagorean cyclic theory.

But before embarking on that phase of our investigation, we should first emphasize how Empedocles' cyclic theory did in fact play a key role in the Greek philosophical advance, and that the most important of those in that advance seem to have been aware of it, for much of what is written by Plato, Aristotle and the later Stoics concerning cosmo-temporal circularity seems but a refinement of Empedocles' attempts to explain the world in terms of a circular cosmogony. Further, of even greater immediate impact, was his religious thinking, which, although it



coincided with contemporaneous movements towards spiritual awareness through mystical experience, markedly differed from these attitudes insofar as his theories regarding the existence and the nature of the soul were directly a reflection upon his empirically based schema for the natural world.

To sum up, then, in a few words his importance, we might say that his theorizing reflected not only a profound striving for spiritual illumination, but also a vigorous attempt to advance scientific and intellectual knowledge, in which respect he accomplished a truly remarkable achievement.

To continue our story, we must travel back in time some fifty years before Empedocles had reached his prime, to the last quarter of the sixth century B.C., when an independent movement, initiated by Pythagoras, was in full bloom at Croton in southern Italy. They believed in vegetarianism, transmigration, and original sin, and though profoundly religious in their motive, they believed that the divine powers had imprinted their signs and characters in the Book of Nature, and these signs and symbols comprised the formal laws of numerical logic, so that to properly contemplate the Book, one must contemplate the laws of mathematics.

The influence of Pythagoras and his followers is beyond calculation. Already at the dawn of the scientific era his life and ideas were legend. References to him abound in the writings of Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Ion

of Chios and the historian Herodotos; he was to have a great influence on Plato. However, Pythagoras himself left no writings, the famous theorem in geometry which bears his name was actually worked out by Euclid (Elements I prop. 47). Other theorems or proofs popularly attributed to him, or to his followers, are really refinements of principles already worked out by Egyptian and Babylonian mathematicians. Yet these Eastern peoples had cared for mathematics only as required in everyday life, but the Pythagoreans were interested in the logical and speculative side of science--to say nothing of the mystical--and they saw in the discipline's precise definition and logical exactness a way to unlock the secrets of life.

No generally reliable account of Pythagoras's doctrines appears until the time of Plato, when one of the Crotonian's followers, Philolaos, wrote in three volumes a compendium of Pythagoreanism, known as the Akousmata (now lost), which contained--aside from a large collection of riddles, maxims and superstitions relating to the brotherhood's religious thought--much of what has been preserved concerning the group's science based on number, as well as a small but important body of references concerning their views on the physical world.

It is worth reviewing step by step the reasoning by which Pythagoras reached his conclusions, as the essentials of his position become virtual philosophical commonplaces in Hellenistic discussions of the Cosmic processes.

Upon examining the extant bits and pieces of the Akousmata and related doxographical tracts, it becomes clear that there existed within the movement two clearly different currents of thought, one being more concerned with mystical philosophy than scientific investigations, the other, logical theorizing over religious speculation.<sup>84</sup>

Early on, the religious element was clearly preponderant. It was during this incipient phase that Pythagoras--or so the argument runs--adopted and made extensive use of the mysteriosophy of the Orphics, in whose teachings he found a theoretical setting for his world-renouncing religious ascetic. His reliance upon the precepts of Orpheus was so pronounced that commentators in antiquity, and the present, often speculate that the Crotonian brotherhood was in fact a full-fledged Orphic cult and Pythagoras an Orphic initiator--a claim which we cannot try to examine at present, as it has already been sufficiently discussed by others--though comments will be made in passing; but for now I must be careful to limit myself strictly to the considerations set forth at the beginning of the chapter.

The central cyclic doctrines of Pythagoras derived from his proficiency in mathematical studies are these: first, the metaphysical cycle of cosmic events as determined by the quintessential numerical principle of things: second, the cycle of the Magnum Annus, and third, the cycle of the individual soul.

In reading the commentaries on Pythagoreanism, it soon

becomes clear that the bond uniting these three distinct aspects of circularity is number, itself the basic stuff of the universe as they conceived it. Their ethics, religious beliefs and their ideas on time and repetition per se are all connected with mathematics. What's even more important for us, is the fact that for them, the highest expression of numerical perfection was the sphere or circle, which, as the unparagoned model of simplicity, made the strongest appeal to their mathematical sensibilities.

It has been suggested, and I think correctly, that the order of the universe, and especially the circular measure of the astronomical phenomena, served to underline in the mind of Pythagoras, the belief that the supreme architect of the universe did not make this vast mechanism haphazard but completed it according to well reasoned principles of right measure, number, proportion and circular perfection, distinguished by a wonderful harmony. He believed the basic measure of this harmonious cosmos to be discerned in the pulsing of the Great Year.

That Pythagoras held this doctrine is affirmed by Philolaos, who reckoned its duration to be 59 years with 21 inter-calary months.\* According to Schippanelli, as quoted by Burket, the Pythagorean Great Year "comprehended the cycles of all the planets (2 x Saturn, 5 x Jupiter, 31 x Mars, 59 x sun, Venus and Mercury, 729 x moon", which,

\*A 12 year Magnus Annus was proposed by the Pythagorean Orpheus of Croton (c. late sixth-century B.C.), though nothing is known of this system.

according to Philolaos, revolved in concentric circles beneath the heavenly canopy. Here we see that the celestial bodies number nine: sun, moon, five other planets and the sphere of the stars. However, to meet his pythagorean expectations of the mystic number 10, Philolaos theorized another invisible planet, the so-called counter-earth, which exists perpetually invisible to us, bringing his spherical bodies up to the sacred number.<sup>85</sup> (the movements of these ten bodies produced sounds or music, "corresponding to the numerical values of notes on the musical scale, the more distant bodies producing higher notes, the bodies nearer to the earth producing lower notes because their velocity was less."<sup>86</sup> This is the famous doctrine of the music of the spheres.)

That such a system was widely held by the early Pythagoreans can be confirmed by other evidence, such as can be found in the commentaries of Eudemos, Simplicius, and Aetius; however, these authors, while adhering theoretically to the traditional account of the Magnum Annus, were in unanimous agreement that the great astronomical year of Pythagoras--due to its relative brevity--did not encompass a doctrine of historical repetition; nor, strangely enough, was it strictly associated with the passage of the seasons or the agricultural phases, which were, in fact, bound to a completely different numerical cycle. But before discussing this cycle, we should briefly recall the central tenet of the Pythagorean number-mysticism.

As I've said, the Pythagoreans interpreted macrocosm and microcosm through a mathematical-magical system of universal harmony. In this system, the One is the essence of the first cause. The undefined Dyad is the material substratum of the One; it is the basis of multiplicity and imperfection. All other numbers arise from the intermixture of the One with the unqualified Dyad. From these numbers points are formed, and from these points lines. These lines form the contours of geometrical figures in a single plane; from geometrical figures spring forth dimensional solids; and from the co-mingling of the solids issue forth the four Empedoclean elements, which combine to form the sensible world. The four elements are associated with the tetractys, "the source and roots of ever-living nature."<sup>87</sup> The tetractys determined the tetrahedron in whose pairs of adjacent lines can be seen the ratio of one of the three major musical harmonies (1:2, 2:3, 3:4). Moreover, the sum of the units of the tetractys equals the Sacred Decad, which as we have seen, is one of the keys to the secrets of the cosmos.

The seasonal cycle, to which I briefly alluded to before, was given its character by its association with the tetraktys or "foursome" although Aristides Quintilianus compared "the seasons to the concords; such that spring is to autumn the fourth, spring to winter the fifth, spring to summer the octave, so that the four seasons are to one another as 6, 8, 9, 12, forming an eternally repetitive sequence."<sup>88</sup>



Even though the Pythagorean Great Year is totally unrelated to any sequential succession of distinctive periods or stages, it is, nevertheless, vaguely suggestive of what admittedly may have been one of the less important aspects of the Pythagorean dogma, though one relevant to our theme, namely, that of the historical cycle--the duration of which exceeded greatly their idea of the Magnum Annus. Unfortunately, we know next to nothing of this cycle, as the ancient fragments and doxographical data are reticent as to the particular order and appearance of the sequential stages or states in the cycle's recurring pattern of change, and silent also about the directive force behind it--though it seems probable that the ordinal cause was not based on any astronomical or fluvial sources, but rather on a metaphysical oscillation between polar opposites crudely associated with ideas of civilizational wax and wane. The process underlying this development should be observed.

We may remind ourselves that the Pythagoreans assumed the intelligible world to be generated from the undefined Dyad as the result of change brought on by the interaction of contrary forces. That is to say, that the world is created as the result of the combination of opposites. The following list of Pythagorean contraries comprehends the essential compounds that comprise the totality of individual things:

Limit	Unlimited
Odd	Even

Unity	Plurality
Right	Left
Male	Female
At Rest	In Motion
Straight	Curved
Light	Darkness
Good	Evil
Square	Oblong <sup>89</sup>

To this list we might logically add our own list of contraries apropos to the historical cycle, e.g., in terms of government, monarchy-democracy, or of condition, weakness and strength, rich and poor, and so on.

It is not trite to suggest that the oscillation between opposite poles provides the necessity for cyclic motion per se--the very process that imparts to man the sense that all things go round the same wheel and makes things seem in phase or step with each other. Such a conclusion is a priori, as circular motion, as such, is the only motion which is continuous and without beginning or end. The implication of polar oscillation for the historical cycle centers around the idea that identical events recur in infinite repetition between polar extremes such as I have suggested. This doctrine is ascribed to the Pythagoreans by a number of doxograophers; the following passage from Eudemus is generally considered to be among the most reliable statements of this belief:

If one were to believe the Pythagoreans, with the result that the same individual things will recur, then I shall be talking to you again sitting as you are now, with this pointer in my hand, and everything else will be just as it is now, and it is reasonable to suppose that the time is the same now.<sup>90</sup>



We might perhaps be tempted to agree with Walter Burkert, that his "historical cycle" is in some mysterious and inexplicable manner allied with the soul cycle inasmuch as the latter was thought to exist in a transcendent state above the physical reality though it still interacted weakly with the material world. The duration of both were generally assumed to be determined by a cosmic creational and destructive cycle, which, I re-emphasize, should not be confused with the Pythagorean Great Year. In fact, in contrast to the relatively brief span of the World Year, the event, or, soul cycle was variously estimated at 9,000 years--the time mentioned in the Timaeus (23e) since the founding of Athens--or, 3,000 years, which follows the estimation of Herodotos (BK. II, 123); though perhaps the best evidence is based on the calculations of the later Pythagoreans who determined the cycle's length to be based on the cube of 6<sup>7</sup>, or some 1,679,616 years.<sup>91</sup>

It was widely believed by the Hellenistic chronographers that this later calculation, lost then rediscovered, was loosely based on the observations and interpretations of the sage Pherecydes of Syros (c. 605-560 B.C.) who was credited with teaching the doctrine of Palingenesia to Pythagoras. It was assumed that he had learned it from the sacred texts of the Phoenicians, Chaldeans and Egyptians which he was thought to have studied. However, it seems fair to adjudge this legend apocryphal, on the grounds that the various accounts--to which the most conflicting details

had been given by the chronographers--are, generally speaking, mythopoetic in their approach; at best none of them look particularly historical.

Though opinions differ as to the originating locus of the Pythagorean brand of the transmigrational doctrine, the group's tenets became so closely intertwined with the Orphic as to be scarcely distinguishable, and as we have already examined the possibilities surrounding the birth of the doctrine in Orphism, any further inquiry into the matter would be repetitive and should be avoided--though a few general comments concerning the particulars surrounding the so-called Pythagorean orthodoxy are in order.

Speaking specifically on the Pythagorean doctrine, Alcmaeion, a pupil of Pythagoras, held that he had been taught that the soul was immortal precisely because "it was always in (circular) motion . . . like the sun, the moon, the stars and the whole heavens."<sup>92</sup> Conversely, he tells us that the mortal essence, which comprises man's individuality, is doomed to death because it "cannot join the beginning to the end," that is to say, the spiritual self travels the whole cosmic cycle, while the material self travels only a fraction of it. Finally, at the end of its journey, the righteous soul is united with god, while the souls of the wretched are reabsorbed into the primal, undefined Monad, from which they are condemned to begin again their weary journey of incarnations. These impure, or evil shades must atone their sins according to the harsh law

of attribution--the Biblical "eye for an eye"--which determines at the death of the individual, the new body to which the soul is drawn according to its just reward.

In the narrow terms of the development of the cyclic theory in the Greek world, the Pythagorean notion of the cyclic doctrine needs a concluding emphasis only in this respect: that the Pythagorean conjunction of the transcendent spiritual cycle--itself moved by the immutable circle of contrarities--with the endless cycle of worlds, formed an important connecting link with Plato's teleological explanation that reality (Ideas, or Forms) though beyond Being (i.e. anything in the physical world) is still the very thing on which the universal architects modeled the intelligible world in which we live.

Let us now shift our concern to the Platonic interpretation of transcendent Being and its relation to his implicit understanding of cosmic circularity.

#### COSMIC CIRCULARITY IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

As should by now be clear, the dialogues of Plato are a varitable gold-mine of significant allusions to the idea of cosmic circularity. In several of these, notably, the Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic, and Timaeus, the mystic doctrine of metempsychosis is used to validate his belief in immortality and pre-existence of the soul; while in the Laws, the Statesman, the Phaedo and the Republic he strongly implies that historical developments may have a cyclic character.

In fact, underlying the entire spectrum of Platonic thought concerning his perception of the processes of nature and Being is a pervasive cosmological principle of universal circularity; to understand this process we must go deep into several aspects of his metaphysics.

As we learned in the last chapter, Plato's earliest reference to cosmic circularity, though a playful one, or else one expounded purely for didactic purposes, is to be found in his Politicus (or Statesman) where he posits the notion that each complete revolution of the universe is followed by a reversal of rotation as brought about by god, "who returns to the helm and prevents the world from sinking, racked by trouble and confusion arising from its inherent evil."<sup>93</sup> This newly instituted forward motion continues until the divine Pilot retires from the helm, and the universe, left to itself once more, without any guidance from god, yields to its evil propensities and begins its backward revolution again. The forward motion is ever followed by this reverse drift so that the world is eternally divided into two distinct ages; the first, a period of concord and harmony; the second, a period of discord and dissonance; both periods alternating to the end of time so long as the universe endures.

Now, we should not forget that even though Plato believed the cosmos to be intelligible, and therefore explicable, his description of it in the Statesman is--as I've said--despite its rigidity, not a serious one. In fact,

it was not until late in his life (for reasons that we cannot here go into) that he undertook to seriously lay out his vision of the universe. This he accomplished in one of his most influential dialogues, the Timaeus--but even here he warns that the study of the workings of the cosmos is highly tentative at best, owing to the ephemeral and imperfect nature of perceptible things. Nevertheless, one finds in this work one of the most comprehensive views of the universe as a whole--dealing with the phenomena of matter and energy; the earth's structure and the transformations of its surface features, the vast array of heavenly bodies, the soul, the body, and the interrelation of these factors to each other.

To the knowledgable reader, however, it soon becomes obvious that the cosmology in the Timaeus is based on Pythagorean speculation. The hypotheses set forth in the dialogues are put into the mouth of Timaeus who was in fact a minor Pythagorean philosopher, and though astronomical facts share an equal footing with intruding aspects of Pythagorean number-mysticism, I am in accord with the widespread view that the Pythagorean idea of universal harmony played a central role in the astronomy of Plato--and therefore that it is at the very heart of his cosmology.

We are perhaps not surprised to find that according to Plato, the Cosmos is shaped by a Demiurge for the reason that he alone "has the knowledge and also the power which are able to combine many things into one and again dissolve the

one into many."<sup>94</sup> He looked to already existing Forms as models (130c-d) and created the world as an intelligible living creature, which contained in itself "all the subordinate species, members of which inhabit the visible world."<sup>95</sup>

It requires no great powers of reason to understand that a living world must necessarily be possessed of a soul; accordingly, in the Timaeus, the creator arranged just that, fashioning the world soul out of three constituents, sameness, difference and being while forming its non-spiritual body out of the four Empedoclean elements which are in correspondence with the four central geometric solids--the cube, the tetrahedron, the icosahedron and the octahedron. Both the world body and soul are corporeal and exist everlastingly.

Of central significance to his understanding of the workings of the universe is Plato's apprehension of the spherical shape of Being.<sup>96</sup> This based on the rationale that the "axial rotation [of the Universe] is only possible for a body with equal radii," as such a shape "is the only one that can be rotated in a circular fashion," which he perceived to be a clearly superior mode of locomotion.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, he formulated a picture of the universe in the true Pythagorean tradition, as a geometrical figure made entirely of circles and spheres, with a spherical earth at the center. We shall examine this cosmology more closely in due course.

Before, however, we embark on this examination, we must emphasize, as has frequently been noticed, that in the Timaeus, Plato abandons the principle, familiar to us from the Statesman, that god is the reasoning helmsman who keeps the universe in balance by alternating the flow of time and generation. What he proposes in the Timaeus is really that the universe is run by a blindly mechanistic principle, denying the interference of the Demiurge with the laws of the universe. The principle of counter-current cycles is not wholly abandoned however. Plato asserts that the directive force of the cosmos is kept in equilibrium by two equivalent cycles (the zodiacal and siderial, or equatorial) which flow in eternal opposition to achieve a proper balance between the world body and soul. He calls these cycles the same and the different--although they have nothing to do with the cosmico-temporal reversals mentioned in the Politicus.<sup>98</sup>

We should observe and understand the nature and function of these cycles, especially in the context of the observed movements of the sun, moon and fixed stars.

Under compulsion of the Ideas or Forms, the Demiurge proceeds to create the various interacting cosmic and astronomical cycles that order existence with due regard to the purpose and function of each motion. He first "cuts up" the soul-substance and places unspecified quantities of the stuff in invisible banks which correspond to the siderial equator--forming the outside circle (which encompasses Being)

and the ecliptic (the Zodiac) which forms the inside circle. These cross each other in the form of an X.<sup>99</sup>

The ecliptic (Zodiac) is split into seven lesser circular points on which traverse the planets, as indicated above. These two "soul cycles" are, as I've said, animated in opposite directions, the equatorial cycle producing the "movement of the Same", the zodiacal, the "movement of the Different". Together, they animate the whole universe, as everything in the cosmos, from its extreme periphery down to the center of the earth is subject to their direction.<sup>100</sup>

Most important to us is the inner circle, the Zodiac, as this, in essence, is the vantage point representing the reference frame for Plato's astronomical work.

As pointed out before, the wandering planets, whose perigrinations fall almost completely within the circle of the Zodiac, are governed by the contrary motion of the ecliptic, characterized by Plato as the movement of the Different, which is identical also with the actual movement of the sun. This path is called the ecliptic because the eclipses of the sun and moon take place on it. With regard to this principle Cornford maintains:

That the revolution of the Different may be illustrated by the motion of a moving staircase, on which seven passengers are standing. Suppose that the staircase is moving downwards, if this were all, the seven planets, though shifting (afterward) against the background of the fixed stars (represented by the stationary wall enclosing the staircase), would keep their relative positions, all being equally subject to the motion of the staircase.<sup>101</sup>

It seems worth noting, that in Plato's vision of the cycle



of the different, we find a palpable explanation for the clear deviations in the characteristic wanderings and differing velocities of the individual planets. This interpretation of astronomical events fits well with what the best-informed contemporary observers in Greece and the Near East were able to find out about the movements of the celestial bodies and would not be substantially improved until the floruit of the great Alexandrian astronomers, Aristarchos, Hipparchos, Ptolemy and Eratosthenes.

It is easy to imagine why Plato might associate the the planetary cycles with the flow of time, but leaving this consideration for later discussion, I should here point out that the siderial or outer sphere has implications for Plato's theory of the soul which we should know something of.

In the Timaeus, Plato teaches a thoroughgoing Orphic-Pythagorean eschatology. According to his view the Demiurge formed the subsidiary gods which appear physically to man as the stars of the outer circle.<sup>102</sup> From these stars are created the souls of men, which fall, in classic Orphic fashion, from the fiery heights to the earth below where they are entombed in flesh, to which they are condemned to return again and again in order to atone for past errors and seek perfection, as we learn in these lines from the Timaeus:

He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star, and there he would have a blessed and congenial existence. But

if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth, he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he helped the revolution of the Same and the like within him to draw in its train the turbulent mob of later accretions made up of fire and air and water and earth and by this victory of reason over the irrational return to the form of his first and better state.<sup>103</sup>

The duration of the metempsychotic cycle is ultimately determined by the course of the planets which are, as I have alluded, the most visible instruments of time. Such a hypotheses is not new with Plato as the fundamental unit of time had always been perceived in the rotation of the sun, and to a lesser extent, the other heavenly bodies. Consequently, time was understood to be circular, because it is literally made up of the unending cycles of motion that comprehend the circular movements of the heavenly bodies. Plato accepted this idea; for him the wandering planets formed together "the moving image of eternity that constitutes time."<sup>104</sup>

In light of this understanding, we are tempted to agree with Proclus, who, commenting on the Timaeus, argues that Plato believed implicitly in the notion that "time revolves as the first among things that are moved, as by its revolution all things are brought round a circle."<sup>105</sup> It seems clear that the best evidence for this interpretation is to be found in the following passage from the Timaeus:

Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time. The sun and the moon and five other stars, which are called planets, were created by him in order

to distinguish and preserve the numbers of time, and when he had made them several bodies, he placed them in the orbits in which the circle of the other was revolving.<sup>106</sup>

Like the planets that marked the various stages of time, time itself is conceived by him to be an intelligent principle, that did not precede, but is part of creation; it is the really important product of the celestial motions from which it is inseparable. Thus, periodic time is inherent in the world's rational structure.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, as the spheres of activity for the planets are estimated on the assumption that they are in harmony with certain mathematical principles, Plato concludes that eternal time itself, "revolves according to number."<sup>108</sup> It is not surprising that this number is 7, the number of the planets, which, he tells us have intervals in ratios of two and three.<sup>109</sup>

Of far greater interest for us, however, is the fact that the revolving planets determine the duration of the τέλειος ἔριστος, the "perfect year", which is defined as the period in which the planets complete their revolutions and return to the same relative positions in the Zodiac from which they started:

. . . their wanderings (the planets), being of vast number and admirable for their variety, make up time. And yet there is no difficulty in seeing that the perfect number of time fulfills the perfect year when all eight revolutions (the seven planets and the astral sphere) having their relative degrees of swiftness, are accomplished together and attain their completion at the same time measured by the rotation of the same and ever moving.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, once again, we are brought back to the familiar Babylonian scheme of the Great Year, though this time, the conjunction of the planets in the signe of Capricorn does not portend a universal cataclysm--as Plato's "perfect year" is not apocalyptic in the broadest sense of the word's meaning, i.e., in terms of cosmic dissolutions, although strictly terrestrial destructions are suggested in several passages such as this one from the Timaeus:

There have been, and will be again, many destructions of mankind arising out of many causes; the greatest have been brought about by the agencies of fire and water, the other lesser ones by innumerable other causes. <sup>111</sup>

Although Plato informs us that the length of the "perfect year" can be determined, he does not suggest its duration, though it is possible to connect what is said in the Timaeus about it with the 10,000 years mentioned in the Phaedrus as related to the reincarnational cycle--which, we recall, also runs parallel to the cycle of a cosmic year.<sup>112</sup> This interpretation seems to be supported by the oft-quoted passage in Book VIII of the Republic, where Plato speaks of a "cycle of bearing and barrenness for soul and body (which repeats itself), as often as the revolution of their orbs come full circle . . . as comprehended by a perfect number."<sup>113</sup>

According to Adams, this "mysterious number" is probably the square of 3,6000, the number of days in a cycle of 35,000 years of 360 days each as derived from the mystical number 216 (that of the "seven-month's child") according

to a difficult mathematical computation described by Adams (in this scheme, the maximum limit of a human lifetime, 100 years, is a day in the year of the cosmos).<sup>114</sup>

This and other calculations that could be described, have had an important influence on later cosmological and astronomical speculation, and while it might be premature to discuss later antiquity's debt to Plato, it is interesting to note, that the 36,000 year cycle described above, is in essence the Annus Platonicus of medieval philosophy; and is perhaps the theory that influenced Hipparchos of Nicea (c. 190-120 B.C.), who estimated the precessional period of the equinoxes (the continual displacement of the stars relative to the equinoxes) at 36,000 years, a calculation later accepted by Ptolemy of Alexandria, and preceded only in the sixteenth century when Copernicus determined that the planets revolved around the sun, enabling him to explain correctly for the first time, the variation of the seasons and the procession of the equinoxes.

Like Plato, Aristotle thought that time was circular. Much of his thinking in this respect was no doubt made possible by the theorizing of Plato as well as the astral and mathematical science accumulated by the old Pythagorean tradition. It is indeed the principles of Pythagoras as mediated by the Platonic concept of harmony which define his cyclic views. But the synthesis of these ideas in his conception of cosmic circularity are as completely and

uniquely Aristotelian as is his notion of one all-embracing system of knowledge that would include everything that man knows.

Aristotle at times speaks rather vaguely of the cyclic process as if it could be the result of any number of the universe's structural processes. Generally, however, his notion of circular time derives from a well-defined cause. He tells us that motion provides the best unit measuring time because motion is itself circular:

Time is measured by motion and motion by time, this being so because by a motion definite in time the quantity both of the motion and of the time is measured: if, then, what is first is the measure of everything homogenous with it, regular circular motion is above all else the measure because the number of this is best known . . . this also is why time is thought to be the movement of the sphere, viz. because the other movements are measured by this, and time by this movement.<sup>115</sup>

Elsewhere in the Physica, in an attempt to define further the association of time and motion, Aristotle asserts that as "rotation is the measure of motion it must be the primary motion (for all things are measured by what is primary: on the other hand, because rotation is the primary motion it is the measure of all other motions)."<sup>116</sup> He concludes that "rotary motion is the only motion that admits of being regular; the only motion whose course is naturally such that it has no starting point or finishing point in itself but is determined from elsewhere."<sup>117</sup>

In Aristotle's mind, then, all coming-to-be must be cyclical inasmuch as what comes-to-be must in some sense

"return upon itself" such that necessary becoming is a "circular movement" of the various substances of Being "returning in upon themselves."<sup>118</sup>

In his treatise De Generatione et Corruptione, he carries this idea to its logical conclusion, arguing that nature is continuous, circular and eternal because all things return through the same stages to the same beginnings. The essence of this perspective is nicely illustrated by the following excerpt:

The cause of this perceptual coming-to-be, as we have often said, is circular motion: for that is the only motion that is continuous. And it is for the same reason that all other things, the things, I mean, which are transformed into one another by virtue of their powers of acting and being acted upon, e.g. bodies--imitate circular motion. For whenever water is transformed into air, air into fire, and the fire back into water, we say the coming-to-be has completed the circle, because it reverts again to the beginning. Hence it is by imitating circular motion that rectilinear motion too is continuous . . . If then, the coming-to-be of anything is absolutely necessary, it must be cyclical--i.e. it must return upon itself. For coming-to-be must either be limited or not limited: and if not limited, it must be either rectilinear or cyclical. But the first of these last two alternatives is impossible if coming-to-be is eternal, because there could not be any first cause whatever in an infinite rectilinear sequence, whether its members be taken forwards (as future events) or backwards (as past events). Yet coming-to-be must have a first cause . . . but it cannot be eternal if it is limited. Consequently it must be cyclical. There will, then necessarily be a reciprocal relation between what is prior and what is subsequent, so that the necessary occurrence of the prior or the subsequent involves the necessary occurrence of the prior, and conversely the necessary occurrence of the prior involves the subsequent. And this will hold continuously in all cases: for it makes no difference whether the sequence of which we are speaking is composed of two or of many members.

It is in circular movement, therefore, and in cyclical coming-to-be, that the absolutely necessary is to be found. And if the coming-to-be of things is

cyclical, it is necessary that each of them is coming-to-be and has come to be: and if their coming-to-be is necessary, it is cyclical. It is, then, reasonable that this should be so (since the circular motion, i.e. the motion of the heavens, was shown to be eternal on other grounds also) because it is from necessity that things exist and will continue to exist as many of them as are moments of this motion or are due to it. For since that which moves in a circle is always setting something else in motion, the movements of the things it moves are also necessarily circular. Thus because there is such a motion of the upper heaven, the sun also revolves in a circle; and because it does so, the seasons consequently come-to-be in a cycle, i.e. return upon themselves; and because they come-to-be is caused by the seasons.

Why then do some things manifestly come-to-be in this cyclical fashion, as, e.g., showers and air, so that it must rain if there is to be a cloud and conversely, there must be a cloud if it is to rain, while man and animals do not return upon themselves so that the same individual comes-to-be a second time (for though your coming-to-be necessarily presupposes your father's, his coming-to-be does not presuppose your's)? Why, on the contrary, does this coming-to-be seem to occur in a straight line? To answer this question we must begin by inquiring whether all things return upon themselves in the same manner or whether they do not, so that in some cases what recurs is numerically the same, in others it is the same only in species (or form). Now it is evident that numerically, as well as specifically, the same in their recurrence: for the character of the motion is determined by the character of that which undergoes it. Those things, on the other hand, whose substance is perishable must return upon themselves in the sense that what recurs, though the same in species, is not the same numerically. That is why, when water comes-to-be from air and air from water the air is the same in species but not numerically: and even if these too recur numerically the same, yet this does not happen with things whose substance is such that it is essentially capable of not-being.<sup>119</sup>

This premise entails the idea that eternal recurrence is exemplified by the continuum (synecheia), in which the fundamental common character of things or processes is discernable amid a series of variations uniting qualita-



tively differentiated stages, the most evident of which are, of course, the phases of wise old age and callow youth, which represent the opposite poles of life's continuum.

If we apply this concept to the broader realities of the cosmos as a whole, we end up with a sequence of being and becoming that represents the fundamental principle of Aristotelian cosmology. In this larger context, the archetypal continuum is marked off by the contrary poles of the Limited and the Unlimited, and Rest and Motion. In the continuous round of the synecheia, the opposing aspects of these principles combine, separate, and recombine, though their common characteristics, which we call change and multiplicity, remain discernable throughout the series of indefinite variations.

With the idea of the continuum in mind, we may explain Aristotle's general theory of time thusly: The present is the intermediate point between the opposing extremes which are the past and the future. The present is ever moving toward the future and the future ever towards the past "returning upon itself", and like all circular motions it is coming back to the beginning (arche) ever while it is going forth toward the end (telos).<sup>120</sup>

By logically extending these assertions Aristotle propounded a rational explanation for the "moving order" of all things, as he explains in the Physica:

The common saying that human affairs forms a circle, and that there is a circle in all other things that have a natural movement and coming into being and passing away. This is because all other things are discriminated by time, and end and begin as though conforming to a cycle; for even time itself is thought to be a cycle; and this opinion again is held because time is the measure of this kind of locomotion and is itself measured by such. So that to say that the things that come into being form a circle is to say that there is a circle of time; and this is to say that it is measured by the circular movement; for apart from this measure, nothing else to be measured is observed; the whole is just plurality of measures.<sup>121</sup>

Aristotle took over the astronomical system of the Pythagoreans as it had been improved by Eudoxus of Cnidus (c. 409-353 B.C.). He rearranged it to take account of more recent observations and fitted it to his understanding of the cosmic processes. It is not surprising, then, that he embraced a system of worldly recurrence loosely based on contemporary Pythagorean models.

In the Meteorologica, for example, he discusses the cyclic interchange of the sea with dry land as determined by the immensely long cycle of the Magnum Annus which begins, according to the commentary of Olympiodorus, "when all the planets are in a winter sign, e.g. Aquarius or Pisces, and ends, in a great summer when all are in a summer sign, e.g. Lion or Crab."<sup>122</sup> Aristotle follows Plato in rejecting the fullest apocalyptic implications of this cycle, though he warns that the meteorological manifestations are, nevertheless, quite severe: "nations perish and are destroyed", he tells us, though the cosmos is not in danger of dissolution, nor, for that matter, is the race of man threatened with extinction, as is made clear in

this passage from the Meteorologica:

Rather we must take the cause of all these changes to be that, just as winter occurs in the seasons of the year, so in determined periods there comes a great winter of a great year and with it excess of rain. But this excess does not always occur in the same place. The deluge in the time of Deucalion, for instance, took place chiefly in the Greek world and in it especially about ancient Hellas, the country about Dodona and the Achelous, a river which has often changed its course . . . where such abundance of rain falls in the great winter it tends to make the moisture of those places almost everlasting. But as time goes on places of the latter type dry up more, while those of the former, moist type, do so less: until at last the beginning of the same cycle return.<sup>123</sup>

So we see that for Aristotle, the cycle of transcendent time comprehends the realm of human affairs--at least peripherally. Professor Cornford says in summing up his discussion of this doctrine, that Aristotle believed in all seriousness that "the arts and sciences have been brought to perfection many times in history and then almost entirely lost and forgotten in the aftermath of some overwhelming catastrophe."<sup>124</sup> This observation is no doubt based on these lines from the Metaphysica:

While probably each art and each science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions with others, have been preserved until the present, like relics of ancient treasure.<sup>125</sup>

To sum up. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of Aristotle's impact on the subsequent development of our theme, though it is my view--as shared with many others--that his input in this respect is substantially less than the original contributions of others, such as Empedocles or Plato, for

example. In fact, even though much of his cyclic theorizing was accepted as absolute truth by lesser men in the Middle Ages, it seems fair to say that his search for truth in this sense led to no lasting results. This is not to say that his speculation on cosmic circularity does not represent an important link in the continued development of the history of our theme, as it clearly does. In fact, it demonstrates in a particularly clear way the mature estate to which Greek cyclic thought had developed in the Golden Age of Greek philosophy--a ridge beyond which only few peaks will rise.

Henceforth, the theme now under consideration will be especially marked by oriental influences brought about by closer ties between East and West resulting from the conquests of Alexander. The line of development now follows the mystical revivals of the third and second-centuries B.C., and the Stoic theories, which will claim our attention through the remainder of this chapter.

#### CYCLES IN STOIC COSMOLOGY

Upon the breakup of the Greek world at the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., the torch of philosophy passed to the East; specifically, to the metropolis of Alexandria where Ptolemy Philadelphus had founded the great Museum of Alexandria which was attended by some of the most glorious names in science. These scholars and scientists worked to solve not only the practical problems at hand, but

also to discover the one, long sought after law governing all of nature. But it was not in Alexandria alone that philosophers were to be seen; Athens was still the big center of philosophy, and philosophers were to be seen on the streets of virtually every major city in the Hellenistic world--for in the face of an era of precipitous social decline, this was an age consumed with a desire to know eternal truths.

It was during this period that Apollonius of Perga (fl. 220 B.C.), who had studied under successors of Euclid at Alexandria, applied Euclid's methods to the study of the geometry of ellipses, parabolas and hyperbolas. His work, which marks the highest level of Greek mathematics, led to the reduction of the "apparent irregular movements of the celestial bodies to uniform circular movements," incorporating a system of epicycles, "or small circles having their centers on the circumferences of other circles."<sup>126</sup> This epicyclic model, according to Clagett, "was shown to be equivalent with that of the eccentric circles and this equivalence was crucial for all succeeding astronomy."<sup>127</sup> It was crucial also, to the Stoic elaboration of the Cyclic Theory.

The idea was taken by the Stoics and applied to the workings of nature in general, but most clearly to natural changes on the cosmic scale. For the epicyclic model reaffirmed the old circular cosmological system, and explained the workings of the world which men see around them.

The Stoics, more than any other post-Aristotelian philosophy, believed that the cosmos repeated itself endlessly according to the strict laws of astronomical fatalism; for them, the world exists through a series of periodic phases in which the essential characteristics of each stage repeat ad infinitum. Everything that happens in any given phase is bound to happen; it has happened before and will again so long as God deems the universe to exist.

This doctrine was based on the remarkable idea, that cyclic action results from the interplay of two basic entities, the passive material substances (the Empedoclean elements), and the active Theos-Logos principle, or unity--the so-called mighty and continuous fire of Zeno and Cleanthes--which represented god's directive nature.<sup>128</sup> This force, or Logos, partakes of the Parmenidean principle of unqualified being as One and indivisible. By ordering the material substratum (the Many), it shapes the universe and all that is in it. "It is", writes Sandback, that "which makes the matter take form now of fire, now of water and now of earth."<sup>129</sup>

The Stoics took over from Heraclitos the idea of fire as the principle of substance, the creative aspect of god (called the pyr technikon), which blended together the three lesser elements with itself to form the whole rational continuum that is the universe. In this sense, the Stoics believed that god was literally everything; the sum of all substances and processes, so that to their way of thinking

his existence represented the real divinity of Nature--a thesis, as A. A. Long reminds us, to which the Stoics "devoted much great energy proving."<sup>130</sup>

This metaphysical mixing of god and elements represents the Stoic doctrine of "total blending" (krâsis di holôn) which states that all things contain to varying degrees proportionate mixtures of non-atomic material elements as stabilized by the intelligent material agent, "pneuma" the artistic fire of the Old Stoa: "an extremely rarified and subtle substance," itself a mixture of air and fire, that interpenetrates "all matter and fills in the space between bodies."<sup>131</sup> According to Sambursky, "the physical functions of the pneuma were threefold: it makes matter coherent, gives bodies their specific qualities (such as hardness, color etc.), and it serves as a medium for the propagation of physical impulses."<sup>132</sup> It organizes the physical world and the identity of inanimate objects and maintains the whole world's continuous vibratory movement, or "tensional movement" in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the Heraclitean dialectic.

The most remarkable feature of Stoic ideas about the universe concerns their pneumatic theory of cyclic compulsion. This is explained by references to the Pneuma's periodic contractions, as brought about by internal overbalances of heat and cold: that is, contraction due to its cooler constituent air, and expansion, due to the heat of its inner fire. This leads by inference to the related doctrine

of internal tension (tonos, mentioned above) that generates the stability of the continuously vibrating pneuma and, by extension, the universe that it moves.

This process (which is not yet completely understood) is commented on by both Cleanthes and Chrysippus, who agree that the Pneuma's continuous contraction and expansion (as related to the advance and retreat of the hot and cold), produces a "simultaneous movement within it from the interior outward and from the periphery inward, so that it is constantly going forth and returning" or "turning back on itself."<sup>133</sup> The outward movement is responsible for size and quality, the returning movement for unity and existence. The result is a universal tension, which keeps everything in balance, unity and cohesion.<sup>134</sup>

This understanding led the Stoics to their theory that the spatially unified cosmos, had also a close temporal connection. Pneuma permeated the world and ensured its interconnection, unity, and best disposition. The doctrine of the immanence of pneuma taught that providence, as defined by Chrysippus, was itself a "pneumatic force";<sup>135</sup> an activity of the immortal World Soul the highest type of pneuma. This assertion has been remarked upon in one way or another by many students of Stoicism, though Michael Lapidge summed it up best in this statement which will serve as a general background for the fuller explanation of the process below.

Just as all cosmic parts are interconnected, all events are linked to one another. Hence arises the



Stoic's notion of a chain of fate; and this chain of fate as held together by pneumatic force, is the cosmological and theoretical basis of the Stoic's determinism.<sup>136</sup>

To Chrysippus we also owe the cosmological explanation of the Stoic doctrine of providence. This theory was originally propounded by Zeno, if we are to believe the doxographers, though its precise expression and fullest elaboration have eluded the modern world. According to what we know of this account, the events of the world are entirely determined by the all-embracing Theo-Logos unity whose own methodical proceedings are determined, in turn, by the cyclic, or oscillatory generation of hot and cold within the pneuma, which is to say, within the spirit of god, with which the pneuma is associated. All this happens according to god's plan for himself, which is, ipso facto, a plan for the universe and all that it comprehends. Thus "no particular event, however small, takes place which is not in accordance with universal nature and its principle." Any unplanned event would undermine the stability of the universe and would be contrary to the Stoic understanding of the pervasive nature of the intelligent director of everything, the all pervading Logos.<sup>137</sup> And since the principle of universal nature is, according to the evidence of the senses, periodic or oscillatory, so are the broader, i.e., universal, dictates of fate.

In the Stoic view, Fate decrees not only god's will for man, but in a larger sense, his will for the Cosmic processes as well, since the pyr technikon's motion, as regulated by the

pneumatic activity, forms a cycle of contraction and expansion that manifests in the grandest workings of the universe as is evident in the world's periodic destructions by flood and fire, and the round of historical ages.

It follows from the nature of such a supposition, that the unfolding of history was conceived as formed of an infinite series of exactly similar cycles, so in a new world the same events, characterized by the same conditions found themselves in existence again. The various stages, or ages, of the world cycle are exactly repetitive because Fate, "which is responsible for everything, must order the world in the best way possible, and it is plausible that there cannot be two ways equally good."<sup>138</sup>

The Stoics were irrevocably committed to the concept of repetitive world cycles and assigned the process to all phases of existence whether trivial or great. Thus the reincarnational cycle of the soul as adapted from Pythagoreanism was bound up with the cycle of historic repetition such that, at the destruction of the world, the microcosmic human soul would return to its home "from which it had originally emanated," the macrocosmic World Soul.<sup>139</sup> With the rebirth of the cosmos and the renewal of mankind, these exactly similar souls were endowed with the same qualities and possessed of exactly similar physical bodies as had been in existence throughout all previous cosmic rounds. This doctrine is attested to by Hippolytus in his Philosophumena, where he informs us that the Stoics "acknowl-

edge there is a transition of souls from one body to another";<sup>140</sup> and more importantly by Posidonios, who is credited with connecting the doctrine to the Stoic world system and "popularizing the notion among his contemporaries and the succeeding generation."<sup>141</sup>

As we have already learned, the Stoics believed in a Magnum Annus such as that of the ancient Mesopotamians, though other more subtle influences are common throughout their writings as is evidenced by the movement's discriminate use of Pythagorean, Platonic and Heraclitean terminology (unfortunately, Aristotelian influences on Stoic cosmological speculation are not so obvious, a problem compounded by the fact that we don't know what treatises were studied by the leading Stoics of the second and third-centuries B.C., though a general reading of Stoic literature per se, leads firmly to the belief that they had a clear understanding of his major tenets).

The Stoic Great Year was governed by astronomical and fluvial sources--as we might expect. The beginning and end point of the cycle was the great conflagration (ekpyrosis) in which Being is dissolved into fire and the universe is purged of its impurities. According to Lapidge, this cleansing was generally called katharsis, and elsewhere in the literature the word paligenesia is used in referring to the renovation or reconstruction of things as they are now.<sup>142</sup> The extant evidence, limited as it is, certainly gives no clear support as to the orthodoxy of either term,

and semantics are not here important; what is of account is the elaborate array of causes and effects that result in the cyclic destruction and revitalization of the world: these causes--which involve the pneumatic activity, the world's ruling principle, the pyr technikon, the star gods, and the zodiacal round--should be examined.

According to Lovejoy and Boas, the full-blown doctrine of ekpyrosis was accepted by Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippos and Posidonios, but not, according to Diogenes Laertius (VIII, 142), Panaitios. The following passage from Eusebios aptly sums up the cyclical and terminal nature of any given universe, as typically understood by the later Stoa.

The oldest members of this (Stoic) school believed that all things would become aether at certain very long periods, being dissolved again into an aether-like fire. And this occurs again and again. From this it is clear that with respect to substance Chrysippos did not accept the theory of actual 'destruction' as equivalent to 'change'. For those who assert the resolution of all things into fire (which they call ekpyrosis) do not regard this as a literal destruction of the cosmos taking place at immense intervals of time. But to designate this natural change they use the term 'destruction'. For the Stoic philosophers liked to believe that all substance changes into fire as its elemental stuff, and that again from this arises the ordered universe as it was before. And this doctrine was accepted by the first and eldest teachers of their school, Zeno and Cleanthes and Chrysippos. For they say that his (Chrysippos's) disciple and successor in the school, Zenon, suspended judgement concerning the ekpyrosis of all things.<sup>145</sup>

Similar statements are to be found in the Eclogues of Stobaeus and in the following passage from Tatianus:

Zeno has shown that after the ekpyrosis these men will be resurrected as they were. And I say that this must imply that Anytos and Meletos will again bring their accusation, and Busiris slay the strangers, and Hercules perform his labors.<sup>144</sup>

As we learned from Eusebios, despite the apocalyptic nature of ekpyrosis, the Stoics yet spoke of the eternal nature of the universe--this owing to the fact that its constituent elements and principles exist continually throughout their radical transformations. It is only the order of the cosmos that is obliterated by the conflagration.<sup>145</sup>

The dissolution of the world is its creation. All that is consumed by the pyr technikon is purified, reformed and assigned the same role in the new world as it had enjoyed in the old.<sup>146</sup> In the seventh book of his Lives of the Cynic Philosophers, Diogenes Laertius presents a brilliant exposition of the creation of our world and its dissolution:

God is one and the same with Reason, Fate and Zeus; he is also called by many other names. In the beginning he was by himself; he transformed the whole of the substance through air into water, and just as in animal generation the seed (sperma) has a moist vehicle, so in cosmic generation God, who is the seminal reason (spermatikos logos) of the universe, remains behind in the moisture as such an agent, adapting matter to himself with a view to the next stage of creation. Thereupon he created first of all the four elements  
 . . .<sup>147</sup>

This process is repeated in each regeneration of the cosmos just as it had taken place in illo tempore. A slight variation on this explanation is provided by Sextus Empiricus, which follows:

The Stoics suppose the genesis of the universe from

one unqualified body; for the unqualified matter which is entirely amenable to change is according to them a principle of existing things, and when this changes the four elements--fire and air, water and earth--are generated.<sup>147</sup>

In this scenario, as Gould relates it, "during the conflagration the God-substance unity is in its purest state or in a state in which substance in the unity becomes increasingly differentiated until the God substance unity is itself a fully articulated physical universe."<sup>148</sup>

As adumbrated before, the fire is kept from completely consuming everything by the counter-balance of moisture, which eventually quenches the cosmic flame by bathing the remaining material substrata in a final great flood, that washes away impure residue not purged by the fire.

In still another theory, the re-creation of the universe is brought about by the violent interaction of fire and moisture which jostle about the two remaining elements, earth and air (themselves composites of the primary elements) causing motion and creating the multiplicity of things that populate the cosmos.

Other theories might be inferred from existing data, though so little is known of these systems that the available information hardly could serve even as a starting point for a serious discussion.

In summing up the somewhat different descriptions of the cosmic processes discussed in this section, we find two salient features common to all reconstructions--that the conflagration and regeneration of the cosmos is (a) periodic,

and (b) that the cycle of history is comprehended by our old friend, the Magnum Annus. To these points we may add a third: that the internal divisions of the Great Year were comprised of a sequence of historical ages, usually reflecting the Hesiodic scheme, in which the same characteristics of each period are repeated in exactly similar circumstances throughout the rhythmic life of the Cosmos.

For any further discussion on the Stoic ideas concerning the Magnum Annus--especially in connection with the procession of World Ages--the reader will be referred to the previous chapter. However, a few words are in order concerning the astronomical implications of Stoic cosmology.

In this connection, we might perhaps quote from Nemesis of Emmessa (fifth century A.D.) concerning the Stoic conception of the Great Year as one complete lifetime of the universe:

And the Stoics say that the planets will be restored to the same zodiacal sign, both in longitude and latitude, as they had in the beginning when the cosmos was first put together; that in stated periods of time a conflagration (ekpyrosis) and destruction of things will be accomplished, and once more there will be a restitution of the cosmos as it was in the very beginning. And when the stars move in the same way as before, each thing which occurred in the previous period will without variation be brought to pass again. For again there will exist Socrates and Plato and every man, with the same friends and fellow citizens, and he will suffer the same fate and will meet with the same experiences and undertake the same deeds. And every city and village and field will be restored. And there will be a complete restoration of the whole, not once only but many times, or rather interminably, and the same things will be restored without end.<sup>149</sup>

Stoic thought carried the cyclic ideal to Rome where Seneca talks of worldly dissolutions by fire and water, and Marcus Aurelius speaks of the periodic death and restoration of the universe. And though some Roman Stoics later abandoned the circular notion of time, a greater number tenaciously clung to the cyclical concept of eternity that so clearly matched the evidence of the senses. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the Stoic idea of circular time was perhaps the most successful Greek philosophical transplant, with reverberations of it ringing loud throughout the period of the Empire. It was instilled with new vigor in the closing period of ancient thought by the Neo-Pythagoreans and by the highly syncretic philosophic school known as the Neo-Platonic that ran parallel to the development of Christianity and that in a relatively short period, totally eclipsed the Stoic school itself, which had so long dominated the philosophical literature of the Empire. Plotinus, the coryphaeus, if not the founder of the movement, accepted Plato's view of rebirth and transmigration of souls and linked it to the cyclical recapitulation of the cosmic process in which divine perfection, overflowing from the godhead, circled through the graded triad, the One, Nous and Soul (the three hypostases of God) creating and maintaining the spiritual and material worlds. These late philosophies kept alive for a further time the old idea of cultural and historical destiny and history, in which, by and large, the idea of cultural and historical destiny were



shaped by the individual's perception of his present place in the cosmic cycle.

We have defined and examined the more important aspects of cosmic circularity in Greek philosophy--thereby acquiring a formal perspective to serve as an introduction and basis for research on related ideas in the next chapter. Now it is necessary to discuss the theme of eternal recurrence as used and interpreted by the Greek historians, who, as we shall see, believed in historical repetition whether determined by the round of celestial motion, or in the biological sense, applying the stages through which an organism passes to the genesis and fall of nations.

### CHAPTER III: FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Karl R. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. I, The Spell of Plato (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 206.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Hussey, The Pre-Socratics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Jaeger, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup>M. L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Guthrie, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup>Felix M. Cleve, The Giants of Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophy: An Attempt to Reconstruct Their Thoughts (The Hague Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965). I, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup>Kathleen Freeman, The Pre-Socratic Philosophers (1941; rpt., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), p. 61.

<sup>8</sup>Charles H. Kahn, Anaximander and the Origin of Greek Cosmology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Philip Wheelwright, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup>W. I. Matson, "The Naturalism of Anaximander," The Review of Metaphysics, I., 1952, p. 389.

<sup>11</sup>Hussey, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup>Wheelwright, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup>F. M. Cornford, Principium Sapientiae, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup>Pseudo Plutarch, quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup>Wheelwright, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Seligman, The Apeiron of Anaximander: A Study in the Origin and Function of Metaphysical Ideas (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1962), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup>Hussey, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup>Freeman, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup>Cornford, Principium Sapientiae, p. 163.

<sup>20</sup>Kirk and Raven, pp. 103-104.

<sup>21</sup>Cleve, p. 149.

<sup>22</sup>Augustine, Civitas Dei, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, ed. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: An Image Book, 1958), Bk. VIII, ch. 2. In regards to this passage, it is argued by some, that there is an infinity of worlds which are successive and not coeternal to our own.

<sup>23</sup>Simplicius, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 57.

<sup>24</sup>Kahn, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup>Kirk and Raven, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup>Aristotle, Metaphysica, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup>Aristotle, fragment 27, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 33.

<sup>28</sup>Freeman, p. 102.

<sup>29</sup>Hippolytos, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 39.

<sup>30</sup>West, p. 229.

<sup>31</sup>Hugh Delacy, "Heraclitos of Ephesus: Structure of Change," Science and Society, 33 (1969), p. 46.

<sup>32</sup>Guthrie, p. 95; see also Bertrand Helm, "Social Roots of the Heraclitean Metaphysics," Journal of the History of Ideas, 24 (1964), p. 568.

<sup>33</sup>Heraclitos, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 71.

<sup>34</sup>Cleve, p. 23; see also G. S. Kirk, Heraclitos: The Cosmic Fragments (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 316.

- <sup>35</sup>Wheelwright, p. 72.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 103.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>40</sup>Kirk and Raven, pp. 195-196.
- <sup>41</sup>West, p. 139.
- <sup>42</sup>Popper, pp. 206-207.
- <sup>43</sup>Aristotle, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 54.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>45</sup>Theophrastos, quoted in Lovejoy and Boas, pp. 79-80.
- <sup>46</sup>Wheelwright, p. 82.
- <sup>47</sup>West, p. 155.
- <sup>48</sup>Censorinos, quoted in Kirk, Heraclitos, p. 300.
- <sup>49</sup>Popper, p. 206.
- <sup>50</sup>West, p. 155.
- <sup>51</sup>Kirk, Cosmic Fragments, p. 302.
- <sup>52</sup>Wheelwright, p. 85.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 72.
- <sup>54</sup>Aristotle, Metaphysics, trans. W. O. Ross, ed. Richard Mckeon (New York: Random House Inc., 1947), 985b, 15.
- <sup>55</sup>Wheelwright, p. 120.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>57</sup>Lucretius, The Way Things Are, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, Indiana: The Indiana University Press, 1969), ll. 216-231.

<sup>58</sup>Freeman, p. 100.

<sup>59</sup>Diogenes Laertius, quoted in Kirk and Raven, pp. 409-410.

<sup>60</sup>Wheelwright, p. 121.

<sup>61</sup>Denise O'Brien, "Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle," The Classical Quarterly, 18 (1967), p. 29.

<sup>62</sup>Kirk and Raven, p. 324.

<sup>63</sup>Helle Lambridis, Empedocles: A Philosophical Investigation (Montgomery, Alabama: Alabama University Press, 1976), p. 43; see also, Freeman, p. 181.

<sup>64</sup>Leo Sweeney, S. J., Inifinity in the Presocratics (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Neghoff, 1972), p. 138.

<sup>65</sup>Simplicius, quoted in Kirk and Raven, pp. 329-330.

<sup>66</sup>Hippocrates, "The Nature of Man," quoted in Wheelwright, p. 268.

<sup>67</sup>Gregory Vlastos, "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," Classical Philology, 42 (1947), p. 156.

<sup>68</sup>Polybos, Nat. Hom. 7, Jones IV, 120-122, quoted in Kahn, p. 189.

<sup>69</sup>Lambridis, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup>A. A. Long, "Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle in the Sixties," The Presocratics, ed. P. D. Maurelatos (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), pp. 395-399.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>72</sup>Simplicius, quoted in Long, p. 402.

- <sup>73</sup>Empedocles, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 131.
- <sup>74</sup>Kirk and Raven, p. 331.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 331.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 337.
- <sup>77</sup>Denise O'Brien, Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle, (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 155.
- <sup>78</sup>Empedocles, quoted in Wheelwright, pp. 132-133.
- <sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 135.
- <sup>80</sup>Long, p. 415.
- <sup>81</sup>Empedocles, quoted in Wheelwright, p. 115.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 132.
- <sup>83</sup>Kirk and Raven, p. 360.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 219-229.
- <sup>85</sup>Walter Burkert, Love and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism, trans. Edwin L. Minar Jr. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 314.
- <sup>86</sup>George Bosworth Burch, "The Counter Earth," Osiris, 2 (1954), p. 267.
- <sup>87</sup>Wheelwright, p. 204.
- <sup>88</sup>These calculations and all others for the Pythagoreans are taken from Kirk and Raven, pp. 245-247; Wheelwright, pp. 203-205; and F. M. Cornford, "Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition," The Presocratics, ed. P. D. Maurelatos (New York: Anchor Books, 1975), pp. 145-150.
- <sup>89</sup>Philips, p. 47.
- <sup>90</sup>Eudemos, quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 223.

- <sup>91</sup>Burkert, p. 250.
- <sup>92</sup>Alcmaeon, quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 223.
- <sup>93</sup>Plato, Statesman 273d-e.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., 273d-e; see also, J. B. Skemp, Plato's Statesman (New Haven, conn.: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 89, n. 2.
- <sup>95</sup>Plato, Timaeus in The Collected Dialogues, p. 68.
- <sup>96</sup>F. M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, (New York: Harcourt Brace and World Inc., 1937), p. 40; see also, Plato, Timaeus, 32c-34b.
- <sup>97</sup>R. J. Mortley, "Plato's Choice of the Sphere," Revue Des Etudes Grecques, 82 (1969), p. 345.
- <sup>98</sup>F. M. Cornford, Plato's Timaeus, The Library of the Liberal Arts, pamphlet Number One Hundred and Six (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1959), p. 27.
- <sup>99</sup>Gregory Vlastos, Plato's Universe (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 31.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>101</sup>Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, pp.82-83.
- <sup>102</sup>Plato, Timaeus, 39e-40b.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., 42a-d
- <sup>104</sup>Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, p. 104.
- <sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 104.
- <sup>106</sup>Plato, Timaeus, 38a.
- <sup>107</sup>A. E. Taylor, A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 176.
- <sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

- 109 Taylor, p. 217.
- 110 Plato, Timaeus, 39d.
- 111 Plato, Timaeus, 22c; see also, Laws Bk. III, 677a.
- 112 Plato, Phaedrus, 249a.
- 113 Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, 546b.
- 114 Taylor, p. 217.
- 115 Aristotle, Physica, in The Works of Aristotle, trans. R. P. Hardie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930), Bk. IV, 223b, l. 15.
- 116 Ibid., Bk. VIII, 9256e.
- 117 Ibid., Bk. VIII, 9265b.
- 118 Aristotle, De Generatione et Corruptionis, in Works, 338a.
- 119 Aristotle, quoted in Lovejoy and Boas, pp. 170-171.
- 120 Murray Green, "Aristotle's Circular Movement," The Review of Metaphysics, 19 (1965), p. 132; see also, Michael Kaplan, Aristos and circularity," Greek and Byzantine Studies, 16 (1975), pp. 1-31.
- 121 Aristotle, Physica, 223b, 25.
- 122 Cornford, Principium Sapientiae, p. 183, n. 2.
- 123 Aristotle, Meteorologica, 339b, 25.
- 124 Cornford, Principium Sapientiae, p. 183.
- 125 Aristotle, Metaphysica, 352b, 15-355a, 25.
- 126 Marshall Clagett, Greek Science in Antiquity (London: Collier-MacMillan Ltd., 1955), p. 118.
- 127 Ibid., p. 118.



128 Josiah B. Gould, "Being, the World, and Appearance in Early Stoicism and other Greek Philosophies," The Review of Metaphysics, 28 (1974), p. 277.

129 F. H. Sandbach, The Stoics, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1975), p. 73.

130 A. A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 149.

131 S. Sambursky, "On Some References to Experiences in Stoic Physics," Isis, 49 (1958), p. 332.

132 Ibid., p. 332.

133 A. A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, p. 141.

134 Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," The Stoics, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 176.

135 Ibid., p. 176.

136 Ibid., p. 176.

137 A. A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, p. 177.

138 Sandbach, p. 79.

139 Head and Cranston, p. 219.

140 Hippolytos, quoted in Head and Cranston, p. 219.

141 Posidonios, quoted in Head and Cranston, pp. 219-220.

142 Lapidge, p. 188.

143 Eusebios, quoted in Lovejoy and Boas, p. 85.

144 Tatianos, quoted in Lovejoy and Boas, p. 85.

145 David E. Hahn, The Origins of Stoic Cosmology, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), pp. 191-192.

146Lapidge, p. 183.

147Diogenes Laertius, Lives, trans. C. H. Oldfather  
(London: W. Heinemann, 1933), Bk. VII, ll. 135-136.

148Sextus Empiricus, quoted in Gould, p. 278.

149Bould, p. 276.

150Nemissus, quoted in Lovejoy and Boas, p. 86.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DESTINY: CYCLES IN HISTORY

In this chapter, a content analysis of Greek historical literature from the fifth through the second centuries B.C. will reveal that most Greek historians, in their search for universals, accepted the thesis that the succession of events that comprise the normal life of society follows the circular pattern. Such a pattern explains how things are now, how they used to be, and how they will be in the future. More importantly, this view is mediated by the doctrine of cultural degeneration which contributes the primitivistic perspective suggesting that the story of man is one of progressive decadence from the dawn of time to the present age, and that the cumulative result of all that has transpired necessarily ends in pain and sorrow

I propose to analyze the development of the historical cycle not as an independent outgrowth of Greek cyclic theory per se, but as arising out of the very structure of Greek thought itself, though, of course, certain ideas under previous consideration will be reviewed from time to time in order to clarify points under current deliberation. As the analysis unfolds in the course

of this chapter we shall find that the historian's prose is substantially free of the mystical cant that has typified much of our previous discussion, and has little directly in common with the philosophers and their amorphous cosmologies--although the impact of philosophy on those who wrote history was very real. After all, it seems obvious that it would have been nearly impossible for the historians to have developed their empirical theories had it not been for their awareness of philosophical trends and advances in the biological sciences. Both of these developments were in fact the results of only slightly different approaches to attempt to grasp a better understanding of man's environment and his own place in it, and are in this respect really no different than those intellectual tools employed by the historian in his effort to discover similar truths about man's relationship to his surroundings. Obviously, both are equally legitimate conceptual perspectives that set up certain configurations and diagnostic images in hopes of constructing easily recognizable and ideal models that fulfill the observer's deepest desire for an un-cluttered image of reality. In our systematic search for the psychical or cognitive tendencies underlying the Greek historian's perceptions of social and political reality, we shall necessarily encounter many elements of the scientific mode of thought; however, no further attempt will be made to formally identify their position within the

broad confines of our present subject.

Before beginning our discussion, some few words by way of clearing up any misunderstandings that might arise out of the use of the phrase "historical cycle" are in order.

Putting the point in a general way, we shall define the phrase "historical cycle" in terms more broadly inclusive than say in the loosely delineated sense of the chronologically repetitive course of events; and will herein take it to mean a carefully delimited, internally caused circular movement that marks the rise and fall of all social phenomena in unison. Consequently, we will include in our discussion the more general cycles of action and reaction adumbrated by Herodotos and Thucydides, as well as the more sharply defined cycles of events such as the political or constitutional cycles propounded by Plato and Polybius.

Whom should we make our starting point? As in the last chapter, our subject can be chosen without much difficulty, as Herodotus of Halicarnassus in Asia-Minor (c.484-c. 420 B.C.), is surely, despite his many shortcomings, the deserved bearer of the august title, the "father of history". His nine books are the earliest extant Greek prose, and in them he transcends the often childish musings of the genealogical poets, mythopoi and logographers who were still recounting the events of the day in the trappings of fable, which entertained the imagination but never achieved a status

higher than that of "a more or less clarified and arbitrarily rationalized mythography."<sup>1</sup> With Herodotos, chronographic literature rose to a new level of historical thought that left the credulous and uncritical mythopoetic and genealogical presentations of human affairs far behind.

The main subject of his History, as every schoolboy should know, is the Persian war of invasion, yet the author presents us with a "narrative of the relations between the Greeks and the oriental powers from the accession of Croesus to the recapture of Sestos in 478 B.C."<sup>2</sup> He often diverges from this account, however, to bring us a wealth of historical, geographical and antiquarian knowledge perhaps indicating an original intention to recount more than a history of the invasion of Xerxes, but to present a grand impression of the supreme romance of human achievement and the dark tragedy of human failings in a universal cultural history. However, the abruptness of its close, together with numerous hints suggesting his failure to revise his work thoroughly show that it was not entirely completed at the time of his death.

At any rate, in analyzing what we do have of his mighty history, we note that Herodotus was something of a visionary who felt comfortable dealing with abstractions; he more often than not attributed the great events of history to larger and remoter causes

than individual motives. This ability, remarkable in its time, allowed him to formulate a general theory "about the rise and fall of civilizations"; and, like the early Greek philosopher-scientists, he sought to find a single explanation of events--a kind of law of history. He thought he had found the basis of this law in his observation that history reveals a reoccurring cycle of rise and decline in all great powers--a cycle of intemperance and austerity, or more precisely, of hybris and nemesis: "One power rises to great heights and then decays; into the vacuum thus created, another power moves, only to undergo the same pattern of rise and fall."<sup>3</sup> This process comprehends the biography of all cities great and small; says Herodotos:

For the cities which were formerly great have most of them become insignificant; and such as are at present powerful, were weak in the olden times.<sup>4</sup>

Later in Book I, he informs us that the pulsating flux of hybris and nemesis is bound up with a combination of other commonplaces of Greek cyclical thought, such as the "natural law" of birth, growth, decline, death and the mysterious cosmic wheel:

A wheel on which the affairs of men revolve, and that its movements forbid the same man to be always fortunate.<sup>5</sup>

However, perhaps his best explanation of this hybris and nemesis cycle is found in Book VII (Ch. 10) where Artabanus, Xerxes' uncle, boldly warns the Shah that in his desire to subdue the Greek states can be seen

the sin of hybris:

See how god with his lightning always smites the bigger animals, and will not suffer them to wax insolent, while those of lesser bulk chafe him not. How likewise his bolts fall ever on the highest houses and the tallest trees? So plainly does he love to bring down everything that exalts itself . . . Thus often a mighty host is discomfited by a few men, when god in his jealousy sends fear or storm from heaven, and they perish in a way unworthy of them. For god allows no one to have a high thought but himself. Again, hurry always brings about disasters from which huge sufferings are want to arise.<sup>6</sup>

In chapter 16 Artabanus continues his argument:

For myself, it has irked me not so much to be reproached by you, as to observe, that when two courses were placed before the Persian people, one of a nature to increase their pride, the other to humble it, by showing them how hurtful it is to allow one's heart always to covet more than one at present possesses, you chose that which was the worse both for yourself and for the Persians.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear, then, that Herodotos believed that the pervading influence on the rise and fall of national fortunes was determined by the jealous interferences of the gods, who in exercising their government according to fixed laws based on principles of justice and retribution, punished excessive success with a violent reaction to the opposite extreme through the blind process of nemesis which inexorably elevates the weak and brings down the mighty. This is the message at the very heart of his story: "it is what Herodotos wanted the statesman of the present and the future to learn from his History--that no nation can go beyond certain limits and survive."<sup>8</sup>



The idea of vengeance in the Persian Wars gives tone and color to the events that are bound up with the cycle of time which, however, is only the skeleton of wordly action.

This mysterious process explains the disaster of Croesus, as Herodotos tells us in Book I, 34:

After Solon had moved away a dreadful vengeance, sent of god, came upon Croesus, to punish him it is likely, for considering himself the happiest of men.

It also explains indirectly the leniency of Cyrus, as de Romilly explains: "Solon fournit le secret de cette vengeance, et les oracles redus a Cresus lui servent d'instrument."<sup>9</sup> Herodotos also finds in this process a possible--though, admittedly unlikely explanation for the war between the Greeks and Persians. He says that according to knowledgable Persians, the blame for the conflict actually rested with the Phoenicians of old, and by a curious conflation of "incidents and counter-incidents" grew to include the whole complex of Persian and Greek peoples and allies.<sup>10</sup> J. B. Bury, I believe, strikes at the heart of the matter when he tells us that:

The whole passage reads as if it might be the condensation of a friendly discussion between a Greek and a Persian as to the responsibility for the Persian war. It was undeniable that the Persians and not the Greeks have been the aggressors; the conquest of Ionia by Cyrus has been the beginning. The Persian advocate could only remove the blame from Asia by going farther back.<sup>11</sup>

In order to assess the whole situation better, Bury, casts the argument in the form of a dialogue, which I quote here in extenso:

Persian. The Greeks had no business in Asia. They belong to Europe, and they should have stayed there. Their expedition against Troy was the first trespass; it began their encroachments on a continent which belongs to Asiatic peoples of whom the Persians are the heirs.

Greek. Oh, but you are forgetting that on that occasion the Trojans were the offenders; Paris carried off Helen.

Persian. That was no sufficient reason; but even if it were, the act of Paris was only a reprisal for the Greek crimes of carrying off Medea and Europa. And the Asiatics were far too sensible to make a causa belli of such foolish elopements.

Greek. Well, if you go back so far, you must go back further still. What about the rape of Io from Argos?

Persian. Well, yes, I admit it. That was a Phoenician business, and we Persians must allow that the Phoenicians began the mischief, though we hold you really responsible, through your folly in taking such an affair seriously. Only fools would make war on account of such escapades. Men of the world know that, if these women were carried off, they were not more reluctant than they should be.<sup>12</sup>

However, Herodotos, who seems to doubt the facts of myths in general, seems particularly loath to accept without question the veracity of this quaintly naive tale.<sup>13</sup> Instead, he offers his own interpretation of events which can only briefly be touched on here. He finds the true cause of the war by reconciling the idea of nemesis with a generally valid historic chronology.

In doing so, he explains how king Croesus of Lydia inherited a rich empire from his grandfather Gyges and marshalled the resources of that empire against the people of Persia. In executing this plan, he commits the sin of hybris which results from his ignoring the bounds of moderation. This transgression calls down the inevitable wrath of god who visits upon Lydia a great affliction that brings her destruction.<sup>14</sup> "Then Persia stepped into the shoes of both the Assyrian Empire and Lydian Empire and succeeded in uniting much of Asia, including part of India. Through ever-greater conquests and enormous concentration of power in the hands of one man. the king of Persia, the whole civilization committed hybris, leading the Persians to disaster under their kings Darius and Xerxes. Persian expansion was halted at the borders of Europe by the Greeks who thus acted as the people chosen by the gods to teach the Persians the lesson of moderation."<sup>15</sup>

Like Herodotos, Thucydides was obsessed with finding an explanation for the rise and fall of great men and nations. With him the idea of nemesis became curiously intertwined with the biological analogy and was in his writings divested of all spiritual implications. He believed that nations, like living beings, are born, mature, degenerate with age, and then die, making way for new life. What exactly he means by this is a much debated question, though it seems obvious that his

conception of nemesis, which appears so often in his pages, is far more complex than that held by Herodotos. We might characterize it as a natural law that manifests in the political realm when any of a nation's constituent parts, such as one of its social classes, goes beyond its proper limits and creates an imbalance that sickens the entire nation unto death.\*

The actual background of Thucydides, as far as we are able to determine, derives from what Bury has called the "intellectual revolution which we associate with the comprehensive name of the Sophists, though Anaxagoras, tradition tells us, is said to have been his tutor."<sup>16</sup> More importantly, his methodology bears a striking parallel "to the teachings of the so--called Hippocratic school of Medicine," the relevant aspects of whose theories we should briefly recall.<sup>17</sup>

As we have learned, the implicitly philosophical Hippocratic corpus of medical knowledge sought not only to discover the secrets of the human body, but also to shed some light on the nature of the human mind "which appears to have been generated out of the body's more developed activities and yet is able to win some degree of control over it. Thus medical theory on the one hand is rooted in human needs, sometimes needs of

\*This sickness in human society he calls stasis. A famous description of it is included in book three, in the passage on the Corcyraean recolution.<sup>19</sup>

the greatest urgency, while on the other hand it points towards unsolved questions about human life which in their fuller implications are metaphysical."<sup>18</sup>

Many details might be added. But the general picture should now be clear: it is one that clearly belongs to the discussion of the Greek perception of physical and metaphysical circularity. Its position in this tradition is remarkable in many ways though the physicians arrived at their conclusions about the circularity of life through an empirical process no different than that employed by the historians. The physicians saw the cyclical process of degeneration and rebirth common to all living things, and understood the circular generation of life and death to be a perfect pattern explaining the endless disturbances and restorations that comprise the balance of life. Each organism tends to play its part in this life cycle in a healthy manner so long as its own constitution is marked by an equality of power, a balance called isonomia. A biological transgression paralleling Thucydides' conception of hybris occurs when one of an organism's internal powers--such as one of its humours--reaches beyond its just limits of due mixture (krisis) appropriate to the species of which it is a member, causing an imbalance that hastens the decline of the creature by destroying the balance that is health.

Thucydides shared the Hippocratic conviction that the nature of the human mind was as predictable and capable of explanation as the human body. He reasoned that states were analogous to a higher form of organism, and as such were capable of revealing their individual states of health to anyone capable by dint of discernment of formulating a prognosis on the basis of recognizing commonly agreed to symptoms evident in the life-cycles of all nations. "He wrote," says Hamilton, "because he believed that men would profit from a knowledge of what brought about the ruinous struggle (the Peloponnesian war) precisely as they profit from a statement of what causes a deadly disease."<sup>20</sup>

This analogy is most fully drawn in book three of his history, where Thucydides offers an account of the violent opposition between the democrats and oligarchs that plagued the various city states in their ceaseless vying for power. For him, this conflict was exemplified by the Political struggle of Corcyra. It is important not to misunderstand the analogy. In his mind, the two factions represent the normal constituent elements of the basic socio-political organism, the polis. When either of these parts exceeds its just bounds by resting control from its opposite it is in effect committing hybris. This is the story as Thucydides tells it:

In their struggles for ascendancy nothing was barred; terrible indeed were the actions to which they committed themselves, and in taking revenge

they went farther still. Here they were deterred neither by the claims of justice nor by the interests of state; their one standard was the pleasure of their own party at that particular moment, and so, either by means of condemning their enemies on an illegal vote or by violently usurping power over them, they were always ready to satisfy the hatreds of the hour. 21

This is an extremely condensed bit of history; but it contains the most comprehensive statement in connection with the theory of hybris to be found anywhere in the pages of Thucydides. It requires only the briefest comment to make it comprehensibly.

Put briefly, both parties are guilty of hybris, and hybris, as we have learned, provokes destruction. The instruments of ruin are revolution and the economic want which it brings. This class turmoil, which began at Corcyra, soon spread throughout the Greek world and was the ultimate cause of the disastrous war between Sparta and Athens that so violently convulsed the ancient world and brought the curtains down on the golden age of Greece.

As the above comments perhaps suggest, Thucydides equated economic prosperity in a nation with health and even justice; while war, and the stasis it engendered, with decline and death.<sup>22</sup> Thucydides observes that

In times of peace and prosperity cities and individuals alike follow higher standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have to do what they do not want to do. But war is a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of the actual circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

Here it is time to pause and take our bearings. Thucydides' sweeping generalizations serve as considerable justification for identifying him as a proponent of the belief in political hybris. In certain important respects he seems to be echoing Herodotos, who promulgated the tradition. After all, as de Romilly has said, "political hybris provides a pattern which is just as clear and neat as religious hybris."<sup>24</sup> Both are obviously linked to national rise and fall and both imply an un-ending cycle of action and reaction. In fact, it has been suggested that he derived the basis of his theory from Herodotos. But the scientific and rational tenor, and over-all originality of Thucydides' doctrine make such a notion extremely implausible.

As mentioned above, the simple pattern of hybris and revenge is rooted in the very nature of life. Thus, once again we are faced with the biological analogy. And in this simile too, the contrary aspects of political health and stasis are merely important and peculiarly symbolic manifestations in the usual unfolding of a state's life-cycle. "The revolution of the cycle Thucydides watched," claims Hamilton, "brought results so terrible that he believed an account of them would be a warning which men could not disregard."<sup>25</sup> The constant nature of nations (which mirrored the



constant nature of Man) meant for Thucydides, that the application of principles concerning the governance of human activities might be applied to the circumstance apertaining the history of a country--circumstances which are bound to repeat eternally and thus serve as a warning to those perspicacious enough to recognize the danger signs and perhaps save themselves or rescue their fellow countrymen from otherwise almost certain doom. This perception is implied again and again but specifically referred to by Thucydides only once:

It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same way, be repeated in the future.<sup>26</sup>

The cyclic conception of history implied above is also adumbrated in this passage which illustrates the symbiotic character of human nature and historical action:

In the various cities these revolutions were the cause of many calamities--as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery, and, as different circumstances arise, the general rules will admit of some variety.<sup>27</sup>

To be sure, no one among those attributing a cyclic view to Thucydides would question the fact that for him the cyclic flow of history was temporally in-exact; that is to say, that events did not repeat themselves exactly according to a perfectly articulated circular pattern. Nothing could be further from the truth. And though

modern critics have expressed an astonishing variety of opinions about the validity of Thucydides cycle, it is my firm conviction that he believed, like Herodotos, that the processes of history themselves, by their workings, produced a cycle of events in which only the most broadly identifiable characteristics (such as the zeniths and nadirs of national power) are faithfully repeated according to natural laws. Obviously, such a cycle does not follow the same immutable laws associated with the great cosmic whirls, but merely form ideational skeletons around which the events of history may be arranged according to their chronological unfolding. Thus, the cycle's veracity is real only insofar as it encompasses developments of wide occurrence.

With this in mind, we come to understand that no war, no matter what its apparent gravity, could settle the ultimate problem of "power and tyranny", not even the seemingly catastrophic Peloponnesian war, which, according to Grene, "merely removed one tyrant from power and substituted another." He goes on to explain the case of the causes of the Peloponnesian war

Circumstances compounded the concentration of power, and the human reaction to this intensified the consequences of such concentration. The war of one state against another, and of one class against another within the state at the favorable opportunity and the individual and anarchic war of one man against his society, when poverty or plenty drive him by "constraint" or by "pride and insolence" (e.g. the career of Alcibiades,) are parts of the entire chain of necessity with which everyone and every state is fettered.<sup>28</sup>

It must be admitted, that aside from the passages concerning re-occurring events already quoted, it is futile to look in the pages of Thucydides for any systematic statement of a cyclic theory. His belief in the circular flow of human events is never explicitly stated; merely implied.

Some have read this view out Thucydides altogether. They detect no such overtones and argue that his notion of chance (tyche), or coincidence, makes the future completely unpredictable--thereby denying the proposition that history would in any sense repeat itself, or so they would believe.

I cannot refrain from concluding that this position is unwarranted; the characteristic unpredictability in the idea of chance does not at all contravene the necessity of the cycle, especially in the indefinite form which it assumes in Thucydides. For him chance is merely an unknown quantity that modifies the internal details of the skeletal framework of the historic cycle. He sees the effects of chance on the cyclic process in much the same manner as the Hippocratic physicians perceived the impact of the overbalance of a bodily humor upon the body; so as long as the deviance was not too severe, the process would right itself, and the cycle of nature would continue. Needless to say, the internal details of each phase of the historic cycle may very well be affected by chance, but the broadly

repetitive rising and falling movement of the cycle remains substantially unchanged. It moves on endlessly, chasing itself in a metaphysical game of tag in which growth and decay are the players, one pursuing the other, trying to make it like itself by overcoming its opposite. And even if the internal action of the cycle's stages are unique, and the temporal intervals inconsistent, the cyclic paradigm still holds its relentless sway over the affairs of men. For if it is true that "nothing is stronger than Necessity,"<sup>29</sup> then it is equally incontestable that "Necessity is stronger than human nature,"<sup>30</sup> and the cycle, as a biological necessity, required by the laws of a universe in constant revolution, will always govern the general flow of human affairs.

It will not have escaped the reader's notice then, that Thucydides believed, like most Greeks of his age, that Nature itself was the real teacher of mankind. Consequently, he believed that the study of nature could unlock the greater secrets of the phenomena of life in general; and though his History was not a "horoscope", for the historian it could illuminate principles loosely predictive of the political, economic and social changes that seem to comprehend the ordered realm of human events.<sup>31</sup>

Like Thucydides, Plato believed that the structure

of power could make clear certain truths about government, and like Thucydides also, he understood the state to be analogous to the individual. And though commentators have been rather baffled by Plato's conception of history, it seems clear that his "philosophy of history" was largely concerned with the immutable "laws or principles of which human history exhibits the working."<sup>32</sup> In light of this it might fairly be said, that Plato was concerned with history only in the interest of philosophy, though as a philosopher he was more than any other concerned with political theory.<sup>33</sup>

The central tenet of Plato's historical theory concerns the idea that all political organizations are destined to decline because of the "churning appetites" of society's disenfranchised elements, which he defined as those classes or factions not now in possession of power.<sup>34</sup> Plato applies this theory to a quasi-historical study of political communities which takes shape in the form of an unending cycle of constitutional revolutions in which successive governments typified by certain constitutional archetypes (timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannic), which according to him, follow one another in an undending chain of grievances.

That this succession of political constitutions represents a serious delineation of cyclic historic action can be logically inferred from the fact that

his scheme is a logical implication of his view of nature which is demonstrably cyclic--though I am not here asking the reader to accept this as an a priori assumption, and will adduce supporting evidence of this claim in due course.

But first, we need to trace in general outline Plato's idea of an ideal state, with a special view to understanding its psychological implications for mankind in relation to the state and the state in relation to the natural order.

His general plan of political devolution is presented in Book V of the Republic.

In the Republic, his most famous work, Plato addresses himself not to the philosophy of history but to the quest for the highest ethical ideals; what is the true nature of justice? Is there a reasoned precept underlying moral distinctions carrying autonomous authority immune from influence or change? And, how might power be obtained and harnessed for the common good of the state and its constituent human factions? These are the questions that Plato tries to answer.<sup>35</sup>

In Books II and III of the Republic, Plato lays out his ideal state which is theoretical in aim; a pattern that men "may approximate as closely as they can, but not a copy which must be imitated line for line."<sup>36</sup> In this scheme, he identifies the interests of the state with the objective interests of its citizens.<sup>37</sup>

In this picture "metaphysics, moral psychology and political organization combine to ensure that those interests need never override individual, mundane interests (not superior) for they never conflict; they coincide."<sup>38</sup>

It is pertinent to point out, that in this harmonious world various classes are shown to be analogous to the tripartite aspects of the Platonic soul, the cognitive, appetitive and spirited selves, which manifest the respective virtues of wisdom, temperance and courage when under the over-all direction of the cognitive self. The harmony of these elements promotes an equanimity in the spirit exemplified by the truly wise and just individual. As Plato understands the state to be merely the individual writ large, he associates the three aptitudes of the soul with the three estates of his ideal society; the rulers, the warriors and the workers. The rulers, which he calls the philosopher-kings, are thus characterized by the virtue of wisdom; the guardians by true courage; and the workers by temperance. "Justice is the proper interrelation of the three functions, whether of the classes in the state or of the faculties in an individual."<sup>39</sup> That is to say, that the harmony among the three classes, like the harmony of the three-fold soul promotes a morally healthy state while conversely, these caste-delimited virtues are discernible as the major moral principles in the virtuous individual.

Plato goes on to contend that the foundation for all moral excellence within the state is derived from the citizen's attention to immutable moral principles gained by personal insight to the idea of the Good, which is present in the soul from the beginning. However, Plato laments that such enlightened men are rare and power has a tendency to corrupt them. In fact, Plato, like Thucydides believed that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely; and more than any other philosopher, he was aware of the dangers of tyranny of the individual or the many to the substance of the state.

In Book VII of his Republic, Plato lays out his non-mythical exposition of the general process of social, moral and racial degeneration as comprehended by the cycle of constitutional devolution. The imperfect states which arise are a result of a disturbance of the balance of power brought on by one of the lower order's successful strivings for predominance. These constitutional types are placed in a "descending scale, each state being further removed from the ideal than its predecessor."<sup>40</sup> In each case, argues Plato, "the states are as bad as the men," which is to say that the five forms of constitutions which he delineates find exact parallels in the human soul.<sup>41</sup>

Before examining these constitutions, it is important to note that Plato does not claim to present an exhaustive analysis of all the political elements involved in the



successive emergence of new governments; he sets forth only the archetypes in order to show how easily a man can be corrupted by seeking power, and completely ignores the possible multiplicities of their subdivisions. His scheme is an empirical generalization used as a rationale for government "disorganization and disordering"; it is serious, but theoretical, "obviously based on a careful observation of actual polities."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, he did not mean to show that national decline always followed an exactly similar pattern, but rather to give examples of typical transitions from one polity to another according to the general pattern of human and transcendent nature. Finally, there is abundant evidence showing that Plato realized that these systems never actually existed in pure form, nor were reflective of an actual historic development. However, he does esteem them as having some predictive value, and more importantly, as having some value in the investigation of the psychological principles underlying the degrading process of constitutional change.<sup>43</sup>

It cannot be stressed enough, that for Plato, "the individual represents the inner psychological condition which, if sufficiently dominant in a state, will give it a certain character."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it is most important that we understand the relation between the individual; his psychological profile, and the state

in which he predominates.

According to the Platonic formulation, the first government in the cycle of constitutional degeneration is the aristocratic, or government by the best. The aristocratic state is just and is typified by just men, the most fit to rule. This best of states degenerates into the timocratic polity which may be defined as a Spartan-like government intermediate between aristocracy and plutocracy."<sup>45</sup> The timocratic man is marginally inferior, and though best of the imperfect types, is too full of aggressive dash to be a truly temperate and just leader. Oligarchy comes next. The oligarchic man is insatiable, covetous and parsimonious, as Plato observes:

He would be a squalid fellow . . . looking for a surplus of profit in everything, and a hoarder, the type the multitude approves. <sup>46</sup>

The oligarchic man is brought down because of his greed and extravagance. He is hated and envied by the more numerous poor who clamor for a greater share of the wealth. In time, the oligarchy gives way to democracy, a kind of anarchy. The democratic man is intemperate and far too indecisive to know what is best for himself, let alone the well-being of the state. Due to an excess of liberty, the democracy degenerates into lawlessness and order is only restored by the establishment of an autocracy.

The despot, cut off from all fellowship, is the most depraved of all men. He is jealous and suspicious

and is ruled totally by his passions. Under his domination all men suffer and the state declines to its lowest ebb. Justice is departed, and the state thus enervated, faces death. But is this the end? Or did Plato intend the series to run full circle, and the tyrants be converted into the aristocrats who ruled in the beginning period? On this possibility Plato is characteristically reticent, though to my mind, the cyclical interpretation is precisely what is suggested by the evidence, as I shall endeavor to prove in due course. But it is more important at this point to delve deeper into Plato's psychology of revolution to gain a clearer picture of the various constitutional types of individuals to illustrate the process of moral degeneration, which as I have mentioned, is a primary cause of all constitutional decline.

It is pertinent here to point out that in his quest to discover the psychological cause of decline behind the tragedy of social decline, Plato focused his attentions on the interrelationship of mind, body, and soul. In doing so he stresses the importance of environment and stimulus--man is what his surroundings make him; hence, Plato's emphasis on proper education. He reduces behavior to very simple elements. It is true that his mechanistic or mechanical explanation of human behavior is an oversimplification, and he

has a tendency to treat the individual as a sort of puppet who can make only certain specific responses to the given environmental stimuli. Nevertheless, his is an exceedingly important explanation of human behavior providing much that can be called scientific today, and will facilitate our better understanding of his theorizing regarding the question at hand.

To judge from Plato's own assertions, the stream of political change is the result of a regular law of personality degeneration applicable to those not possessing the knowledge of the Good. This view is consistent with his notion that the course of human societies might be predicted given a sufficient knowledge of human nature especially when viewed in light of certain transcendent metaphysical laws. In his formulation, where the state is viewed strictly as a projection of a personality archetype, the relationship between the state and the individual can be defined precisely.

According to Plato's psychological imperatives, the aristocratic constitution devolves into the timocratic when the warlike propensities of the soldier class prevail over the temperate and wisdom-loving class of the just "and impose a militant policy dictated by ambition and the love of glory. Similarly, in the soul of the timocratic man the spirited part gains precedence over the reasoning part, and the result is

a valiant but contentious and ambitious nature."<sup>47</sup>

In time, the harboring of gold among the warriors fosters the notion that wealth is to be prized over honor and the soldier kings degenerate into money grubbing merchants and country squires. The state is divided into the rich and comfortable rulers and the miserable rabble of the perpetually poor. Due to the imposition of property qualifications as a condition for political rights the poor are locked in their social positions as a permanent underclass.

In the soul of the oligarchic man, the appetitive element holds sway over both the cognitive and the spirited parts so that they rule not in the common interest, but only insofar as they perceive to enhance their own avaricious desires.

The transition from oligarchy to democracy follows, owing to the revolt of the hostile poor who discover that the oligarchs have become soft and unfit for military service. "In this new state," explains Boyd, "all rank disappears; everyman is as good as his neighbor. The rule of the day is complete license. No man is required to take any share in state affairs unless he likes, and law is trodden underfoot."<sup>48</sup> Everyone is set free to chart his own course without benefit of knowledgeable guidance. This licentious freedom is pernicious beyond calculation and the government:

Anarchic and motley, assigns a kind of equality

indiscriminately to equals and unequals alike!

"Where the oligarchic man, thrifty at heart, gave way only to the moneymaking (or necessary) desires, the democratic man, casting off even this restraint, gives free reign to the spendthrift (or necessary) desires, and liberty is thus complete."<sup>50</sup>

Now when these democrats tire of the lawlessness that has made their lives insecure, they band together in support of a strong man of the worst sort who facilitates the restoration of order by brutal and unjust means:

And is it not true that in like manner a leader of the people who, getting control of a docile mob, does not withhold his hand from the shedding of tribal blood, but by the customary unjust accusations brings a citizen into court and assassinates him, blotting out a human life, and with unhallowed tongue and lips that have tasted kindred blood, banishes and slays and hints at the abolition of debts and the partition of lands-- is it not the inevitable consequence and a decree of fate that such a one is either slain by his enemies or became a tyrant and be transformed from a man into a wolf.<sup>51</sup>

Before the foolish democratic man is fully aware of what has happened, tyranny is established in the state.

The tyrannical man is ruled by the worst aspects of his soul. "in him," says Boyd, "one single lust has become predominant, and his whole soul, reason, spirit and passion is given up to its satisfaction."<sup>52</sup> He is utterly without scruple and seeks only to feed his boundless passions. In him the education of the

soul has ceased, "he cannot escape the deterioration that goes with absolute power."<sup>53</sup> The society which the tyrannic man exemplifies is a complete slave to fear, corruption, poverty and every other sort of misery and deleterious influence. Understandably, the state which he governs lacks the impulse of control and like the man at the helm, has a strong present-time orientation and little ability to defer its immediate whims to plan a safe and prosperous future. Society is at its lowest ebb; it can get no worse.

This is as far as Plato goes in the story of decline. He fails to suggest how society arrests the deadly cancer of tyranny; consistency, however, allows us to develop the following scenario as an implication of his idea of the circular progress of the world as a whole: Outraged by the excesses of tyranny, a few good men, their souls guided by wisdom, join in common cause and strike against tyranny to break their fetters. Seeing that a coup is to their advantage, the spirited and appetitive elements within the state also rise up and align with the aristocratic cabal. Out numbered and without friends the tyrant is toppled and the unendurable chains of oppression are finally cast off. Deferring to the better judgement of the true aristocrats the remaining segments of society agree to follow the "aristocrats." The restoration of aristocracy corresponds to the rule of the best after the original overthrow of



primitive monarchy setting the stage for the cycle of degeneration to recommence. Further evidence supporting the circularity of this scheme will be adduced at a later point, though for the present we must dip deeper into psychological discussion.

It is obvious that the preceding examination dealt primarily with society as organized according to principles not only of conditioning, but of metaphysical psychology. However, for Plato, these processes alone do not represent the entire makeup of human behavior. Experience too, he argues, determines personality formation, defined by him as the promotion of the unity or disunity of the soul under the dominance of one its constituent parts. For Plato, then, the personal and the collective unconscious of the individual and the respective class to which he belongs is shaped by the individual's long contact with his parents at the beginning of his life. It may fairly be said, therefore, that for Plato, an understanding of the nature of the soul together with a profile of the individual's upbringing will explain much of the nature of human behavior.

Accordingly, in Plato's scheme, as we have learned, the aristocratic man exemplifies the perfect individual, but he is also the original progenitor of all inferior constitutional personality types. We must logically conclude, therefore, that he carries within himself the germ of his own dissolution. The timocratic man is



the offspring of an aristocratic family. He is perhaps the son of a philosopher, or if not, some other sagacious sort who has divorced himself from public life, to pursue wisdom. He is content to concern himself with his private affairs. But, because "men who mind their own affairs in the city are spoken of as simpletons and are held in slight esteem," the youth, because of his ambitious ways, learns to abjure his father's character and becomes a "meddler" like those he has learned to "honor and praise."<sup>54</sup> In the beginning honor keeps him straight; but in time he falls under "evil communications" and undertakes a compromise between the spirited and appetitive elements of his soul. He

turns over the government in his soul to the intermediate principle of ambition and high spirit and becomes a man haughty of soul and covetous of honor.<sup>55</sup>

The oligarchic individual allows his appetite to guide his soul. His timocratic father, who was of high spirit and courageous temper has perhaps been a strategos or polemarch or some other military leader. But as "aspirants to political distinction are constantly being ruined by malicious accusations," he was perhaps brought to court by "mischievous sycophants and put to death or banished with the loss of all property."<sup>56</sup> It stands to reason that a son of such a man would be repulsed by public life and would abandon altogether those high-minded principles that he felt destroyed his

father. He wholly concerns himself with the acquisition of money and the satisfying of his burgeoning appetite.

And so as time goes on, and they advance in pursuit of wealth, the more they hold that in honor the less they honor virtue.<sup>57</sup>

The oligarchic man is not totally bereft of all admirable qualities. "Externally there is decency, order, and respectability" in his life, but the "drone appetites" are beginning to make themselves felt, though as yet they are "kept in check by the absorbing appetite for wealth."<sup>58</sup>

And is it not apparent by this that in other dealings, where he enjoys the repute of a seeming just man, he by some better element in himself forcibly keeps down other evil desires dwelling within, not persuading them that it 'is better not' nor taming them by reason, but by compulsion and fear, trembling for his possessions generally.<sup>59</sup>

But though outwardly a respectable man there is no inner harmony; "the true virtue of soul in unison and harmony with itself . . . escapes him and dwells afar."<sup>60</sup>

As a father the oligarch is austere in matters of religion and conduct, at least in regard to superficialities, but fails to offer strong guidance in regards to "beautiful pursuits and right principles" necessary in warding off the pernicious impulses that arise from an in-harmonious soul.<sup>61</sup> As a result, the son becomes totally impulsive, seeking immediate gratification in all matters, completely oblivious to possible deleterious consequences. He becomes a man out of control; a creature of appetite.



When youth bred in the liberal and niggardly fashion that we were describing, gets a taste of the honey of the drones and associates with fierce cunning creatures who know how to purvey pleasures of every kind and variety and condition, the youth must doubtless conceive it to be the beginning of the transformations of the oligarchy in his soul to democracy.<sup>62</sup>

Very often, the democratic man has a good and kind heart. And though he regards himself as amiable and friendly, he is intolerant of even the slightest criticism. His attentions wander aimlessly from one passion to another; he lacks discrimination and cannot refuse his appetites. In him each element of the soul serves as a check on the other; so he indulges all with equal vigor:

Now wine-bibbing and abandoning himself to the lascivious pleasing of the flute and again drinking only water and dieting, and at one time exercising his body, and sometimes idling and neglecting all things, and at another time seeming to occupy himself with philosophy.<sup>63</sup>

The democratic man "does as he likes"; he assumes that the existence of any differences in distinction constitute prima facie evidence of gross inequality.<sup>64</sup> He is incapable of recognizing any variation in individual talent and capacity, but assigns a "kind of equality indiscriminately to equals and unequals alike."<sup>65</sup>

Because of his enthusiastic lack of direction, the democratic man proves to be a poor father. He easily misdirects his son, who sees him as a weakling--the stooge and dupe of any man of determined desire. He learns to despise his father's weaknesses and to love



strength: In him the craving for power consumes his very being; and unlike the democratic man who indulges the passions of the moment, the tyrant is unified in his desires and refuses to be led astray from his quest for power. His capacity for evil is commensurate with his desire for power as he is ruled completely by passions as divorced from reason.

All this may appear simple and self-consistent. But Plato makes the matter somewhat more confusing by telling elsewhere in the Republic a totally different story of the fall of the aristocratic society. This other account, which we shall examine shortly, is an invaluable aid to our more full comprehension of Plato's correlation between the decline of society and the soul. It is the interlocking hypotheses that is the frame of reference by which we can grasp the full dimension of the empirical problem of social decline: for at the root of his theorizing about the historic and moral degeneration of man and society is the all important biological law of nature, that familiar rule, which explains the origin of the disunion and decline in the state by likening it to a living organism that grows and dies. Thus Plato, like Thucydides and Herodotos, linked the flow of human society to a transcendent principle comprehending the circular rise and fall of all phenomena.

But the reader might ask, if Plato believed in universal cyclic laws determining the destiny of mankind,



then why the lengthy psychological explanations of character decay? Certainly, it must be admitted that at first sight there is a contradiction, an inner tension between the psychological and natural causes of decline. If, however, you examine in detail the one in light of the other you will find the two ideas complementary. The explanation is easy: for even though the original polity was best, its members were not fully aware of the knowledge of the Good; and without this knowledge they are unable to withstand the natural processes of degeneration. In other words, even though the natural laws are themselves unchanging, they might possibly be circumvented by those in possession of the highest knowledge of Ideal truth. Plato, as we shall presently see, makes it abundantly clear that without this true knowledge men will falter and will beget children of inferior quality in accordance with the cyclical laws of nature and human psychology.

But what of these cyclic laws? Perhaps the answer to this highly pertinent question should be sought in the suggestion in the Republic that contemporary monarchs might be converted into the philosopher-kings of the ideal state, though I personally think such a conclusion somewhat misses the mark.

A far better argument for the eternal recurrence of history can be confirmed in a general cyclic law which Plato enunciates time and time again. It is a law

applying, says Nettleship, "to all organic life, as he (Plato) says; 'to everyting in which souls and body are united.'"<sup>66</sup> Nettleship goes on:

All organic things (according to Plato) have predestined periods, longer or shorter according to their nature, upon which their inherent vitality and power of reproducing themselves depend. At certain intervals the vitality of souls that are in human bodies becomes feeble and the soul is comparatively unproductive. If a number of children are produced at such a time they will form an inferior race, and society must decline.<sup>67</sup>

This idea needs further elucidation. We could cite offhand a series of striking examples but the following highly detailed passage is Plato's clearest statement of the relationship between transcendent cyclic time and the biological development of species. The following passage, to which Nettleship refers above, offers an explanation for the decline of the perfect state owing to a dereliction on the part of the aristocratic rulers who fail to observe the proper mystical number and thus "produce children out of season."<sup>68</sup>

Hard in truth it is for a state thus constituted to be shaken and disturbed, but since for everything that has come into being destruction is appointed, not even such a fabric as this will abide for all time, but it shall surely be dissolved, and this is the manner of its dissolution. Not only for plants that grow from the earth but also for animals that live upon it there is a cycle of bearing and barrenness for soul and body as often as the revolutions of their orbs come full circle, in brief courses for the short-lived and oppositely for the opposite. But the laws of prosperous birth or infertility for your race, the men you have bred to be your rulers will not for all their wisdom ascertain by reasoning combined with sensation, but they will escape them and there will be a time when they will beget children out of

season. Now for divine begettings there is a period comprehended by a perfect number . . ."69

As Nettleship implied earlier, during this "unseasonal" period bodies and souls are "feeble" and "unproductive".70 So it is logical that this fallow period corresponds to the winter of the Great Year, while the "divine" or fertile period corresponds to spring. At any rate, Plato calculates the number of this cycle and connects it to the span of transcendent circular time. Nettleship hypothesized that:

The passage expressed Plato's belief that there are fixed laws governing this matter, which are capable of being definitely stated. But, he says, however wise the best minds of a society may be, their intelligence is necessarily alloyed with sense; hence they will not perfectly understand the laws of human generation, and owing to their mistakes children will inevitably be born who are inferior to their parents; and, when the decline has once set in, it will inevitably increase. Thus the decline of human society is brought about by its failure to understand the laws of its own life.71

He goes on:

Plato has anticipated the notion that a human society is in some sense an organic thing, having its own laws of growth and decay.72

And on:

He offers no evidence for what he says, but his fundamental idea that there are unknown conditions favorable and unfavorable to the maintenance of the vigor of a race, has remained to the present day: . . . that every decay of a nation is caused by some loss of vital power, and that there are laws, however undiscoverable they may be, upon which the loss or maintenance of that vital power depends.73

Elsewhere in this theses I have quoted passages of Plato reflecting his belief in fixed recurring periods,

especially in regards to the cycle of the soul. Other passages may be found in the Statesman, 269 c sqq; Phaedrus, 248a to 249d; Laws, X. 903 b sqq; Timæus, 42 b-e and in a particularly striking passage from Book X of the Republic:

This is the word of Lachesis, the maiden daughter of Necessity, "Souls that live for a day, now is the beginning of another cycle of mortal generation where birth is the beacon of death."<sup>74</sup>

Although statements such as the above leave us no doubt as to the circularity of Plato's political succession, they are not the only factors reflecting such an understanding. The ideas of hybris and nemesis as manifest in his understanding of the law of excess and reaction in human affairs have obvious links to the recurring cycle of rise and fall. Plato expresses it when he says, "Nemesis, the messenger of Justice, is appointed to watch over all matters", and again in the Laws when he reminds us that, "excess of money, property, and distinction is apt to be a source of hatred and division among states and individuals."<sup>75</sup> His comments in the Phaedrus are more to the point:

When desire devoid of reason rules in us and drags us to pleasure, that power of misrule is called excess.

Finally, an even more explicit statement is found in the Eighth book of the Republic:

The ruin of oligarchy is the ruin of democracy; the same disorder intensified by freedom dominates over democracy, the truth being that the excessive increase of anything often causes a reaction in the opposite direction; and this is the case not only in the seasons and in vegetable and animal



forms, but above all in forms of government, The excess of liberty seems only to pass into an excess of slavery. The most aggravated form of tyranny arises out of the most extreme form of liberty.<sup>77</sup>

Here is indeed a nest of difficulties!

Is Plato here informing us that the compulsion for the life-cycle is a law of excess and reaction? Or is he merely pointing out how such a law easily conforms to the eternal rhythm of life? This is a much debated question which can only be touched on briefly here. In short, I believe both processes are conjoined at higher levels of metaphysical activity, though the cycle of action and reaction sublimates the transcendent cosmic cycle. That is to say, that the energy of the subordinate cycle of nemesis is directed toward the higher ends of the superior i.e., ordinal cycle of nature. This conclusion presupposes a consistency in Platonic thought and relies heavily on the cosmology of the Timaeus where the ordinal power of the celestial spheres is clearly outlined. It seems clear to me that throughout the dialogues the transcendent cosmic, or soul cycle seems to be a kind of planning Providence. And although it is broadly deterministic, it is not narrowly so, but seems to organize the ebb and flow of all phenomena according to a repetitive design that permits a great deal of variation. It is a mechanical principle, as is the law of nemesis, though unlike the latter, it is

linked to the divinity of life and in this respect takes precedence over the blindly mechanistic principle of nemesis.

To summarize the foregoing discussion of probabilities, it may be reasonably surmised that it is in all probability an overstatement to say that the arguments adduced above and in the preceding pages stand as prima facie evidence of a theory of political cycles, though it does, to my way of thinking, clearly prove circumstances which afford a sound basis for a highly probable inference of the belief. And even if Plato did not intend to make the series eternally cyclic, which, as our study shows, is exceedingly doubtful; it is certain that subsequent proponents of political cycles, such as Polybius, for example--whom we shall discuss in detail later--did not question the fact that Plato's series represented a complete round. In fact, as we shall see, he accepted the Platonic analysis of social decline in toto; assumed it to be circular in form and did not presume to add any new twists to the scenario. In any case, even if Plato's scheme were not rigidly cyclic, as I have argued, he promulgated the premises on which such a conclusion could be drawn with such lulling persuasiveness that every extant ancient testimonial concerning his theory assumes the circularity of his political succession to be fact.

Finally, even though the scale of treatment was more generous for the psychological causes of change than for the physical, the reason for this abundance is not hard to guess. After all, the central thrust of the discussion in the Republic is towards the resolution of ethical and philosophical questions and not the establishment of political and historical principles. Indeed, for Plato, history is always the handmaiden of philosophy and never the reverse. In fact, most of the flesh and blood of his "historical" narrative is, if not fictitious, certainly flawed--though this should not lead one necessarily to doubt the bare bones. In any case, to return to my point, the immediate problem in the Republic is to define justice. For Plato this can be accomplished only by examining it as writ large in the state. However, this cannot be completed without scrutinizing the psychological profiles of the various constitutional types who comprise the state's successive ruling orders. In regards to this analysis it is obvious that the discussion of transcendent principles of circularity are, in the main, irrelevant; such ideas are merely incidental details drawn from his understanding of the universe and brought to light only to illustrate certain factors having some bearing on the evolution and decline of the ideal state. It is a pattern laid up in heaven that organizes the world, and though it is deceptively simple in form,

its ultimate cause and immediate compulsion are as mysterious as the mind of god.

Although Plato's conception of Greek political history has undeniable charm, and evinces considerable didactic utility, its lack of accord with the true sequence of Athenian governments caused his most famous student, Aristotle, to reject his judgements in historical matters. In this respect, Aristotle's criticisms are somewhat misdirected, based, we may assume, on a misinterpretation of Plato's logical theory and his failure to grasp his true philosophic aim. Consequently, Aristotle's examination of governments and his philosophy of state bear little resemblance to that set forth in the Republic. And though his scheme of constitutional succession reflects the actual chronology of Athenian constitutional change from monarchy through oligarchy and tyranny to democracy, it is not in any direct way linked to a rigid or actual cycle of advance and decline.

Nevertheless, he was one of those who believed that civilization with all its values and relatively high level of cultural and scientific development had been developed, lost, and re-developed throughout the long course of circular time and that it would in the future falter and flower again in an infinite variety of political and cultural manifestations. Yet, due to his strong historical bias, he naturally indulges far

less freely than most classical intellects in those cyclic allusions that so liberally embellish the great preponderance of Greek literature.

If we compare Aristotle's Politics--his treatise on the science and art of government--with Plato's Republic, it is clear that Aristotle is more concerned with political actualities than abstractions or potentialities. Yet, in spite of this, Books II, III, VII, and VIII of the work are concerned with, as he puts it, "what form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal life."<sup>78</sup> In view of this, it is not surprising to find that he uses Plato as a point of departure and even agrees with Plato's basic supposition that the fundamental cause of decline is due to the uncontrolled growth of some baser factor in the social fabric over the better elements.

In contrast to the books cited above, the Fifth and Sixth Books of the Politics are concerned with a comparative analysis of existing constitutions as based on an enormous collection of constitutional histories compiled by the students at the Lyceum of which the Constitution of Athens is the only survivor. Of special interest to us for its bearing on our subject, is Book V which is entirely devoted to the scientific analysis of the causes of the chronic political transformations that characterize Hellenic society. In it,

Aristotle, "proceeding by extensive observations and minute analysis of objective facts," criticized the description of the sequence of governments in Plato's Republic and takes particular exception to the cyclic framework of the scheme,<sup>79</sup> as we learn below:

In the Republic of Plato, Socrates treats of revolutions, but not well, for he mentions no cause of change which peculiarly affects the first or perfect state. He only says that the cause is that nothing is abiding, but all things change in a certain cycle, and that the origin of change consists in those numbers of which 4 and 3, married with 5, furnish two harmonies. And is it by the agency of time, which, as he declares, makes all things change, that things which did not begin together, change together? For example, if something has come into being the day before the completion of the cycle, will it change with things that come into being before?<sup>80</sup>

The empirical method of approach to the problem of political history determines the structure of Aristotle's discussion. By rejecting the metaphysical aspects of Plato's hypothesis, he is free to set out a logical sequence of constitutional change. This sequence is much more specific than Plato's though it deals with a far wider variety of political forms.

Faced with a mass of evidence, much of it conflicting, Aristotle nevertheless felt fully justified in showing that society has a natural tendency to evolve from its primitive state in a series of five stages in sequential order from monarchy through aristocracy, oligarchy and tyranny to democracy. He introduces us to this sequence in the following passage:<sup>81</sup>

The first governments were kingships . . . because

of old, when cities were small, men of eminent virtue were few. Further, they were made kings because they were benefactors, and benefits can only be bestowed by good men. But when many persons equal in merit arose, no longer enduring the pre-eminence of one, they desired to have a commonwealth, and set up a constitution. The ruling class soon deteriorated and enriched themselves out of the public treasury; riches became the path to honour, and so oligarchies naturally grew up. These pass into tyrannies and tyrannies into democracies; for love of gain in the ruling classes was always tending to diminish their numbers, and so to strengthen the masses, who in the end set upon their master and established democracies. Since cities have increased in size also, no other form of government appears to be any longer even easy to establish.<sup>82</sup>

We can infer from the foregoing passage, that Aristotle believed that he lived towards the end of the progression; that he was observing the last and lowest stage in the sequence of development. But does this betray a commitment to any definite methodical scheme, or is it merely an annalistic narration of events as they actually occurred not according to any ordered precept of regularity but according to blind chance? After all, the main difficulty with the sequence, as Aristotle fully recognized, is that it necessarily implies one of two options concerning its final or continued development. Either the last stage in the sequence evolves to monarchy, thereby completing the cycle; or the ordered sequence breaks down altogether paving the way for any one of the remaining governmental types to succeed to power? Some scholars, however, posit yet a third possibility:

that the scheme represents nothing more than a classification of forms of government according to their order of desirability.

While freely granting the apparent reasonableness of this last argument, I am led to reject it. Since it necessitates a conclusion completely at variance with other indications, it must be under suspicion as based somehow on unsound interpretation of the supposed evidence.

However, the argument for circularity, despite Aristotle's condemnation of Plato's cyclic scheme, is at least partly justified by the evidence, which we shall now briefly summarize.

Certain reputable scholars (Dunning and Muller) conjecture that Aristotle implies just such a cycle when after a close textual examination of the Politicus they discern a constant, though irregular, shifting from one constitutional type to another. They argue that Aristotle's history of states favors the view of an ever-flowing rise and decline; although the general upward and downward movement is devoid of the specific recurrence of events. In support of this claim, they remind us that even though Aristotle abjures Plato's cycle, he accepts without reservation, the concept of cosmic recurrence as expressed in the passing of the Great Year, which certainly must assure the repetition of at least the broader aspects of



society, including, we might suppose, the institution of different types of government. Herbert J. Muller recalls this belief:

Aristotle saw a continuous coming to be and falling away; he speculated that there has already been countless civilizations which had passed through a uniform destiny.<sup>83</sup>

However, this argument is somewhat weakened in view of Aristotle's admission that though his generalized scheme from monarchy though democracy is supported by the empirical evidence, still democracy can under certain circumstances revert to oligarchy and tyranny to democracy.

On the other side however, it might be argued, that the above statement implies the succession to be the natural or usual order of affairs and that the possible variations mentioned are really nothing more than occasional and unimportant deviations from the general scheme; however, people supporting this view are hard pressed to find any statements in Aristotle demonstrating their point.

And while those arguing in favor of the theory of a recurring cycle of political constitutions are able, admittedly, to advance in interesting case, the supporting evidence runs far short of their claims.

They cannot effectively controvert, for example, Aristotle's explicit rejection of the application of the cyclical theory to the pregression of political constitutions vis-a-vis the Republic.

And, more importantly, they fail to take into account the fact that Aristotle found a great deal of diversity in different constitutions bearing the same name. And since these differences were far too numerous to be taken into full consideration by him, he deals with them as abstractions derived from the "averaging" together of the diverse characteristics of those political forms commonly grouped together by general agreement under a single designation;<sup>84</sup> so that his scheme is little more than a rather vague generalization in which the political designations employed are not necessarily in line with the actual characteristics of historic polities e.g., some titular monarchies are, practically speaking, tyrannies; and some nominal aristocracies are oligarchies and visa versa right on down the line.

Finally, the cyclical proponents, are unable to explain away Aristotle's oft repeated observation that all political forms--save for the relatively rare exceptions of aristocracy and monarchy--are currently observed in various conditions of rise and decline throughout the Greek world, a fact obviating any possibility that national governments rise and fall in accordance with a rigidly cyclic principle of eternal reiteration. Consequently, the discussion of an Aristotelian political cycle can stop right here; but his belief in a higher metaphysical cycle, as

discussed in the last chapter, should be re-examined, for it upholds the validity of the law of growth, bloom and decay and is applied by Aristotle to the long stream of civilizational history.

Sadly, Aristotle clearly made no attempt to give a comprehensive account of his periodic conception of the advance and decline of the arts and sciences, although he is remarkably serious about its sway over human affairs. We hear only incidentally of its transpiration in a half-dozen or so mysterious and enigmatic passages scattered throughout his essays and compendia of facts and observations. Called a "cultural cycle" by Lovejoy and Boas, it is far broader in comprehension than Plato's political cycle and might contain in a single revolution any number of successive political regimes, such as the one described in Aristotle's Politics. As far as can be made out, it embraces only the most general stages of advancement and decline attained by a civilization, including the religious, intellectual and aesthetic.<sup>85</sup> Writing in his work on Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, George Boas described this cycle's characteristics succinctly and correctly:

(Cultures) all go through a process of development (analogous to the life-cycle of the individual) which is limited. Its final outcome, once attained, is destroyed; and the sequence is subsequently repeated, without limit. Within each of these cycles, then, there is a more or less regular advance from a rudimentary beginning to a climax;

but the supposition of an endless intellectual or cultural progress is excluded.<sup>86</sup>

Strangely enough, aside from the passages quoted in the last chapter, primarily from the Metaphysica and the Meteorologica--which provide the soundest criterion for the belief--the argument is carried on, in a less vigorous fashion, in the Politics, as the following quotation shows:

It is perhaps necessary to believe that other things also have been discovered repeatedly, or rather infinitely often, in the long course of time. For necessity itself probably first taught them what is needful and then by degrees led them to refinements and superfluities; and when these have once taken a start, it may reasonably be supposed that they will increase.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, as Lovejoy and Boas have pointed out, "Aristotle does not attempt (as some other ancient writers did) to trace this history (i.e., of the cultural cycle) in any detail, aside from dealing with the rise and fall culture as a whole."<sup>88</sup> For Aristotle the cultural cycle is a natural corollary to the conspicuous and familiar logical and astronomical cycles that inferred the birth and death of all things on a grand cosmic scale, including the typical successive stages of social development, as opposed, for example, to the narrowly prescribed flux of political revolutions.<sup>89</sup>

In tracing this development, he concludes that the voluntary association of men to a common end is a natural development arising out of the peculiar qualities of man's constitution which are linked up

to the destiny of the Physical Universe as a whole.<sup>90</sup> According to his deterministic view of civilizational development, society arises out of man's need to satisfy his wants; he instinctively takes "unto himself help-mates, first wife and servants, then fellow-villagers, and last of all fellow-citizens, until in the last and widest circle of associates he finds sufficiency, satisfies his wants and realizes himself."<sup>91</sup> His basic needs satisfied, he is free to exercise his creative ingenuity to adapt natural things to aid his intellectual and aesthetic growth. Thus, the development of organized society gives rise to the possibilities of culture.

In several passages, Aristotle makes clear the analogy of the arts and sciences with the evolution of society. He believed that all ideas of value have been known before and would be rediscovered in the future, as he tells us in these lines from the Politics:

Let us remember that we should not disregard the experience of ages; in the multitude of years these things, if they were good, would certainly not have been unknown; for almost everything has been found out, although sometimes they are not put together; in other cases men do not use the knowledge which they have.<sup>92</sup>

However, despite his acceptance of the cultural cycle, he finds untenable the hypothesis that the predestined pattern of growth and decline can be found in any specific culture; its definite structure can only be discovered in a universal history of the human species that encompasses the whole kingdom of life on this planet. Eric Voeglin explains:

The structure of the cycle may have a larger span so that one climax may lie in Iran while another may lie in Hellas. And the epochs will be marked by events in the spiritual history of mankind--not by events in the political sphere--though the polities may have their sub-cycles of growth and decline . . . for Aristotle the myth of the cycle has become a doctrine, and the unconscious as a source of truth is replaced by memory of the species that can be recovered through historical studies.<sup>94</sup>

The continuity of cultural highs and lows are maintained by the transference of ideas from one culture to another within a limited period of history. For example, even though philosophy might be "perfected" in Hellas in Aristotle's time or soon after, its lofty ideals will spread to all peoples in a certain or uncertain number of generations so that a universal perfection of the philosophical art will be consummated within a distinct portion of time that might be called--at least by later observers--a period or an age. Of course, the same developmental pattern holds true for all the arts which tend to peak or decline at about the same time, relatively speaking, owing to the influence of transcendent Nature whose laws determine the periodic rise and fall of things.

It is not so surprising that despite his belief in the cultural cycle, Aristotle can be classified, with some qualifications, a progressivist. But he was a progressivist only insofar as he understood present society's relative position in the cultural cycle to be nearing a zenith. That is to say that even though he believed that he

lived in the lowest stage of the political sub-cycle, he felt that mankind's enlightenment was waxing. He asserted, according to Edelstein, "that 'now' progress had been made from small beginnings within the shortest time by those concerned with geometry, logic, and the other disciplines such as had been made by no generation before in any of the sciences."<sup>95</sup> And although he held that the broader aspects of history did repeat themselves, he hardly meant to assert that the cycle necessitated a reiteration of specific historical events, but within the broader sequence, maintained a constant shifting between opposing poles of development. Thus, there is a freedom in the detailed working-out of broadly determined general lines. That is to say, that within every cultural phase of the cycle there is unlimited potential for scientific and artistic development.

As in any system such as Aristotle's there arises the question of the cause of decline. The immediate and obvious response is that society--understood by Aristotle to be a sort of independent organism--lives a life of comparatively definite duration; it goes through the same state of life as any living thing and it dies. Then there is nothing until a new culture appears. Its death and birth are based on fluvial and astronomical sources as described in the previous chapter and need not be elaborated here.

It appears, then, that Aristotle embraced one of the most important premises of the biological analogy-- though it would seem to be expressed far better by Polybius almost two-centuries later--namely, that societies break down when they approach the close of the biological life-spans.

As noted above, Aristotle believed that his world was riding on a crest of fortune; that he was living in a period of growth and vitality where the biological quality of the individual was sufficiently youthful and vigorous to warrant the hope that civilization might continue to advance for yet some time in the future. However, on the whole, the climate of opinion in Greece was far less favorable to the idea of progress than was expressed by Aristotle. One cannot, in fact, avoid the conclusion that the great preponderance of Greek literati were on the whole as little impressed with this view as were the poets of old.

Even other "progressivists", such as the followers of the Stoic Chrysippus (who "were fond of invoking the law of scientific progress"), were generally unwilling to express enthusiasm for the notion that the present time was the best time.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly enough, the Cynic doctrine, which "condemned civilization altogether" was especially popular. In fact, they, like the poets, also noticed with respect to the cycle of history, that the greatest amount of compliance with the Law of Nature



is likely to be found at the most remote extremes of the Cycle; among the simpler peoples of the distant past.

Hellenistic literature, as opposed to its classical counterpart, was even more pessimistic: "In the poetry of the age can be found many passages that set the simple life of nature above the life lived in the large cities and at court, and even curses upon those who had made inventions."<sup>97</sup> It is clear that many Greeks were disillusioned, and very little remains of the somewhat naive and subliminal optimism of the middle years of the fourth century. In fine, the third and fourth centuries B.C. were marked indelibly by the feeling that everything was going down hill, and much of the literature betrays a profound longing for the past.

In light of these conclusions, I feel it relevant at this point to consider in closer detail the tendency among certain Greek writers towards this strong "primitivistic" bias. This presentation may be taken as a primitivistic interlude in the recital of the historical cycle. But it is not intended as a mere diversion of the reader's interest, but as an important postscript to the foregoing discussion. In this pursuit, I do not feel that I am veering from my task of investigating the cyclic theory per se. For primitivistic ideas in general have an important bearing on

our subject. Their examination will serve as a useful background and it will be a significant prelude to our discussion of Polybius's cyclic theory.

In the second chapter of this thesis we drew attention to the ancient Greek's continual reference to the past as symbolizing the "highest degree of excellence or happiness" yet attained in human history.<sup>98</sup> Further, we discussed the related idea that these first men, whether by divine whim or through some flaw in their character, fell from this original happy condition to a state of relative misery which has continuously deteriorated ever since. At that time, our discussion was largely limited by the mythical frame of reference and by our intent to discuss only those theories related to ideas about the concept of metallurgical anthropology. The examples then cited in this context sufficiently proved how pervasive the doctrine was. Now, however, we shall examine the updated, non-mythic version as treated not by the mythographers and poets, but by the new order of historians and orators, who, for obvious reasons, were far more conscious of the force of history than the mythopoi whom they never failed to criticize for their apparent disregard of truth.

The influence of rhetoric on the writing of history, and on the development of our theme is great, and in regards to the former, has been sufficiently commented upon by others to warrant further illustration here.

Most important is the influence of Isocrates (436-338 B.C.) whose great ambition was to unite all Greeks against the Persians, their common foe, and to this end wrote his Panegyricus which proved to be a powerful force in reshaping Greek attitudes towards history by kindling in the minds of many the "idea of the unity of Greek history."<sup>99</sup>

It is in this famous speech, that Isocrates betrays his feeling that all was not well with his day; that Athens had fallen under the evil spell of hybris and was destined to suffer terrible retribution for her pride and insolence and a myriad of other evils that affected all facets of society--political, economic and moral:

It is just that the age in which we live should be yet distinguished by some glorious enterprise, so that those who have been so long oppressed, in some period of their lives, know what it is to be happy. This unfortunate generation has already paid its just tribute to misery. What calamities hath it not suffered? To those inseparably connected with human nature, we have added others still worse. Many citizens have perished unjustly in the bosom of their country: Others have been obliged to wander with their wives and children through inhospitable lands: And others, still more wretched, have been compelled by a fatal necessity to carry arms against their friends for those who oppressed them. But these events do not move your compassion; and while you lament the unfortunate heroes of fiction whose history is represented on your theatres, you are so insensible to real calamities, the unhappy consequences of war, and the miserable fruits of your ambition, that you take more delight in the evils which you have inflicted on one another, than even in our own prosperity.<sup>100</sup>

In his Areopagiticus he observes the tendency for Athenian decline in the abrogation of their aristocratic constitutions. In the Peace, however, reason for decay is laid to the acquisition of a maritime empire; elsewhere he blames corrupt leaders, the destruction of traditional piety, the fickleness of democracy and the overwhelming lust of her people for possession, prestige and power. His great concern, according to de Romilly, "was that Athens should get rid of the demagogues who charmed the rabble with their empty words, but brought ruin to the state because of their impiety and their ignorance of the high principles of government."<sup>101</sup>

Did he ever suggest a universal law at work in the decline of Athens? And if so, was this idea related in any way to the sensitized perception of flux basic to all cyclic theories? At first glance, we might answer these questions in the negative, but upon closer examination we are able to discern a pattern. In the Peace, for example, Isocrates constructs a "whole dislectic" of growth and decay "around a pair of contrasting terms eunoia and misos ("goodwill" and hatred").<sup>102</sup> This recognition of an oscillatory principle in human history is interestingly allied to a doctrine of nemesis comparable to that we met with in connection with the historical cycle of Herodotos, although it is expressed in a more general and metaphorical manner.

Like the hybris and nemesis cycle in Herodotos, the interaction of eunoia and misos in Isocrates represents a struggle. This conflict originates in the individual who is torn between the contradictory impulses of altruism and hate. These conditions inspire reactions of a broadly predictable nature in all men: altruism, to do good in the world, and to strive for the common prosperity of men; while hate motivates aggression and the desire to prey on others to compete for the necessities and luxuries of life. These opposing principles are externalized by the state. Therefore it is my conviction that Isocrates believed in a psychologically based condition of human life that gave rise to the conflicting interaction of nations. And although in his many references to the development of civilization he never so much as mentions a cycle, just such a pattern is implied by the contradiction of eunoia and misos and their continual resolution, as we might infer from the following interpretive reconstruction.

It has been very plausibly suggested that Isocrates seems to believe that fortune raises nations to heights, but as they approach the pinnacle, the covetous aspects of man's nature give rise to the desire to increase their own national wealth at the expense of other states. This greed is ultimately expressed as hatred around which the clouds of war gather. Finally, unfettered

by restraint of goodwill, the covetous nation rushes beyond the bounds of prudence and humanity. But for this transgression it is punished by men and gods and is visited by the greatest of evils, defeat and economic ruin. Thus, we may conclude, Isocrates saw national decline as arising from the very seeds of its success.

That the latest cycle of decline might be arrested is his most fervent hope. As de Romilly has observed, "he was possessed by the wish to help restore the glamour of Athens' greatness as she had know it from the time of the Persian wars till the time of Pericles; but he was seized with horror at the idea she could once more undergo the same evolution."<sup>103</sup> In the Areopagiticus, he suggests the process of the latest decline was set in motion by the overturning of the aristocratic constitution. This coincides with the general fourth century trend to desire a return to the old Solonian constitution, in reaction to the "radical democracy" of Pericles. Only through such a reform, thought Isocrates, could a change for the better in Athens' fortunes be brought about.

He wished to set the clock back in politics to revive a way of life that had been the source of national strength in the past.

If we affect a change of polity, it is evident . . . that such conditions of life our ancestors enjoyed will come about for us also, for from the same political constitutions there must always spring like or similar ways of life.<sup>104</sup>

To achieve the desired effects he urges that the Areopagus's former, almost unlimited powers be restored and the prerequisites of noble birth and other loyalty tests be required for admission to the council; he feels that nobelmen are far better able to govern by high minded principle and tradition and less likely to indulge their own base instincts than men of the common estate. The establishment of this constitution, calling as it did on the best elements of society, will arrest the cycle; but, in the end, we may suppose, it will lapse once more into a corrupt polity and the cycle will continue.

Isocrates' conception of Athenian decline and his strong bias for the ancestral constitution has an especially pronounced influence on the historical musing of one of his students, Theopompus, whose quasi-historical Philippica contained a "figment of his own invention concerning the imaginary land of Merope beyond the ocean, where the golden age is still a reality."<sup>105</sup> Interestingly enough, evidence also exists adumbrating his belief in the circular flow of history, but this evidence paints a somewhat confused and unreliable picture. A careful evaluation of the data leads one to believe that he conceived the historical process to be bound up with a broad and imprecise cycle of rise and fall. But the good scholar should be very chary indeed to assert this to be more than a high probability. Perhaps further investigations in this most interesting matter will in time clear up some of the mystery.

Like Theopompus, Dicaearchus--whom we have already met--was a primitivist. And like all peripatetics of his day, he "evinced a feeling of disillusion and a sentimental longing for an irretrievable past."<sup>106</sup> As we learned in Chapter II, he thought that mankind had fallen from a physically and morally superior state. And he believed that the "legend of the age of Cronus was probably a 'non-natural' version of a historic fact."<sup>107</sup> It is conceivable that his conception of history was cyclic although there are no hard facts to support this view; but a number of those finding inspiration in him, including Eratosthenes, Posidonius, and Cicero, held cyclic world views, as had Dicaearchus's master, Aristotle.

Along with Dicaearchus, the cynics also had a profoundly negative attitude to the world in which they lived. Antisthenes, who typifies the movement, "demanded a return to the simple, natural life and renunciation of everything that may endanger inner freedom."<sup>108</sup> He recommended that man withdraw from society and thereby from the "political turmoil and vicissitudes which revealed the vanity of all mundane affairs."<sup>109</sup> Diogenes, the greatest Cynic, derided "as useless the unnecessary music, geometry, astronomy and other studies" that complicated life in the civilized world.<sup>110</sup> His primitivistic tendencies are blatant. The idea of progress is anathema; it was "not a god-given task but delusion and self-destruction."<sup>111</sup> He believed that man was happiest when his life was lived in the greatest



compliance with nature and that blissful period was at the dawn of creation. Moreover, he argued that "man must return to his original state before his fall from grace and before the existence of any of his proud inventions. He must imitate the example of the animals who follow their instincts and are happy and content with what they have by nature."<sup>112</sup>

There is, of course, no mention of the cycle in either Antisthenes or Diogenes. But if we have any faith at all in the later Stoic accounts, the early Cynics (though not specifically Antisthenes and Diogenes) fully believed in the cycle of Ages. In fact, it will be recalled that the Stoic conception of world circularity was really little more than a modification of the Cynic description epochal circularity. In view of this consideration, it seems likely at least some of the early Cynics believed that with the turn of the cosmic wheel civilization would fall. And man, weakened by his enslavement of organized society, would return to the agricultural and pastoral state of human development. Only then could he be free from the vexations of war and want.

For myself, not being among those best qualified to argue this particular point--though I am personally much attracted to it--I must leave the reader to accept or reject the hypothesis on the basis of available

evidence. To be sure, the idea raises many further questions, but these can be answered only by introducing still another digression into my examination of primitivism in relation to cultural destiny. Time does not allow this, however. So with this noncommittal summary I now leave the Cynics and return once again to the examination of the primitivistic concept in oratory.

Along with Isocrates, Dicaearchus, and the Cynics, among others, Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) was an inspiration to a whole generation who were overwhelmed by the ever mounting political turmoil of the day. He was the greatest of orators, and labored hard to convince his fellow countrymen to unite against the threatening posture of Macedonia's king Philip, but their lack of patriotism and their mercenary quest for Macedonian gold rendered his efforts useless. In view of this, it is not surprising to find that Demosthenes believed the grievous decline of Greece to be based in defects of the human character. In his Third Philippic he gave special attention to the reasons why Athens had become a weak-willed, money grubbing city; in doing so he compares the virtues of bygone humanity with those of the present:

What then is the cause of these things? For as it was not without reason and just cause that the Hellenes in old days were so prompt for freedom, so it is not without reason or cause that they

are now so prompt to be slaves. There was a spirit, men of Athens, a spirit in the minds of the people in those days, which is absent today--the spirit which vanquished the wealth of Persia, which led Hellas in the path of freedom, and never gave way in face of battle by sea or by land; a spirit whose extinction today has brought universal ruin and turned Hellas upside down. What was this spirit? (It was nothing subtle nor cleaver) (37). It meant that men who took money from those who aimed at dominion or at the ruin of Hellas were execrated by all; that it was then a very grave thing to be convicted of bribery; that the punishment for the guilty man was the heaviest that could be inflicted; that for him there could be no plea or mercy, nor hope of pardon. No orator, no general, would then sell the critical opportunity whenever it arose--the opportunity so often offered to men by fortune, even when they are careless and their foes are on their guard. They did not barter away the harmony between people and people, nor their own mistrust of the tyrant and the foreigner, nor any of these high sentiments. They have been sold in the market and are gone; and those have been imported in their stead, through which the nation lies ruined and plague stricken--the envy of the man who has received his hire; the amusement which accompanies his avowal; (the pardon granted to those whose guilt is proved:) the hatred of one who censures the crime; and all the appurtenances of corruption. (40) For as to ships, numerical strength, unstinting abundance of funds and all other material of war, and all the things by which the strength of cities is estimated, every people can command these in greater plenty and on a larger scale by far than in old days. But all these resources are rendered unserviceable, ineffectual, unprofitable, by those who traffic ineffectual in them. That these things are so today, you doubtless can see, and need no testimony of mine, and that in times gone by the opposite was true. 113

That the decadence he perceived was of a general sort, affecting all facets of Athenian life, can be seen in his condemnation of contemporary art in contrast with the great artistic works of the past. The works of old, he tells us in his Third Olynthiac, were of "such

beauty and magnificence . . . that posterity has no power to surpass them."<sup>114</sup>

In other of his speeches primitivistic ideas break through in which unfavorable dissimilarities between the present and the past are seized upon and exaggerated. And even though he looks to the past for the moral standards which he found lacking in the Athens of his day, he fails to give us any concrete hints as to the underlying causes of the presumed ancestral moral superiority. What's more, with one exception, there are no references sufficiently detailed to satisfy our yearning to understand the root cause of society's present decay. That one exception is the influence of demagogues and their underlings, the orators, "who spoke to please the people instead of saying what is best."<sup>115</sup>

For obvious reasons no one knew better than he the great potential for harm in public persuasion, for he, like his opponents, was able to "accuse, and flatter and confiscate." But unlike them, he had "never obeyed such maxims or been led by either gain or ambition . . . but kept saying what should mean for himself an inferior credit in Athens, but, for Athens, a greater one."<sup>116</sup>

It must be admitted, that the oratory of Demosthenes poses an awkward problem. He clearly made no attempt to give a comprehensive account of the problem of the

beginning of change and decay. He tells us only that it happened-and very little else. He never says that historical decay might have been avoided, nor does he give us a theory of state. There is no trace of the biological analogy in his work, nor are there statements setting up Providence, Fate, or Fortune as the arbiter of national destiny. And one could search in vain for a recurrent pattern of rise and fall, there is no hint that he conceived the infinite succession of events to be repetitive in any fixed order, or that decadent communities were characterized by definite tendency to rebound from the cess-pools of moral and spiritual decay into which they had fallen. Conversely, it may be supposed that he believed the process of history not to be unalterably degenerative, or else, his attempts to awaken his fellow Athenians from the sloth of apathy and greed would be impotent against the force of so powerful a law--such an idea would be in conflict with the exhortatory purpose of his oratory. Unfortunately, a more meaningful discussion of the minute aspects of relevant questions posed here would be impossible in view of the limits imposed by my original intentions, and the reader must be referred to books dealing with the subject, especially philological texts that might shed light on the possibly relevant implications of his language. However, it is probable that little or nothing having any important

bearing on these points will be found. What little I found was quickly stated.

Similar non-cyclic beliefs in civilizational decline are common throughout the literature of the period. More importantly, implicit in most of these ideas is, if not a cyclic view, at least the conception that the problems of the past will recur from time to time and a knowledge of what has transpired, therefore, will provide the man of action with a pool of information to draw upon for future solutions. We could cite such examples of this view in the poetry of Choerilus or the political literature of Theramenes and in numerous passages in the literature of the later generation Platonists and Aristotelians, as well as in the varied writings of other philosophical groups, many of which we have mentioned in an earlier section. These minor writers, however, are far outside the thematic limits of this chapter. Nevertheless, it would well serve our present purpose to mention, at least briefly, certain historians writing between Xenophon and Polybius who may have a possible bearing on our theme.

A number of historians of the fourth century B.C., whose complete works are not extant might be mentioned. However, since we only have fragments left of their once bulky accounts it is easy to fall into serious misconceptions regarding their views of causality, or as to whether or not they perceived a pattern in the

long litany of human misery. It follows then, that our comments in this respect are conjectural at best and therefore most tentative.

Of these histories, the most attractive by far is the so-called universal history of Ephorus of Cyme (fl. 350 B.C.), an ardent admirer of Isocrates, whose thirty books told the story of man from creation to his own time. From what Diodorus has preserved, and from the few and scattered references in the testimonia, it is not impossible to infer that he held a cyclic conception of history. But when this has been stated, the fact remains that, as all scholars agree, we must use the greatest caution in accepting the few second and third hand references we have to his history and cannot embrace at present the circularity of his system as fact.

The other historians of the period are really little more than names, though Philistius of Syracuse is of some interest. He constructed an annalistic record of the follies and fortunes of Syracuse from primitive times to the present. But of this history we know little and nothing at all of the causal agent at work in the historical process. Nevertheless, later writers did suggest that he believed that a natural rhythm could be found in the coursing of human history, though this idea was reinterpreted from his contemporary critics who criticized the motive and philosophy of the

writer himself.<sup>117</sup>

In the Hellenistic era, the strongly Hellenized Berossus, whom we have met in a different context, is conspicuous for his circular conception of history and his profound sense of civilizational decay. His phenomenal history covered 468,215 years of human development; from the dawn of time down to the death of Alexander. And though much of his account was fanciful and sacred in character, his digressions on purely secular themes, as we infer from the testimonia, possessed a high ideal of historical veracity. His concepts are important because his understanding of the supposed influences of the stars upon human affairs and terrestrial events by their positions and aspects became the prevailing view in Stoic thought, producing a major revival of cyclic theorizing throughout the entire period before Christ, as noted earlier.

We should now move on to our final and, in some respects, our most important area of analysis. It is not that other Hellenistic historical products are unworthy of further consideration, for the stream of political speculation and history writing flows with only slightly diminished lustre throughout the period. But a discussion of much of this literature would be repetitive or else redundant as it would bring us back, primarily to an examination of Stoicism, the leading intellectual force of the day. That small



part now overlooked can be safely eliminated without loss of essential information.

Thus, we approach the final, and I am quite convinced, the most important figure to be considered in this chapter, important that is, in terms of the historical cycle. I am of course, speaking the noble Achaean Polybius of Megalopolis (c. 198-117), the famous son of Lycortas, and the last of the truly classical Greek historians.

In examining his theoretical views of historical causation we reach a suitable denouement for our study of the variety of historical concepts allied with the cyclic theory. In fact, in Polybius, we meet several characteristics of the historical cycle previously discussed, including the biological metaphor, the idea of epochal repetition, and the primitivistic theory of decline. For Polybius these ideas comprise the objective roots of the main force of the growth and decay, the objective roots of the historical processes indicated way.

By common acclaim, Thucydides is first among Greek Historians, though Polybius must surely follow very close behind. Both have many characteristics in common. Both their minds for example, were molded under the respective influences of the paramount philosophical movements of their periods (Sophism and Stoicism respectively). Both had the highest

regard for historical truth; both were insatiably curious and studied limited segments of mankind to formulate what they believed to be valid laws of political behavior. And above all, both could not have achieved lasting fame had it not been for the kindly patronage of time and circumstance.

There were some important differences too. After all, there is a tremendous difference both in cultural standards and socio-political environment between the second century Greece of Polybius and the fifth century Greece of Thucydides. Nevertheless, each of these men were Greeks and the common identity of their high social status is undeniable. However, a Greek hostage living in Scipio's Rome did not have much in common with a dishonored Athenian Strategos living two centuries or so earlier--except, perhaps, that both were subject to the same rational and empirical tendencies, and, more importantly, both sought to discover long term causes in the broad sweep of political and moral issues that characterized trends in Greek social evolution. Finally, they tried to estimate the effects of empire building on the national character, and to fit related historical events into a logical pattern of cause and effect. So although their historiographical goals were similar, the fame of Thucydides rests upon his history of the Peloponnesian war, and unbeknownst to him, what were to be the fading days of classical glory

and the beginning of the end of Hellenic order, while the greatness of Polybius rests on his theoretical discussion of government and his analysis of the Roman constitution.

For these reasons, among others, Polybius represents a major departure from Thucydides and other Greek historians. For he is looking away from Greece altogether, to the west, to a new world, a world yet indebted to the intellectual and artistic glory of Greece, but one subdued and bowed by the growing might of Rome--a young giant whose mission it would be to absorb Greek culture, and teach her civilization to the west.

But what of our author himself? Fortunately, his biography is not open to question, and his character well known.

He was born to leadership in the Achaean League, for his father Lycortas was that confederacy's leading statesman. Soon after reaching the age of 30, he was carried to the eternal city as one of the thousand or so political hostages taken by Rome for the League's part in the Third Macedonian War, the conflict that brought Greece under Roman dominion. Fortunately for the young nobleman, he was taken in by the philhellene Paullus and his son Scipio Aemilianus. He developed a close and lasting friendship with the young Scipio, through whom he would meet the most important men of

Rome and Greece. Though a prisoner, he was able to travel freely on diplomatic and political missions throughout Italy, Spain, Gaul and North Africa, and therefore, was in a most excellent position to write his "Universal History". It is a work of high merit, tracing the steps of Rome on the road to greatness from 220 B.C. and the start of the Punic war to the obliteration of Carthage in 146 B.C.

In the sixth book of this history, Polybius pauses to discuss his views on governments, and to illustrate and praise those elements of the Roman constitution that enabled her to acquire and maintain its Mediterranean hegemony.<sup>119</sup> In so doing, he reconstructs the origin and development of Rome (and by implication, all nations) according to the laws of growth and decline as related to his view of anacyclosis, "a cyclical movement in history."<sup>120</sup> He follows Plato in assuming a sequence in constitutional forms and postulates a periodic return to barbarism as the result of a cycle of natural disasters.

Polybius owes much to the eighth book of Plato's Republic, and himself indicates his debt to the philosopher when he says:

Now it may well be that the Theory of the natural transformation of constitutions into one another is expounded with more exactness in Plato and certain other philosophers; but since the theory is complete and stated at some length, it can be grasped by only a few.<sup>121</sup>

In contrast to Plato's theory of constitutional degeneration, Polybius's presentation is more historically

accurate, although somewhat less sophisticated--an observation not lost to Polybius himself:

Therefore I shall attempt a summary explanation of as much of this theory as I consider pertinent to a serious history and suited to the common understanding of my readers. If anything seems omitted because of the generalized character of my account, the section of detailed discussion (viz. down to Chapter 10) will amply compensate for any matters that may not raise some difficulty.<sup>122</sup>

In his scheme there are six kinds of constitutions that devolve each one from its predecessor in descending order:

" . . . Three that everyone talks about and that have just been mentioned (viz. kingship, aristocracy, and democracy), and three that are cognate with these--namely monarchy, oligarchy, and ochlocracy (mob rule). Now the first to arise, naturally and without deliberation, is monarchy; succeeding monarchy, and born from it by means of planning and reforms, comes true kingship. Kingship is transformed to its cognate evil--that is, changes into tyranny--and from the elimination of this evil, aristocracy is created. Then when aristocracy has been distorted by natural process into oligarchy, and the masses in their anger punish the crimes of those in charge, democracy is born. And from the arrogance and lawlessness of democracy, in due course ochlocracy completes the cycle.<sup>123</sup>

In accordance with the central biological doctrine that says what lives must die.\* Polybius asserts that the cause of each downward transformation is due to an immutable natural law pervading all polities that dictates that any constitutional form will necessarily

\*We are already familiar with the so-called biological analogy from a number of writers, however, the simile is particularly appropriate to Polybius. It dates back at least as far as Alcmaeon of Croton who, according to Hussey, drew analogies between, "medicine and politics, (and) between the animal body and the body politic."<sup>124</sup>

decay owing to a defect inseparable from it; that is to say that each main constitutional type, when working well according to its nature, will be characterized by an appropriate vice: In kingship it is absolutism; in aristocracy it is oligarchy; in democracy it is mob-rule.

Elaborating on this scheme, we find that Polybius sees the cause of the rise of hereditary monarchy in the people's belief that the king's progeny will in important respects resemble their royal father, especially in regards to his sense of "goodness and justice."<sup>125</sup> With the passage of time the descendants of the true king view their right to the throne as a personal right and they "pandered to their own appetites because they could afford it."<sup>126</sup> The degenerate offspring grow unbearably arrogant and establish all manner of distinctions to separate themselves from the rest of their people, whom they treat with increasing contempt. And so in this manner kingship is transformed into the evil form allied to it, tyranny.

Soon, however, the better elements of society are provoked to revolution because their spirits can "least of all bear the arrogance of the rulers."<sup>127</sup> These true spirits wrest control from the tyrants and institute a government in which only those best qualified to lead rule. For a short period these Aristocrats rule justly. But they too adopt the principle of heredity and pass

their power and privileges on to their sons, so that as before power is used by the second generation aristocrats to further their own personal ends. In this way aristocracy is turned into a money-grubbing oligarchy "and the final downfall of these oligarchs was likewise similar to the disasters suffered by the tyrants."<sup>128</sup>

Now is the rule of the people. And for awhile even this debased form of governments works well. But with the passing of time the common citizenry forget the value of the benefits of free speech and equality and "take them for granted."<sup>129</sup> The grandchildren of these democrats begin to lust after more and more power for themselves or their particular group, and the people split into factions, and begin to struggle with one another for control of the state. Eventually, the small number of wealthy citizens band together behind a spokesman who squanders their money to "entice the corrupt masses in every way."<sup>130</sup> With the various factions of the state alligned behind demagogues, the real direction and power of the state is vested in the mobs which cling like leaches to those offering the most benefits. The resulting government is an anarchical form of democracy which Polybius calls cheirocracy.

The masses are now used to eat at the expense of other men and to set their hopes at living off their neighbors expense. Thus when they find a

spokesman who is ambitious and daring but excluded from civic honors due to his poverty, that is when they initiate the rule of violence; this is also the moment when they combine together and bring about murders, banishments, and redistribution of land, until they have once more become nothing but wild beasts and find a master and monarch.<sup>131</sup>

We see in this passage, then, the final turn of the wheel. Unbridled self-interest and the selfishness of the populace leads to a revolt which ends in the re-institution of monarchy. The king arises as a champion of law and order, which when restored brings a period of calm to the state so that the inhabitants can return to their crafts or professions.<sup>132</sup>

That Polybius meant the foregoing system to follow a reoccurring pattern is beyond dispute, as these lines from the Histories show:

Such is the recurring cycle of constitutions; such is the system divided by nature, according to which constitutional forms change and are transformed and return again to their original state.<sup>133</sup>

Elsewhere, commenting of the natural bases of the process, he states:

One may clearly verify my observations if one attends to the natural origin, birth and transformations of each constitution. Only the man who understands how each of these phenomena is born of a natural process can understand when, how, and where the growth, climax and transformation of each, as well as the final end of this process, will recur. I have concluded that this sort of explanation will fit the Roman constitution above all, since from the outset it has attained its structure and growth according to natural law.<sup>134</sup>

The theory seems at first glance obvious and superficial, but it has far-reaching implications for the historian. It grows from a notion of social development



as a process of compliance with the process of nature. It makes the start a part of nature whereby it becomes logically an integral part of the undulating process of life. The concept's utility for the historian is explained by Kurt Von Fritz:

The application of the general theory of biological growth and decay together with a somewhat modified application of the cycle theory to a naturally grown mixed constitution permits a closer prediction of the future. The historical observer has to determine the point in the natural development which the constitution has reached. On the basis of this observation he will then be able to predict within certain limits what further course the development will take and approximately how much time it may require.<sup>135</sup>

Though the organization of society envisaged in his description of the process is in detail far removed from what we know to be the real history of the Roman Republic, it does comply to the shifting concentrations of power within the various estates of Roman society and complies also in a very general way to the pattern of Greek, especially Athenian history. Nevertheless, we are led to assume that Polybius, as a historian could hardly have been completely unaware of the fact that history did not always follow the cycle which he describes and on the basis of which, he claims it is possible to predict the future, as he does in these lines:<sup>136</sup>

And in fact the Roman constitution is the one above all that we may understand if we consider it according to this method: That is, we may understand its formation, growth, and climax, as well as its coming transformation for the worse. For, as I have just remarked, this state, more than any other, has from the outset proceeded in its formation and growth according to natural law,

and it will also change into an opposite condition according to this law.<sup>137</sup>

From the foregoing passage it is clear that Polybius was deadly serious about the circularity of his system and equally serious as to its predictive value. How, then, do we explain the discrepancy between his cycle of political change and the actual pattern of history?

Some have tried to explain away the inconsistency by arguing that Polybius (as he himself asserted) presented an oversimplification, merely giving examples of typical transitions from one polity to another "out of a much greater number of other possibilities."<sup>138</sup> This interpretation reduces his cycle to a schematic illustration of generally valid principles to the purpose of showing the reader how all governments become jealous of power, grow corrupt and overbearing and are eventually toppled when the downtrodden and wretched recipients of their neglect and scorn rise to take matters into their own hands.<sup>139</sup> According to this view, the cycle is "merely an illustration of this fundamental fact and does not mean that the constitution must actually follow upon one another in the sequence indicated."<sup>140</sup> However, everything said by Polybius belies this view, as Von Fritz explains:

There remains the hard fact that, according to Polybius' own claim, predictions can be made on the basis of the cycle theory and these predictions concern not only the future deterioration of a government as such but also the form of government

which will succeed it, since this can be inferred from the point in the cycle at which the present government finds itself. There cannot, therefore, be the slightest doubt that Polybius took the cycle theory much more seriously than the interpretation mentioned admits.

Moreover, in connection with his admission of divesting the theory of its complexity, Polybius promises that these deficiencies will be remedied later on in the chapter. But as von Fritz has shown, the only alterations or corrections presented further on are those surrounding the special circumstances of cities such as Thebes or Athens which had overcome the compulsion of the cycle through the exceptional abilities of leaders of high merit.<sup>142</sup> Thus, argues von Fritz, "it is clear that in Polybius' opinion the oversimplification consisted merely in the omission of special circumstances which might temporarily prevent the mechanism of the cycle from having its full effect."<sup>143</sup> In other words, the oversimplification rests not in his description of the succeeding stages of the Political cycle itself, but in the omission of historical events that conspired, for a moment, to slow the inevitable process of decline.

Forced to accept his sincerity concerning the periodic turn of political events we are hard put to eliminate the "fundamental deficiency of his cyclic theory."<sup>144</sup> But the fact is, there is no satisfactory explanation for the defect anyway, outside that is, from the inherent deficiency of the cyclic view itself, as von Fritz asserts:

The deficiency is right in the cycle theory itself. For anyone who would make historical predictions on the basis of the theory, even if only to the extent to which Polybius declares this to be entirely feasible, would be very much mistaken indeed.<sup>145</sup>

Moreover, we cannot say why Polybius holds fast to the sequence of constitutional decline described in Book VI when history provides many examples of any kind of transition. It might be argued that his cycle is not meant to typify the historic phases of any specific state, but to comprehend the collective political experience of the Hellenic city-states in general. In this view, the cycle does not present a fixed pattern of change to which each polis must rigidly conform, but a broad epochal round through which Hellenic society as a whole progresses. Each internal division of this more general cycle is characterized by the introduction and dominance of a distinctive polity, though not necessarily to the exclusion of other types. And though such a view allows for the apparent diversity of governments in any age, there is not a single shred of evidence to support this hypothesis. In fact, just the opposite is true, as Polybius is most explicit in his view that a knowledge of his cycle will confer upon the intelligent observer the ability to forecast the "exact time when a change in any given state will take place."<sup>146</sup> So, as attractive as the theory is, we have no reasonable alternative but to reject it as being out of concord with the facts. Granted all this, we must restate our general conclusion

that it is impossible to smooth over this basic deficiency in his cyclic theory. Any attempt to bridge this defect must be adjudged a complete failure.

Polybius again lays himself open to a further charge of self-contradiction when he suggests that the natural cycle of "pure and simple constitutions" can be arrested by combining them in a constitutional form in which the deleterious aspects of each are counteracted by the rest.

The combination of this idea with the political cycle is, as Badian has said, an uneasy one "since there is no proper place in a natural cycle for a mixed constitution, that by definition, puts an end to it."<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, he believed that the Roman constitution was just such a polity: "The consuls represented the monarchical principle; the senate, the aristocratic one; and the popular assemblies the democratic."<sup>148</sup>

It is unquestionable, that in a number of passages Polybius expresses a firm belief that the mixed constitution is the only way out of the vicious cycle of political revolution. This is the best illustration of the point:

Such being the power of each element both to injure and to assist the others, the result is that their union is sufficient against all charges of circumstance; hence, one could find no better form of constitution. Whenever some common terror threatens them from abroad and compels them to take common counsel and help one another, the power of their state proves itself so strong that no requirement is left unfulfilled . . . This explains why the particular nature of the constitution proves

irresistible and attains everything on which it is resolved . . . No one element of the state is independent, and a plan formed by one part can be opposed and impeded by the others: accordingly, the one in question cannot acutally outgrow the others or dominate them. All parts abide by the traditional constitutional practices because they are checked from aggressive impulses and because they fear from the outset the opposition of one of the others.<sup>149</sup>

For Polybius, the mixed constitution as an ideal went back at least as far as the Sparta of Lycurgos. Lycurgos, the founder of Sparta's military regime, recognized that societal decline is the result of "necessity and natural law and that every form of state that is unmixed and directed by one ruling element is unstable, because it will soon turn into the particular form of corruption that is closely related to it and naturally tends to accompany it."<sup>151</sup> To avoid the deficiencies inherent in the simple constitutional types, Lycurgos set out to compound the best elements of each together; "in this way no element would develop beyond its safe limits and be distorted into the cognate corruptions. As a result, no one part would decline or sink deeply."<sup>152</sup>

But it is in his very examination of the Spartan constituion that Polybius is brought into a self-contradicting argument. The premises surrounding his idea of the supposedly indestructable mixed constitution had fallen; it was no more. In Polybian terms it had not withstood the alleged necessity of the cycle. F. W. Walbank elaborates:

In view of the irrefutable fact that the Sparta of Lycurgos no longer existed, it would have been idle for Polybius, once he had introduced that classical example of a mixed constitution, to pretend to maintain that his type of constitution was immortal. And so logically it must follow that the Roman constitution would some day also come to an end.<sup>153</sup>

In other passages this glaring inconsistency is apparently recognized by Polybius; furthermore, it is buttressed by his perception of contemporary signs of decline in the Roman state.

For these reasons he was forced to sacrifice "the theory that Rome owed everything to her mixed constitution," and had to admit also that "her government was aristocratic when she reached her greatness in the time of the Second Punic War."<sup>154</sup> Finally, we may conclude with Bury, that Polybius' theory of a mixed constitution "was a mechanical and wholly inadequate theory, even if Rome had possessed a constitution in which the equilibrium of the three constitutional principles was maintained. In abandoning it Polybius was forced to recognize that the secret of life did not lie in a mechanical adjustment of the parts of the state, and to admit that there was no guarantee that Rome herself would not decline."<sup>155</sup>

It is this which makes intelligible--and therewith imparts an especial significance for the present narrative--his cyclic theory as applied to the destiny of Rome. For now he tells us that the Roman constitution "above all others was subject to natural laws" (Bk VI, II 12-14) and that it too was closely connected with the

theory of anacyclosis. We may thus conclude that, in the end, Polybius believed the mixed Roman constitution to be only less ephemeral than other types and like them destined to decay in accordance with the transcendent laws of nature.

Thus far, we have examined what Polybius terms the internal causes of decline; though of the external causes he warns us there is no regular method of investigation.<sup>156</sup> Needless to say, what Polybius means by external cause is his theory of anacyclosis. In regards to this process I am in accord with three widely held opinions: first, that the cycle is unqualifiedly eternal; second, that it is based on a concept of transcendent time; and third, that it derives from a "newer Stoic version of the theory of cyclic succession of forms of governments."<sup>157</sup>

The latter point has been maintained by a number of reputable scholars who support their claims with a convincing array of arguments. Both Bury and Laquer, whose opinions in this regard are highly respected, assert that Polybius received the theory of cyclic succession from his contact with Stoicism in Rome; more specifically, from Panaetius the founder of the middle Stoa.<sup>158</sup> In regards to this point, it can be proven beyond a doubt that Polybius was a personal acquaintance of Panaetius, who like himself, lived for a time in the circle of Scipio Aemilianus.<sup>159</sup>



In support of this contention, J. B. Bury reminds us of a telling passage in the First Book of Cicero's De Republica, in which a friend reminds Scipio that he formerly "conversed with Panaetius in the presence of Polybius, two Greeks most deeply versed in politics."<sup>160</sup> Finally, the argument is given a convincing edge by the fact that Polybius' theory concerning the origin of human morality and notion of justice are in close accord with doctrines promulgated by Panaetius.

Polybius' progression of thought concerning the relationship of Stoic ekpyrosis to his anacyclosis is especially interesting in light of Panaetius's philosophical progressivism. Panaetius evolved from an almost morbid fascination with a lost age to a feeling that the past must be transcended rather than simply longed after. He believed this could be achieved by the cultivation of the arts and sciences.<sup>161</sup> His hope that man could be perfected led him to reject certain doctrines of the older Stoics, including, surprisingly enough, the idea of ekpyrosis. Nevertheless, his view towards this doctrine is not one of scorn; he treats the theory with respect, as a product of high intellectual achievement and worthy of further investigation. We may presume that he discussed with Polybius, at some length, the possible ramifications of the idea even if he himself did not adhere to its principles.

At any rate, it is widely held that Polybius

believed the cycle of political change to have been governed by the physical motions of perceptible bodies in the visible heavens. Such astronomical movements-- goes the familiar argument-- determine the recurrent birth and death of all things; they are the basis for the organic rhythm of life, and the sombre cycle of human history. The following passage is important to understand, as Polybius discusses the much talked about floods and famines that periodically cause the destruction of mankind.

The reader will ask what origins I mean, and how I explain the first growth of constitutions. Sometimes because of floods or conditions of plague or death of crops or other similar causes, the human race undergoes destruction. Tradition tells us of such catastrophes in the past, and reason shows that they will often occur in the future. At such times all institutions and skills perish together; but then out of the survivors, as if from seeds, the number of mankind in due course grows again.<sup>162</sup>

Whether or not this passage reflects changes occurring throughout the cosmos as a whole or mere terrestrial vicissitudes cannot be determined, though Polybius' emphasis on external causality, indicated by his continual references to a natural law are taken by some ancient interpreters as meaning the Great Year which embraces all earthly periods within its round. Of course, we don't know whether the presumed division of the Cosmic year corresponds exactly with the cycle of political change or whether its periods follow each other without qualitative differences between them.

But, Polybius' attitude of decline in the course of history strongly implies that the cosmic cycle's successive stages are becoming worse so that in the evolution through the six stages of government, even the three "good constitutions" (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy), form a qualitatively declining sequence. Furthermore, it is quite clear that human history oscillates between two extreme cataclysms, into which the world is periodically plunged, and man is destroyed and periodically born anew.

A coherent scheme can be constructed only on the assumption then, of a Magnus Annus inspired by a clear conception of a cycle of the cosmos. The process of decay begins soon after the fall of monarchy, which represents a sort of golden age. With the fall of monarchy the decline continues with only intermittent periods of stability arising from the implementation of the "good constitutions". Finally, all is destroyed by some great disaster, bringing a close to the harsh and tragic story of man. But the cycle continues. Emerging from the ruin, survivors come together and forge those bonds which form the basis of a new civilization. But this is a civilization born of nature, and following her immutable laws, it must deteriorate and finally perish with all its races of man, back into the natural state from which once again the cycle takes its rise.

Contrary to what is usually assumed, this trans-cycle does not conform to the concept of biological naturalism. Only the various phases of the political sub-cycle go through distinct period of rise, acme, and decline. In other words, each one of the constitutional types goes through its own natural cycle of birth, growth, maturity, decline, and death. This is the biological analogy, and not the whole six-phased process of the political cycle, as is so often assumed by unwary readers. The knowledge of both cycles is necessary in order to comprehend the theory of natural transformations of constitutions. This, I believe, is what Polybius means when he tells us that the good social prognosticator must understand both the external and internal causes of political decline:

The fact that all entities are subject to decay and to change scarcely requires further argument: the very necessity imposed by nature is sufficient to provide such proof. Now there are two ways in which every kind of constitution is naturally destroyed--one way is external, the other is naturally inherent in it; the external way allows no constant method of analysis, but the internal way permits the use of a well-established one. I have already explained which kind of constitution is first in natural order, and which is second, and how they are transformed one into another; hence those who can connect the earlier parts of my discussion to the conclusion will also be able now to predict the future for themselves.163

Finally, in a broad sense, the external cycle admits of no exceptions, though, of course, the political

sub-cycle is less rigid, as historical events are not determined by the natural processes alone. In this world there is both free will and determinism, both continuity and discontinuity, both the relative and the absolute. It is the nature of Polybius not to offer a reconciliation of these opposites. Consequently, it is hazardous to make definite statements concerning their interaction. In regards to Polybius' theory, the most we can ever know is only a suggestion of the whole, but this is sufficiently definite to permit one to say that his theory, more than any other, has momentous interconnections with much of the most important thoughts surrounding the concept of the cycle. It reflects the different aspects of ancient rumors and archetypal images, ideas culturally transmitted from one generation to another, and translates them into the tools of the social theorist. In this translation, the loss is little, for the meaning is still in the flux itself.

#### CHAPTER IV: FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. R. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Meyer Reinhold, "Historians and Biographers," Hellas and Rome, ed. Douglas Mead (New York: Mentor Books, 1972), p. 173.

<sup>4</sup>Herodotus, Bk. I, Ch. v.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Bk. I, l. 207.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, Ch. x.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, Ch. xvi.

<sup>8</sup>Reinhold, p. 175.

<sup>9</sup>Jacqueline de Romilly, "La Vengeance comme explication historique dans oeuvre d Herodote," des Etudes greeques, 84 (1971), p. 315.

<sup>10</sup>R. Sealy, "Thucydides, Herodotus, and the Cause of War," Classical Quarterly, 7 (1957), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Bury, Greek Historians, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup>Sealy, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>Herodotos, Bk. 5, l. 33.

<sup>15</sup>Reinhold, p. 174.

<sup>16</sup>Bury, Greek Historians, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup>Hajo Holborn, "Greek and Modern Concepts of History," Journal of the History of Ideas, 5 (1949), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Wheelwright, p. 261.

<sup>19</sup>John Percival, "Thucydides and Uses of History," Greece and Rome, 18 (1977), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way, (1930; rpt., (New York: The Norton Library, 1964), p. 113.

<sup>21</sup>Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, trans. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1954), 11. 82-83.

<sup>22</sup>see Henry T. Rowell, "Thucydides and the Stasis in Corcyra. Thuc. III, 82-83 Veras (THUC) III, 84, "American Journal of Philology, 13, No. 92 (1964), pp. 49-55.

<sup>23</sup>Thucydides, Bk. III, Ch. xxcii.

<sup>24</sup>Jackqueline de Romilly, The Rise and Fall of States According to Greek Authors (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1977), p. 46.

<sup>25</sup>Hamilton, p. 115.

<sup>26</sup>Thucydides, Bk. I, Ch. xxii.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. lxxxii.

<sup>28</sup>David Grene, Greek Political Theory: The Image of Man in Thucydides and Plato (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 46.

<sup>29</sup>Euripides, Helena, trans. Richard Lattimore, ed. David Grene (Chicago University Press), p. 134.

<sup>30</sup>Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Antiquities of Rome, Bk. V, Ch. v.

<sup>31</sup>Edelstein, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup>Richard Lewis Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of Plato (London: MacMillan Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 299.

<sup>33</sup>R. G. Bury, "Plato and History," Classical Quarterly, 45 (1951), p. 86.

<sup>34</sup>Mulford Q. Sibley, "The Place of Classical Political Theory in the Study of Politics: The Legitimate Spell of Plato," Approaches to the Study of Politics, ed. Paul King, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1955), p. 141.

<sup>35</sup>George Gatlin, The Story of the Political Philosophers, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 160.

<sup>36</sup>J. M. Harmon, Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 160.

<sup>37</sup>Jerome Neu, "The Republic and the Organic Theory of the State," Philosophy, 46 (1957), p. 238.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>39</sup>George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (1937; rpt., New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), p. 53.

<sup>40</sup>William Body, An Introduction to the Republic of Plato (1904; rpt., New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 97.

<sup>41</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. IV, 426.

<sup>42</sup>Sibley, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>44</sup>Nettleship, p. 298.

<sup>45</sup>Sinclair, p. 161.

<sup>46</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, 1554b.

<sup>47</sup>Plato, in The Collected Dialogues, eds. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse; trans. W. H. D. Rouse (New York: A Mentor Book, 1956), p. 123.

<sup>48</sup>William Boyd, An Introduction to the Republic of Plato (1904; rpt., New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 101.



<sup>49</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 558c.

<sup>50</sup>Plato in Collected Dialogues, p. 123.

<sup>51</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 566a.

<sup>52</sup>Boyd., p. 102.

<sup>53</sup>T. S. Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought (New York: Meridian Press, 1967), p. 165.

<sup>54</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 550a.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 550a.

<sup>56</sup>Nettleship, p. 307; see also, Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 555b.

<sup>57</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 554e.

<sup>58</sup>Nettleship, p. 308.

<sup>59</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 554e.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 554e.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 560a.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 560a.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 561d.

<sup>64</sup>Ernest Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1959), p. 180.

<sup>65</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 558c.

<sup>66</sup>Nettleship, p. 302.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>68</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 546b.

- <sup>69</sup>Ibid., Bk. VIII, l. 546b.
- <sup>70</sup>Nettleship, p. 302.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 303.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 303.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 303.
- <sup>74</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. X, l. 617d.
- <sup>75</sup>Plato, Laws, Bk. IV, ll. 717a-729b.
- <sup>76</sup>Plato, Phaedrus, l. 537.
- <sup>77</sup>Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII, l. 564b.
- <sup>78</sup>Aristotle, Politics, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: The Modern Library, 1943), Bk. II, l. 30.
- <sup>79</sup>William Archibald Dunning, A History of Political Theories (London: The MacMillan Company, 1921), p. 50.
- <sup>80</sup>Aristotle, Politics, Bk. V, 1286, ll. 10-15.
- <sup>81</sup>R. G. Mulgan, Aristotle's Political Theory, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 129.
- <sup>82</sup>Aristotle, Politics, Bk. V, 1286, ll. 10-20.
- <sup>83</sup>Herbert J. Muller, The Uses of the Past (New York: New American Library, 1952), p. 76.
- <sup>84</sup>Sinclair, pp. 212-213.
- <sup>85</sup>Lovejoy and Boas, p. 173.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 173.
- <sup>87</sup>Aristotle, in Lovejoy and Boas, p. 174.
- <sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 173.
- <sup>90</sup>Barker, p. 265.
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 265.
- <sup>92</sup>Aristotle, Politics, 1268b, ll. 34-37.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid., 1264a, ll. 2-5.
- <sup>94</sup>Eric Voeglin, pp. 289-291.
- <sup>95</sup>Edelstein, pp. 69-70.
- <sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 145.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>98</sup>Lovejoy and Boas, p. 2.
- <sup>99</sup>Bury, p. 163.
- <sup>100</sup>Isocrates, Panegyricus in Greek Orations, ed. Robert Connor (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 37.
- <sup>101</sup>de Romilly, Rise and Fall, pp. 119-121.
- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>104</sup>Isocrates, Areopagiticus, ed. George Norlin, (London: W. Heinemann, 1926), p. 78.
- <sup>105</sup>Bury, Ancient Historians, p. 166.
- <sup>106</sup>Edelstein, p. 134.
- <sup>107</sup>Lovejoy and Boas, p. 93.
- <sup>108</sup>Edelstein, p. 59.

109 Ibid., p. 58.

110 Ibid., p. 58.

111 Ibid., p. 61.

112 Theophrastus, in Diogenes Laertius quoted by Edelstein, p. 61.

113 Demosthenes, Third Philippic, in Connors, pp. 102-103.

114 Demosthenes, Third Olynthiac, in Works, ed. Charles Kennedy (London: Bohn Ltd. 1852), p. 57.

115 Demosthenes quoted in de Romilly, Rise and Fall, pp. 51-52.

116 Demosthenes, Cheronese, quoted in de Romilly, Rise and Fall, p. 52.

117 M. P. Charlesworth, "Providentia and Aeternitas," Harvard Theological Review, 29 (1936), p. 114.

118 M. I. Finley, The Greek Historians (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 441.

119 Francis William Coker, Readings in Political Philosophy (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1959), p. 114.

120 Bury, Ancient Historians, p. 248.

121 Polybius, The Histories, ed. E Badian, trans. Mortimer Chambers (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc. 1966), p. 215.

122 Ibid., p. 215.

123 Ibid., pp. 214-215.

124 Hussey, p. 74.

125 Polybius, p. 216.

126 Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>135</sup>Kurt von Fritz, *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity: A Critical Analysis of Polybius' Political Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 94.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>137</sup>Polybius, p. 220.

<sup>138</sup>von Fritz, p. 76.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>147</sup>Badian, in von Fritz, p. xxxv.

148 Edelstein, p. 113.

149 Polybius, p. 229.

150 Ibid., p. 221.

151 Ibid., p. 221.

152 Ibid., p. 221.

153 F. W. Walbank, "Polybius on the Roman Constitution,"  
The Classical Quarterly, 51 (1943), p. 75.

154 Bury, Ancient Historians, p. 207.

155 Ibid., p. 207.

156 Sinclair, p. 211.

157 Bury, Ancient Historians, p. 205.

158 Walbank, p. 211.

159 Bury, Ancient Historians, p. 205.

160 Ibid., p. 204.

161 Edelstein, p. 67.

162 Polybius, p. 215.

163 Ibid., p. 265.

## CONCLUSION

We are at the end of our study--none too soon, I fear. Nevertheless, I cannot refrain from concluding with a few words of somewhat more general observation by way of summarizing my main points.

If there is to be a single lesson learned from the widely dispersed wealth of information contained in this survey, it is simply this: that to a great extent throughout the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods, men of every intellectual persuasion embraced the concept of the transiency of all phenomena, in particular that of human affairs. In addition to this perspective, there enters a consciousness of up-and-down movement, of rise and fall, of corsi and recorsi, and of a rhythmic predictability in the fortunes of humanity and change in all generated things. As we have learned, in one way or another, this perception is bound up with the non-relative, non-changing law of cosmic circularity and consequently the Greek perception of generation and destruction was reinforced.

We have seen that the details of the cycle theory vary greatly from person to person, and from school to school, but it is not with details that we are now concerned; it is rather with the concept itself which the human mind gave to itself to account for the workings of a changing yet essentially

stable world.

As I have emphasized and re-emphasized time and again throughout this essay, all the different descriptions of the process of flux and reflux result from a transmutation of empirical observations drawn from man's life in nature into an eternal law for all Being; whether expressed in terms of the lifetime of divine spirit or in terms of a political or scientific cycle, it is usually seen as part of a grander cosmic process.

This is the same law that determines the succession of the seasons, the coming and passing of generations, the growth and decline of all living things, the passing of the Great Year and the repetitive periods of improvement and decay in the historical cycle.

To be sure, some of this cyclic theorizing was pretty feeble stuff and stale stuff too; and not everyone was personally drawn to the idea, though this thesis might appear to say so. There were, it is true, those with their eyes turned to the future who believed in the possibility of human advancement and perfection, and in the linear progression of history; but they were few and not very influential. The fact is, the fortunes of non-cyclic ideas were dismal because such ideas did not conform to man's basic experience in a world reverberating in cyclic phenomena and processes.

In the final analysis, the evidence, as we have



seen, overwhelmingly supports the view that the cyclic archetype assumed a pre-eminent position in the Greek ideational realm, and was not supplanted until Christian orthodoxy imposed the linear view of history. From this time forward the cyclic theory was given less frequent and, with rare exception, less definite expression, and it began to yield up its spirit and gradually fade; and in our own century it has all but totally extinguished.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, E. N. "Indian Ages." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1955 ed.
- Agard, Walter R. The Greek Mind. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1957.
- Anderson, Florence Bennet. "Cycles of Nine." The Classical Journal, 50, No. 3 (1954-55), pp. 131-139.
- Aratus. Phaenomena. Trans. G. R. Mair. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Aristophanes. The Birds. Trans. William Arrowsmith. New York: New American Library, 1961.
- . The Frogs. Trans. Unknown. In The Eleven Comedies. New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1943.
- Aristotle. De Generatione et Corruptione. Trans. E. S. Forster. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1955.
- . Meteorologica. Trans. E. W. Webster. In The Works of Aristotle. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930.
- . Physica. Trans. R. P. Hardie. In The Works of Aristotle. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930
- . Politics. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. New York: The Modern Library, 1943.
- . Metaphysics. Trans. W. O. Ross. In Introduction to Aristotle. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, Inc., 1947.
- Saint Augustine. The City of God. Trans. Gerald G. Walsh. Ed. Vernon Bourke. New York: Image Books, 1958.
- Baldry, H. C. "Who Invented the Golden Age." The Classical Quarterly, 2 (1952), pp. 81-82.
- Barlier, Ernest. The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle. New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1959.

- Barnett, R. O. "The Epic of Kumarbi and the Theogony of Hesiod." The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 65 (1945), pp. 100-101.
- Bion. The Lament for Adonis. In Greek Literature in Translation. Eds. George Howe and Gustave Adolphus Harrier. New York: Harper and Row, 1948.
- Boas, George and Arthur O. Lovejoy. Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965.
- Boyd, William. An Introduction to the Republic of Plato. 1904; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963.
- Brandon, S. G. F. Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963.
- Brehier, Emile. The Hellenic Age. Trans. Joseph Thomas. 1938; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Burch, George Bosworth. "The Counter Earth." Osiris, 2 (1954), pp. 267-294.
- Burkert, Walter. Love and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism. Trans. Edwin L. Minor, Jr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Burn, A. R. The Pelican History of Greece. 1965; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968.
- . The World of Hesiod. 1936; rpt. New York Benjamin Blom, 1966.
- Burnyeat, M. F. "Time and Pythagorean Religion." The Classical Quarterly, 2 (1961), pp. 248-251.
- Bury, J. B. The Ancient Greek Historians. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958.
- . "Plato and History." Classical Quarterly, 45 (1951), pp. 86-94.
- . A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great. 1900; rpt. London: MacMillan Co. Ltd., 1963.
- Campbell, Joseph, ed. Pagan and Christian Mysteries. Trans. Ralph Manheim and R. F. C. Hull. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955.

- Charlesworth, M. P. "Providentia and Aeternitas."  
Harvard Theological Review, 29 (1936), pp. 114-121.
- Cicero. Marcus Tullius, De Republica, De Legibus. Trans. J. E. King. London: W. Heinemann, 1934.
- Clagett, Marshall. Greek Science in Antiquity. London: Collier MacMillan Ltd., 1969.
- Clark, R. T. Rundle. Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt. 1960; rpt. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1978.
- Cleve, F. M. The Giants of Pre-Sophistic Greek Philosophy: An Attempt to Reconstruct Their Thoughts. Vol. I. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965.
- Coker, Francis William. Readings in Political Philosophy. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959.
- Contenau, George. Everyday life in Babylon and Assyria. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1959.
- Cornford, F. M. From Religion to Philosophy. New York: Harper and Row, 1957.
- . Plato's Cosmology. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937.
- . Principium Sapiientiae. Cambridge: University Press, 1952.
- . Plato's Timaeus. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1959.
- . "Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition." In The Presocratics. Ed. Alexander P. D. Morelatos. New York: Anchor Books, 1975.
- DeLacy, Hugh. "Heraclitus of Ephesus: Structure of Change." Science and Society, 33, No. I (winter, 1969), pp. 158-167.
- de Romilly Jacqueline. "La Vengeance comme Explication historique dans l'oeuvre d'Hérodote," Revue des Etudes grecques, 84 (1971), pp. 315-321.
- . The Rise and Fall of States According to Greek Authors. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1977.
- Demosthenes. Works. Trans. Charles Rann Kennedy. London: Bohn, 1852.

- Diogenes Laertius. Lives. Trans. C. H. Oldfather.  
London: W. Heinemann, 1933.
- Dodds, E. R. The Ancient Concept of Progress. Oxford:  
The Clarendon Press, 1972.
- . "Maenadism in the Bacchae." Harvard  
Theological Review, 33, No. 3 (1940), pp. 155-  
176.
- Dunning, William Archibald. A History of Political  
Theory. London: The MacMillan Co., 1921.
- Ebenstein, William. Great Political Thinkers: Plato to  
the Present. Hinsdale, Illinois: Oryden Press,  
1951.
- Edelstein, Ludwig. The Idea of Progress in Classical  
Antiquity. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins  
Press, 1967.
- Eisler, Robert. "Metallurgical Anthropology in Hesiod  
and Plato and the Date of the 'Phoenician Lie'."  
Isis, 40, No. 120 (1949), pp. 108-113.
- Eliade, Mircea. Myths, Dreams and Mysteries. Trans.  
Philip Mariet. New York: Harber and Brothers,  
1960.
- . Myth and Reality. Trans. William R. Trask.  
In World Perspectives, 31. Ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen.  
New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963.
- . The Myth of the Eternal Return. Trans.  
Willard R. Trask. 1954; rpt. Princeton, New  
Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Erman, Adolf. Life in Ancient Egypt. Trans. H. M.  
Tirard. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971.
- Euripides. Helen. Trans. Richard Lattimore, Eds.  
David Green and Richard Lattimore. Chicago:  
University Press. 1936.
- . Works. Trans. Arthur S. Way, 1912; rpt.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- Fairbanks, Arthur. A Handbook of Greek Religion.  
New York: American Book Company, 1910.
- Farnell, Lewis Richard. The Cults of the Greek States,  
Vol. V. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909.

- Ferguson, William Scott. Greek Imperialism. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913.
- Finley, M. I., ed. The Greek Historians. New York: The Viking Press, 1959.
- Fogarty, Michael P. "The Rhythm of Change." The Review of Politics. 22 (1960), pp. 451-465.
- Fontenrose, "Work, Justice, and Hesiod's Five Ages." Classical Philology, 69, No. 1 (1974), pp. 163-178.
- Frankfort, H and H. A., John A. Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen. Before Philosophy. 1949; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1974.
- Frazer, J. G. Adonis, Attis and Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion. 1906; rpt. London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1955.
- . The Dying God. 1911; rpt. London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1955.
- . The New Golden Bough. Ed. Theodor H. Gaster. New York: Criterion Books, 1959.
- Freeman, Kathleen. The Pre-Socratic Philosophers. 1946; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953.
- Gatlin, George. The Story of the Political Philosophers. New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1939.
- Gardener, P. "Greek and Roman Mysteries." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. 1955 ed.
- Gilgamesh Epic. In The Ancient Near East. Vol. I. Trans. E. A. Speiser. James B. Pritchard, ed. 1958; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Gordon, Cyrus H. "Canaanite Mythology." In Mythologies of the Ancient World. Ed. Samuel Noah Kramer. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.
- Gould, Josiah B. "Being, the World, and Appearance in Early Stoicism and Some Other Greek Philosophies." The Review of Metaphysics, 27, No. 2 (1974), pp. 298-345.
- . "The Stoic Conception of Fate." Journal of the History of Ideas, 35, No. 1 (1974), pp. 16-26.

- Gray, John. Near Eastern Mythology. New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Co., 1969.
- Graves, Robert. The Greek Myths. 1955; rpt. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1957.
- Green, Murray. "Aristotle's Circular Movement." The Review of Metaphysics, 19, No. 73 (1966), pp. 115-132.
- Grene, David. Greek Political Theory. 1950; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Griffiths, J. Gwyn. "Archaeology and Hesiod's Five Ages." Journal of Hellenic Ideas, 17, No. 83 (1956), pp. 321-327.
- . "Did Hesiod Invent the Golden Age?" Journal of the History of Ideas, 19, No. 1 (1958), pp. 91-93.
- Guthrie, W. K. C. In the Beginning. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957.
- . "The Pre-Socratic World Picture." The Harvard Theological Review, 45, No. 2 (1952), pp. 81-93.
- Hadas, Moses. A History of Greek Literature. New York: Columbia Press, 1950.
- Hadzits, George Depue. Lucretius and His Influence. New York: Cooper Square Publishing Co., 1963.
- Hahn, David E. The Origins of Stoic Cosmology. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 1977.
- Hamilton, Edith. The Greek Way. 1930; rpt. New York: The Norton Library, 1964.
- Hamilton, Edith and Huntington Cairns, eds. The Collected Dialogues of Plato. 1938; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Harmon, J. M. Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964.
- Harrington, Wilfrid J., O.P. Key to the Bible. Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1974.
- Harrison, Jane. Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion. 1903; rpt. New York: The Norton Library, 1966.

- Hatzfeld, Jean. History of Ancient Greece. Trans. A. C. Harrison. 1963; rpt. New York: The Norton Library, 1966.
- Head, Joseph and S. L. Cranston, eds. Reincarnation: The The Phoenix Fire Mystery. New York: Julian Press Crown Publishers, 1977.
- Helm, Bertrand. "Social Roots of the Heraclitean Metaphysics." Journal of the History of Ideas, 24, No. 36 (1964), pp. 559-572.
- Henderson, Joseph L. and Maud Oakes. The Wisdom of the Serpent. 1963; rpt. New York: MacMillan Co., 1971.
- Herodotus. The Persian Wars. Trans. George Rawlinson. Intro. Francis R. G. Godolphin. New York: Random House, 1942.
- Hesiod. Theogony. Ed. with a prolegomena and commentary by M. L. West. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966.
- . The Works and Days. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. 1914; rpt. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1973.
- Hinnels, John R. Persian Mythology. New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., 1973.
- Hooke, S. H. Middle Eastern Mythology. 1963; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Homer. The Odyssey. Trans. W. H. D. Rouse. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1937.
- Horon, Adolphe G. "Canaan and the Aegean Sea: Graeco-Phoenician Origins Reviewed." Diogenes, No. 58 (1967), pp. 37-61.
- Hussey, Edward. The Pre-Socratics. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1972.
- Isocrates. Areopogiticas. In Isocrates. Ed. George Norlin. London: W. Heinemann, 1926.
- . Panegyricus. In Greek Orations. Ed. Robert Connor. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966.
- Jaeger, Werner. Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture. Trans. Gilbert Highet. 1939; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1945.



- James, E. O. The Beginning of Religion. London:  
Arrow Books, 1958.
- Jeanmaire, H. Dionysos Histoire du culte de Bacchus.  
Paris: Payot, 1951.
- Jeremais, A. "Babylonian Ages of the World." Encyclopaedia  
of Religion and Ethics, 1955, ed.
- Juvenal. Satires. Trans. G. G. Ramsay. London:  
W. Heinemann, 1928.
- Kahn, Charles H. "Pythagorean Philosophy Before Plato."  
In The Pre-Socratics. Ed. Alexander P. D. Morelatos  
New York: Anchor Books, 1975.
- Kaplan, Michael. "Ἄνεπιος and circularity." In Greek,  
Roman, and Byzantine Studies, 16, No. 2 (1975),  
pp. 125-140.
- Kerényi, C. Dionysos. Trans. Ralph Manheim. Princeton:  
Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Kees, Herman. Ancient Egypt. Trans. Ian D. Morrow.  
Ed. T. G. H. James. 1961; rpt. Chicago:  
University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Kirk, G. S. "Greek Mythology: Some New Perspectives."  
The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 92 (1972), pp.  
74-85.
- Heraclitus and the Cosmic Fragments. Cambridge:  
The Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- "Sense and Common Sense in the Development  
of Greek Philosophy." The Journal of Hellenic Studies,  
81 (1961), pp. 105-117.
- The Nature of Greek Myths. Middlesex, Eng.:  
Penguin Books, Ltd., 1970.
- Kirk, G. S. and J. E. Raven. The Presocratic Philosophers.  
1957; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Lambridis, Helle. Empedocles: A Philosophical Investigation.  
Montgomery: University of Alabama Press, 1973.
- Lang, Andrew. Myth, Ritual and Religion. 1906; rpt.  
New York: A. M. S., 1968.
- Langdon, S. "Babylonian Mysteries." Encyclopaedia of  
Religion and Ethics, 1955 ed.
- Mythology of all Races. 1931; rpt. New  
York: Cooper Square, 1964.

- Lapidge, Michael. "Stoic Cosmology." In The Stoics. Ed. John M. Rist. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Litto, James Allen. The Religious Teachers of Greece. Ed. Adelia Marion Adam. 1908; rpt. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1923.
- Long, A. A. "Empedocles Cosmic Cycle in the Sixties." In The Presocratics. Ed. Alexander P. D. Morelatos. New York: Anchor Books, 1975.
- Lucretius. The Way Things Are. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Introd. Burton Feldman. 1968; rpt. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1974.
- Macurdy, Grace Harriet. "Sun Myths and Resurrection Myths." The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 54 (1934), pp. 165-174.
- Marsh, F. B. A History of the Roman World from 146 to 30 B.C. 1935; rpt. London: Methven and Co., Ltd., 1971.
- Marshal, J. T. "Regeneration." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. 1955 ed.
- Matson, W. I. "The Naturalism of Anaximander." The Review of Metaphysics, 6, No. 3 (1953), pp. 387-395.
- Meltzer, Edmunds. "Egyptian Parallels for an Incident in Hesiod's Theogony and an Episode in the Kumarbi Myth." Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 33, No. 1 (1974), pp. 154-157.
- Mendelson, Isaac, ed. Religions of the Ancient Near East. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955.
- Morford, Mark and Robert J. Lenardon. Classical Mythology. New York: David McKay, Inc., 1971.
- Mortley, R. J. "Plato's Choice of the Sphere." Revue des Etudes grecques, 82 (1969), pp. 345-356.
- Moscatti, Sabatino. Ancient Semitic Civilizations. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960.
- Murray, Gilbert. "Dis Geniti." Journal of Hellenic Studies, 71 (1951), pp. 120-128.
- . The Five Stages of Greek Religion. 1927; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1955.

- Mulgan, R. G. Aristotle's Political Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Muller, Herbert J. The Uses of the Past. New York: New American Library, 1952.
- Mylonas, George E. Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.
- Nettleship, Richard Lewis. Lectures on the Republic of Plato. London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1958.
- Neu, Jerome. "The Republic and the Organic Theory of the State." Philosophy, 46, No. 177 (1957), pp. 16-32.
- Nock, Arthur Darby. "Orphism or Popular Philosophy?" Harvard Theological Review, 33, No. 13 (1940), pp. 301-314.
- Nilsson, Martin P. "Early Orphism and Kindred Religious Movements." Harvard Theological Review, 28, No. 1 (1940), pp. 1-7.
- Norlin, George. "Ethnology and the Golden Age." Classical Philology, 12, No. 10 (1917), pp. 351-364.
- O'Brien, Denise. Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . "Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle." The Classical Quarterly, 18 (1967), pp. 29-40.
- Ovid. The Metamorphoses of Ovid. Trans. Mary M. Innes. 1955; rpt. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975.
- Pausanias. Description of Greece. Trans. W. H. S. Jones, 1961; rpt. London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1963.
- Pearson, A. C. "Transmigration (Greek and Roman)." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. 1955 ed.
- Percival, John. "Thucydides and the Uses of History." Greece and Rome, 18, No. 2 (1977), pp. 12-26.
- Philip, J. A. Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism. Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1966.
- Pindar. The Odes of Pindar. Trans. Davison W. Turner and Abraham Moore. London: George Bell and Sons, 1898.
- . First Olympian Ode. In The Greek Poets. Moses Hadas, ed. 1953; rpt. New York: The Modern Library, 1958.

- Plato. The Collected Dialogues. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse, eds. Trans. W. H. D. Rouse. New York: New American Library, 1956.
- Polybius. The Histories. E. Badian, ed. Trans. Mortimer Chambers. New York: T. Wayne Publishers, Inc., 1966.
- Popper, Karl. The Open Society and its Enemies. Vol. I., The Spell of Plato. 1944; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Pritchard, James, ed. The Ancient Near East. Vol. I. 1958; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Reishold, Meyer. "Historians and Biographers." In Hellas and Rome. Ed. Douglas Mead. New York: A Mentor Book, 1972.
- Rohde, Erwin. Psyche. Vol. I. Introd. W. K. C. Guthrie. Trans. W. B. Hillis. 1925; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.
- Rose, H. J. Religion in Greece and Rome, 1946; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1959.
- Roux, George. Ancient Iraq. 1966; rpt. Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Rovell, Henry T. "Thucydides and the Stasis in Corcyra: Thuc., III, 82-3 Veras (Thuc.) III, 84." American Journal of Philology, 92, No. 365 (1967), pp. 49-55.
- Rubinowitz, W. G. and W. I. Matson. "Heraclitus as Cosmologist." The Review of Metaphysics, 10, No. 2 (1956), pp. 244-257.
- Sabine, George H. A History of Political Theory. 1937; rpt. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1959.
- Sambursky, S. "On Some References to Experience in Stoic Physics." Isis, 49, No. 157 (1958), pp. 331-355.
- Sandbach, F. H. The Stoics. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1975.
- Sarno, Ronald. "Hesiod: From Chaos to Cosmos to Community." The Classical Bulletin, 45, No. 5 (1969), pp. 17-23.
- Sealey, R. "Thucydides, Herodotus, and the Causes of War." Classical Quarterly, 7 (1957), pp. 1-12.

- Sebeok, Thomas A., ed. Myth--A Symposium. 1955; rpt. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1965.
- Segal, Charles Paul. "The Character and Cults of Dionysus and the Unity of the Frogs." Harvard Studies of Classical Philology, 65 (1961), pp. 207-231
- Seligman, Paul. The "Apeiron" of Anaximander: A Study in the Origin and Function of Metaphysical Ideas. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1962.
- Sibley, Mulford Q. "The Legitimate Spell of Plato." Approaches to the Study of Politics. Ed. Roland Young Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1955.
- Sinclair, T. A. A History of Greek Political Thought. New York: Meridian Books, 1967.
- Singer, Charles. A Short History of Scientific Ideas. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Skemp, J. B. Plato's Statesman. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1952.
- Smith, Kirby Flower. "World Ages (Greek and Roman)." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1955 ed.
- Soderblom, N. "Zoroastrian Ages of the World." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1955 ed.
- Solmsen, Freidrich. Hesiod and Aeschylus. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949.
- Stewart, Douglas J. "Hesiod and the Birth of Reason." Antioch Review, 26, No. 2 (Spring, 1966), pp. 213-231.
- Sweeney, Leo, S.J. Infinity in the Presocratics. The Hague: Martinus Nighoff, 1972.
- Taylor, A. E. A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928.
- Teggart, Frederick. "The Argument of Hesiod's Works and Days." Journal of the History of Ideas, 8 (1947), pp. 45-77.
- Theocritus. Idyll XV. In Greek Literature in Translation. Trans. C. S. Calverly. Eds. George Howe and Gustave Adolphus Harrier. New York: Harper and Row, 1924.
- Theognis. Maxims. In Greek Literature in Translation. Trans. J. H. Frere. Ed. George Howe and Gustave Adolphus Harrier. New York: Harper and Row, 1924.

- Thomson, G. "From Religion to Philosophy." The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 73 (1953), pp. 77-84.
- Toynbee, Arnold J. A Study of History. Vol. II, 1954; rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Company, Ltd., 1965.
- Uphill, Eric. "The Egyptian Sed-Festival Rites." Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 24, No. 2 (1965), pp. 365-383.
- Virgil. Works. Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough. London: W. Heinemann, 1918.
- Vlastos, Gregory. "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies." Classical Philology, 42, No. 3 (1947), pp. 156-178.
- . Plato's Universe. Seattle: University of Press, 1975.
- Voeglin, Eric. Plato and Aristotle. Vol. III of Order and History. New Orleans: Louisiana State University Press, 1957.
- von Fritz, Kurt. The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954.
- Walbank, F. W. "Polybius on the Roman Constitution." The Classical Quarterly, 57 (1943), pp. 73-89.
- . "The Text of Hesiod's Theogony and the Hittite Epic of Kumarbi." The Classical Quarterly, 5 (1955), pp. 198-206.
- . Hesiod and the Near East. Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1966.
- West, M. L. Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Wheelwright, Philip. Heraclitus. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- . ed. The Presocratics. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957.
- White, J. E. Manchip. Ancient Egypt: Its Culture and History. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970.
- Willoughby, Harold R. Pagan Regeneration, 1929; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Winnington, R. P. Euripides and Dionysus, 1948; rpt.  
Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969.