SOME CONCEPTUAL PRESUPPOSITIONS
OF GREEK POLITICAL THEORY

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Conceptual Presuppositions and Conceptual Systems

In recent years, philosophers seem to have become particularly interested in the study of conceptual systems. They have come to realize that the most interesting aspect of the presuppositions of a thinker is often the system of interrelations of the concepts he more or less unconsciously employs rather than the content of any single idea. Accordingly, such phrases as "the appraisal of conceptual systems" and "the most general features of our conceptual structure" recur in philosophers' descriptions of their own activity.[1]

This activity may take a more systematic or historical turn depending on whether one is predominantly interested in our own conceptual system or in the conceptual systems of other periods and other cultures. For both purposes, however, the study of the ancient Greek ways of thinking is of considerable interest. Their conceptual system was, it seems to me, similar enough to ours to make a confrontation between the two useful for systematic purposes, in addition to its overwhelming historical importance to us. At the same time it is sufficiently far removed from our conceptual system to make the differences frequently quite striking, however well hidden they often are by subsequent adjustments and conventional interpretations.

A number of recent studies have in fact cast some interesting light on the peculiarities of the Greek conceptual habits and on their differences from our ways with our own concepts. A good case in point is the survey of "the most powerful words of commendation" of the Greeks in their social, religious and legal setting by A. H. Adkins in *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960). Among other things, Adkins brings out systematically the close connection which there was between these central "words of commendation", in particular between the concept of *aretē* (virtue, excellence) on one hand, and success or competitive superiority on the other. Connections of this kind had often been commented on before (Snell, Schwartz), but they had not been examined in as wide a setting before Adkins.

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Another study which is of a special interest for the purposes of this paper is *The Development of Plato's Ethics* by John Gould (Cambridge, 1955). One of the main conceptual points made by Gould is that for Socrates and early Plato the kind of knowledge that went together with virtue was *knowing how* and not *knowing that,* and that "intellectualistic" misunderstandings on this score have misled many earlier interpreters. Gould's thesis is controversial, however, and has been effectively criticized by several scholars.[2] There obviously is an element of truth in Gould's thesis, although the relation of the two kinds of knowledge in Socrates and Plato remains problematic.[3]

In this paper I shall advance a similar general thesis concerning the conceptual system that underlies the work of the central Greek thinkers, especially the work of Plato and Aristotle, and illustrate it by means of examples taken from the sphere of Greek ethical, political and legal thinking (and to some extent also of their practice in these departments). Within the scope of a single article, it is of course impossible to delineate the applicability of this thesis as carefully as it seems to deserve, or to indicate all the qualifications it needs. Suffice it to warn against one misinterpretation. I do not think that any general conceptual presuppositions automatically "explain" why a philosopher adopted the doctrines he in fact did. The linguistic and conceptual tools of a thinker do not prejudge his theories in the way the simple-minded versions of the Wharfian hypothesis claim. Very often a major thinker is struggling to free himself of the fetters of the conceptual system of his environment. Adkins gives striking indications of the sense in which Socrates and Plato were attempting a reform of the ordinary Greek value system, including a re-evaluation of the relations of *aretē* to the concept of success on one hand and to the concept of justice on the other. This does not diminish the interest of the presuppositions, however, for without understanding them we cannot in such cases really appreciate the problems which a philosopher like Plato was facing, nor the reasons why he was worried about them. It is just for this reason that Adkins was able to put so many things in Plato and other Greek writers into a fresh perspective.

The Telic Character of Greek Thought

The thesis I want to put forward is that the concept of a *telos,* that is to say, of an end, aim or outcome occupied a special place in the Greek conceptual system. The Greeks had a tendency to discuss all phenomena (events, activities, actions, processes, performances, etc.) from the vantage point of their ends or outcomes, and were not happy when they could not do this. The idea of an end or aim was an essential part of their conceptual repertoire; it had to be used in order really to understand anything rationally.

It is well known that large parts of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle were teleological in the familiar sense of the word; i.e. that they postulated explicit theories according to which certain parts or aspects of the universe, sometimes including the whole universe itself, were striving to realize certain ends or aims.

What I have in mind here is something more than these explicitly teleological or telic theories.[4] In my view, these theories are usually only particular manifestations (among others) of a much more widespread and much more pervasive way of conceptualizing whatever one is dealing with. This more general tendency might be called *implicit teleology,* for often it does not take the form of explicit assumptions or theories but can only be seen from the way philosophers and other thinkers handle their conceptual tools. It might also be called *conceptual* teleology as distinguished from *doctrinal* teleology. If I am right, it often appears in forms that have nothing to do with teleological theories; for instance, it may appear as proness to certain types of arguments or to certain types of ambiguity.[5]

How can this insight into the conceptual telelology of the Greeks help us to understand their political theory and practice? I shall try to answer this question by considering a number of relatively special problems.

The Concept of Law Among the Greeks

I have argued elsewhere[6] that in the philosophy of nature this implicit teleology is betrayed by the relative neglect of the idea of a law of nature by Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. Even though the idea of a law as a mere regularity, abstracted from the outcome to which it eventually will give rise, was not unknown in Greece, it remained relatively undeveloped, and was especially neglected by Plato. Plato and Aristotle tried to explain natural phenomena primarily in terms of their ends or in terms of what they are "imitating". They remained cold to the idea, in so far as they ever really conceived it, that the idea of a law "for the sake of law" could play a central role in understanding nature.

Somewhat in the same way, it seems to me, the idea of law was neglected in Greek social and political thinking. It is not that we do not hear a great deal of the law and of many particular laws. The point is that the idea of a law intellectually separated from the outcomes of the individual acts of following the law remained undeveloped and was actually shunned to a surprising extent by the Greeks. The question is not one of value; it is not whether the idea of following a rule or of acting freely in accordance with it was conceived as having value in itself, apart from the production of certain results. The crucial point is really whether the idea of merely adhering to the letter of the law or rule, in brief, the idea of law as imposing a regularity on people's behavior, played a significant role in Greek social thinking and social practice, independently of whether this role was conceived of as instrumental or as having intrinsic value.

This point may be illustrated in various ways. In moral philosophy a distinction is often made between act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism. In the former, individual acts are judged on the basis of their consequences; in the latter, a comparison is made of the consequences of following different rules, and a choice is made between them on the basis of these consequences. In the latter case, the idea of a regularity as abstracted from the concequences of the individual acts of following it enters into the consideration in an important way.

It thus follows from my general thesis that the idea of rule-utilitarianism was likely to remain undeveloped by the Greeks, in spite of the idea that in rule-utilitarianism the following of a rule is thought of merely as an instrument of bringing about certain results.

Conversely, it may be pointed out that Aristotle obviously valued an activity *(praxis)* higher as a mode of human behavior than a process of bringing about a certain product (i.e. production or *poiesis)*. This does not mean, however, that Aristotle was able to free himself of the fetters of the teleological conceptual system, although he was to some extent trying to do so. In fact, the way in which he actually characterizes the difference between activities and productions takes him right back to the telic fold. The implicit teleology had so strong a hold of him that he had to find a *telos* even for the activities that ostensibly have none. Since there is nothing apart from the activity that could serve as a *telos*, it must be the activity itself that is the *telos*, a true Greek was forced to think here; and this is in fact just what Aristotle says of activities.

It must be noted, furthermore, that a law or a system of laws does not have to be conceived of in the spirit of a "mere" regularity. A law may e.g. be conceived of as defining the ends of a state or of the political activity that takes place in a state; and we shall find that this is in fact how the Greeks often viewed their laws.[7] What I suggest is merely that the idea of law as a regularity apart from its consequences was not popular in ancient Greece.

Many features of this syndrome are rather well known. One of them is the fact that the difference between lawmaking and the administration of the law, i.e. between the legislature and the judiciary, was often extremely fuzzy and sometimes virtually non-existent. A change in the law could sometimes be the result of a private individual's case "against the law", decided by a fairly small "court of law" and not by anything like an assembly.[8] The Greeks had little use for the idea that once a law is passed, it can be relied on "blindly" to find the right judgment, that the function of a judge can often be merely to ascertain the relation of the acts of the accused to the letter of the law. Hence individual acts of applying the law retain the independence of the "will of the legislature"; they have to be judged and justified in the same way as the original law was judged and justified. The acts of private citizens were deemed on the same grounds of the common good as the laws of the state. As a consequence, as Adkins says, "the jury could be swayed by other considerations than the simple question 'has the accused broken the law or not?'" (p. 203). These "other considerations" were apt to concern directly the interests of the state. To quote Adkins again: "If, in reading a Greek forensic speech, one has in mind the practice of a modern court of law, the most prominent oddity in Greek practice is the never-failing mention of the speaker's services to the state where such have been performed, not as a mitigating circumstance when he has been found to be guilty, but as a plea intended to justify his acquittal. Such words as one might expect to find in the mouth of politicians justifying their actions before assembly are uttered by ordinary citizens in ordinary cases of all kinds" (p. 201). It would be a serious

mistake to see in the appeals Adkins describes symptoms of corruption or cynicism. What they betray is not a moral atmosphere different from ours, but a different conceptual atmosphere.

The Concept of Justice In Greece

The idea of justice plays of course an important role in legal theory and legal practice. But what this concept contained was usually something different from a merely formal adherence to the commands of the law. Justice was less a "formal" or "legal" than a "material" or "moral" concept; it was related closely on one hand to the moral ideas of impartiality and fairness and on the other hand to the ideas of the common good and interests of the state. "It must be noted", writes Sir Ernest Barker, "that no legal significance attaches to 'justice' in Plato's use of the word. Justice (δικαιοσύνη) ... is one of the virtues that constitute moral goodness (ἀρετή) Such goodness is the quality both of an individual soul and of a community of individuals; and justice, therefore, is also a quality of both. It is thus one of the constituent parts both of individual morality and of social morality; but it is with *morality* rather than law that it is connected in either form".[9] "Nor was Plato, in conceiving justice in this sense, very far removed from the current ideas of Greece" (p. 207).

For the Greeks, the purpose of "the administration of justice" was not just to apply the rules the legislator had set forth, but to ascertain the relation of the acts of the accused to the material and moral concepts of fairness and impartiality, as well as to the interest of the state. "That men without any special learning whatsoever could act as judges was due to the fact that a judge was not required to know the law. It was up to the parties in a case to appeal to the law, if they wanted to do so. The judge considered only those points of law that were referred to by the plaintiff or by the accused. His task was to find a solution to the dispute that satisfied the requirements of fairness and reasonableness rather than simply to apply the norms the lawgiver had laid down".[10] However, the quest of fairness and impartiality was not the only aim. Adkins points out that when an accused in a Greek court of law emphasized the services he had rendered to the state, this was not an appeal to emotions. It was part and parcel of the accepted mode of argumentation. "In these courts it is the regular practice to show, when asking for justice, that it is also advantageous to the city, *sūmpheron (lusiteloun) tēi polei*" (Adkins p. 204).

In his *Rhetorica* I, 15, 1375b3 ff. Aristotle advises in the same spirit an advocate to "plead that the just is something real and of actual utility, and not merely a matter of what seems good to the authorities; and that it cannot, therefore, be simply identified with written law — — the more so as written law may fail to fulfill the true purpose of law".

It may seem that my point is belied by the distinction Aristotle makes in the *Ethica Nicomachea* V, 1, 1129a23 ff. between two senses of justice: "The 'just' therefore means that which is lawfull and that which is equal or fair" (1129a33—34).

Prima facie this appears to mark a perfect counter-example to my thesis that Greek thinkers like Aristotle were not apt to have a clear-cut idea of law as a regularity, for he says by way of explanation to the sense of justice as lawfulness: "It is therefore clear that lawful things are just in one sense of the word, for what is lawful is decided by legislature, and the several decisions of the legislature we call rules of justice" (1129b 2—14). It is in fact clear that this is a much clearer statement of the idea of justice as legality than we find in most other sources, and therefore is a step away from the Greek presuppositions (in so far Aristotle is not merely playing with the etymological relation of $\delta i \kappa a \iota o \varsigma$ and $\delta i \kappa \eta$). It is characteristic of Aristotle, however, that he cannot rest happy with this explanation but must connect this idea of justice with others, going on to say: "Now all the various pronouncements of the law aim either at the common interest of all, or at the interest of a ruling class determined either by excellence or in some other similar way; so that in one of its senses the term 'just' is applied to anything that produces or preserves the happiness, or the component parts of happiness, of the political community." This, of course, is precisely the idea that I have attributed to the Greeks. Aristotle is not merely thinking of the law as a classification of individual acts into forbidden and permitted ones, but in relation to the purposes the law is to serve.

All these features are also connected with various historical conditions within Greek culture. This does not diminish, however, their interest for one who is so to speak primarily interested in the "formal" and not in the "efficient" causes of Greek institutions and of Greek thought. They all illustrate, it seems to me, the subordinate status among the Greeks of the idea of law conceptually independent of the idea of end or aim.

The Nature of Statesmanship and its Relation to Written Law

The same attitude is illustrated by the idea Plato and Aristotle had of the nature of statesmanship (political wisdom). Their ideas were in fact special cases of more widespread conceptions of the relation of knowledge and skill in Greece. These can be anticipated on the basis of the conceptual teleology I have been discussing. If the focal point of every activity is its end or outcome, the essence of any skill will undoubtedly lie in one's knowledge of its end or outcome. In another paper, I have argued that to some extent this is just what connected the ideas of "knowing how" and "knowing that" for the Greeks, and especially clearly for early Plato.[11] "Knowing how to bring about X" became almost identified with "knowing what X is" or "knowing the nature of X". For instance, the art of healing is virtually tantamount to knowing what health is: a conclusion which is explicitly drawn (in a slightly different form) by Plato in *Laches* 195c. It is in this spirit that Aristotle says in *Metaphysica* that "the medical art is in some sense health, and the building art is the form of the house" — that is to say, the art of medicine lies in the "form" of health which a doctor has in his mind,

and the art of building lies in the "form" of a house which a builder has in his mind and which he is striving to realize.[12]

We might also put the same point by saying that an art that turns on following certain rules "blindly", i.e. without attending to the eventual outcome to be aimed at, did not in the Greek view constitute real *epistēmē*, real rational knowledge or skill. The same idea was also applied to political wisdom. A political system that was based on the adherence of its members to the explicit pronouncements of the law could not be based on real statesmanship, real political *epistēmē*, but only on some lower capacity. This conclusion was drawn by Plato in so many words. For him laws were "but imitations of scientific truths in whatever depart- ment of life they are dealing with" *(Politicus* 300c). Accordingly, "being guided by opinion" (i.e. not by real knowledge) and "acting according to the laws" are bracketed together by Plato (301b). It is interesting that Plato should put forward this view in connection with and virtually as a conclusion from the requirement that all individuals and all groups of individuals be forbidden "to perform any act in contravention of these laws" (300c). This is said by Plato to be "our second- best method of government"; improvements are clearly thought of as being possible if one is allowed to aim at the right ends directly, instead of merely following certain laws to the letter. It is not surprising, therefore, that according to Plato a "truly wise ruler" is allowed to overstep the "written codes" of his state. A similar principle is put forward by Aristotle in *Politica* III, 17, 1288a15 ff., though not without hesitation.

Plato's relation to the idea of "the rule of law" is a question that has been hotly disputed by scholars, especially in connection with the *Republic.* Barker has claimed that there is no place for laws in Plato's ideal *polis* and that laws would only hinder scientific government of the kind Plato envisages in the *Republic.*[13] Glenn Morrow[14] and G. E. L. Owen[15] have vigorously contested this claim. All the different combinations of views are in fact represented here. Barker argues that Plato was "uncompromisingly hostile to law" in the *Republic* but relaxed his attitude in the *Politicus.* Owen argues for the opposite development; according to him, the "doctrine of sovereign and immutable laws" is "asserted in the *Republic*" but "denounced in the *Politicus*". Morrow, for one, argues that Plato consistently supported the idea of "the rule of law".

Part of this dispute is due to the ambiguity of the term "law". In so far as the law serves to define the true aims of a state, its ideal form for Plato was of course sovereign and immutable. In this respect, I do not see any real change in Plato's views. If this is what Morrow means by "the rule of law", he is right.

If there was a subject on which Plato's views did change, it was the relation of actual statutes to the ideal (in more than one sense) law which defines the true ends of a state. In the *Republic*, Plato believed that the Guardians could reach to real "scientific truths in whatever department of life we are dealing with" and incorporate some of them in the actual working rules of the ideal *polis.* Yet in other cases there is according to him no need of detailed legislation (425a-b), because many minor matters can be decided by reference to "the

principles of law" that Plato lays down. It is only when these are lost sight of that piecemeal legislation and changes in the law become prominent (425e).

However, in his later work Plato was more pessimistic concerning the possibility of incorporating anything like the ideal in the actual laws of a state, and also more pessimistic of the majority's capacity to appreciate the underlying "principles of law" without recourse to actually written-down approximations to them. This puts into a new light the question of the role of laws as imposing regularities on people's behavior and the question of their unchangeability. Now the written laws of a state will be subordinate to the will of a really scientific ruler *(Politicus* 294a — 301a), who will find it necessary to change them (295b — 296a). Only in a "second best" state can the laws be absolutely binding, as we saw. However, since such a second-best solution now begins to appear to Plato as the only realistic one, he devotes in the *Nomoi* a great deal of attention to the details of actual positive legislation. Thus, there does not seem to be any real change in Plato's attitude to those aspects of the law which we have been discussing. For him positive laws were imitations of the "real" laws which define the ends of a state. What changes in Plato is his answer to the question to what extent this imitation can succeed and also the question as to what extent we have to bother about these imitations at all.

Demiurge as a Conceptual Model

One manifestation of implicit teleology was a tendency to use as a conceptual paradigm of almost all human (and non-human) activity such activities as had a clearly defined and concrete goal. The activity of an artisan or craftsman was perhaps the most conspicuous case in point. The role of this model in Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy of nature is well known, and requires few comments here. For instance, as Ingemar Düring has pointed out, in Aristotle's philosophy of nature "Physis (nature itself) plays the same role as Demiurge in the *Timaeus*",[16] Demiurge who was precisely what the word implied to a Greek: a magnified craftsman.

It is perhaps objected that Aristotle does not accept the work of a craftsman as the paradigm of all human activity, but in so many words distinguishes production *(poiesis)* from activity in the narrower sense of the word *(praxis)*. It was already pointed out in the above, however, that the way in which Aristotle makes this distinction in fact shows his adherence to telic modes of thought. It is also interesting to note that, his own explicit distinction notwithstanding, Aristotle often uses words for production and action almost interchangeably.[17]

Aristotle's tendency to consider political activity as some sort of production or "making" was pointed out by Hannah Arendt in her well-known work, *The Human Condition.* As the case often is in Arendt's works, her comments on this point are a mixture of perceptive observations and misinterpretations. Miss Arendt wants to see political activity as spontaneous action, not as "making" or bringing about concrete results. "Action can result in an end product only on

condition that its own authentic, non-tangible, and always fragile meaning is destroyed", she writes. From this vantage point, Miss Arendt criticizes Aristotle for holding that "legislating and the execution of decisions by vote are the most legitimate political activities because in them men 'act like craftsmen': the result of their action is a tangible product, and its process has a clearly recognizable end".[18] What Aristotle really says in the passage in question is rather different, however: "This political wisdom is concerned with doing and deliberation; it issues in the decree, which is something that has to be done as an individual act. This is the reason why only those who promote and execute decrees are said to 'take part in politics', for it is only they who 'do' things in the same sense as manual labourers" (Ethica Nicomachea VI, 8, 1141b24 ff., tr. Barker). If this quotation expresses a value judgment, it is apt to be contrary to what Arendt attributes to Aristotle. It is to be noted that Aristotle does not here use the normal word for a craftsman, δημιουργός but the more restricted term χειροτέχνης for which "manual labourer" is the most literal translation. It is clear that the latter term often had pejorative connotations. As Aristotle says elsewhere: "Hence we think also that the master-workers ('architects') in each craft are more honourable and know in a truer sense and are wiser than the manual workers, because they know the causes of things to be done..."[19] The same value judgment follows also from Aristotle's general principles. He generally values activity (praxis) more than making (poiesis). For instance, the end of the state is said by him to be "a good quality of life", and life is to him essentially praxis not poiesis. If we attend to his explicit pronouncements on the subject, we thus cannot say that Aristotle is guilty of the error which Miss Arendt imputes to him. On this level of discussion, it is false, pace Arendt, that Aristotle "wished to turn against politics and against action".[20]

The Status of the Original Lawgiver

In a deeper sense, however, Arendt may be close to the truth. What she is pointing out is not a moral but a conceptual weakness in Plato's and Aristotle's ideas about the individual's participation in political activity. His own principles notwithstanding, Aristotle unwittingly. emphasizes the significance of those activities which have a clearly defined end, in part perhaps because they easily lend themselves to his modes of discussion and conceptualization. Perhaps the best example is the role (Miss Arendt has also commented on it) which the laws, or perhaps rather the constitution, of a state played in the political thought of Aristotle and of the Greeks in general. If all rational human activity has a predetermined end, then so must political activity. This goal or end is defined by the constitution of the state. This constitution therefore is "the expression of the kind of life which (a) community sets before itself as its ideal "which determines" the end at which (that) political community aims", as Sir Ernest Barker puts it.[21]

Only secondarily is the constitution a norm for further piecemeal legislation.

Because it defined the goals of political activity, it had to exist before this activity and independently of it.[22] Therefore it could not be a product of the kind of political activity the citizens of a state ordinarily engage in,[23] any more than the form of a bed which according to Plato serves as the model for a carpenter could be the product of any ordinary craftsman. It is interesting to see how the Greeks in fact tended to postulate individual lawgivers like Solon or Lycurgus as creators of their constitutions. "The general Greek conception was that of the sole legislator, the Solon or Lycurgus, who was responsible for the laws of his State".[24] The situation which arises when a new polis is first organized is the recurring "dramatic fiction" of such Platonic dialogues as the *Republic* or the *Nomoi*. Here we also find one of the sources of the alienation of the function of a legislator (in the sense of the *original* lawgiver) from the citizens' normal political activities which Arendt emphasizes to the point of exaggeration. The Greeks, Arendt says,[25] "did not count legislating among the political activities. In their opinion, the lawmaker was like the builder of a city wall, someone who had to do and finish his work before political activity could begin. He therefore was treated like any other craftsman or architect and could be called from abroad and commissioned without having to be a citizen, whereas the right to *politeuesthai,* to engage in the numerous activities which eventually went on in the *polis,* was entirely restricted to citizens. To them, the laws, like the wall around the city, were not results of action, but products of making" (p. 194). The contrast set up in the last sentence of this quotation has a touch of anachronism about it, however, for if I am right the gist of the matter is that the Greeks had a tendency to treat *all* activity as if it were a process of "making" or producing certain results.

From this viewpoint it can in any case be understood why the lawgiver was more highly esteemed than an ordinary politician. It followed from the implicit teleology of Greek thinking that the selection of goals or ends was of more fundamental importance than their realization or "imitation". In his *Poetica* Aristotle indicates that in his view an artist makes an essential error if he selects the object of his "imitation" wrongly, but that his error is only accidental to poetry if he merely fails in his effort of imitation.[26] The political analogue of this is obvious. Barker states: "To Aristotle, the legislator is greater than the statesman, because he lays down the great lines on which the State is to move."[27] Thus for Plato as well as for Aristotle the basic problem of social and political philosophy was the specification of the right organization for a state, i.e. the description of an ideal state.[28] It is characteristic that this is for them more of a moral and educational problem than an institutional one. Aristotle claimed, as did Plato, that for every constitution there is a corresponding type of human character. This demonstrates graphically that the "good quality of life" which according to Aristotle determines the ends of the state, i.e. determines its constitution, is not only a matter of institutional arrangement but also pertains to the kind of life its citizens are living. The constitution of a state was for the Greeks a constitution in both the modern senses of the word.

The Naturalness of the City-State

Aristotle's conceptual teleology also colors his famous dictum on the relationship between the individual and the city-state. "Man is by nature a political animal". It also underlies Aristotle's strikingly "totalitarian" pronouncement concerning the dependence of the individual upon the state. "We must not regard a citizen as belonging just to himself: we must rather regard every citizen as belonging to the state. Each is a part of the state..." (tr. Barker).[29]

Prima facie, Aristotle's reasons are far from clear. How can he claim that the city-state, *polis*, exists by nature? Occasionally he says that natural is that which happens always, or in most cases.[30] Yet he does not suggest that people always and everywhere or even in most cases organize themselves into city-states.

The way in which Aristotle argues for his thesis that man is by nature a political animal, i.e. an animal naturally living in a *polis*, once again betrays the hold teleological modes of thought have on him. According to him, *polis* is a natural form of human organization because it is the endpoint of a series of higher and higher modes of organization which the humans had evolved. This development had to have an end, and *polis* was this end.

"Because it is the completion of associations existing by nature, every polis exists by nature..... It is the end or consummation to which those associations move, and the 'nature' of things consists in their end or consummation; for what each thing is when its growth is completed we call the nature of that thing, whether it be a man or a horse or a family."[31] Aristotle could scarcely have brought out more clearly the importance of telic concepts for his thinking than by saying that each thing's essence lies in the end of its development.

In creating the first *polis*, men therefore "imitated nature" although no city-states had ever existed before for them to imitate.[32] This is only a special case of the relation of arts to nature. Aristotle says in *Politica* at the end of Book VII that "the purpose of education, like that of art generally, is simply to copy nature by making her deficiencies good" (tr. Barker). The famous statement in the *Physica* is presumably to be understood in the same spirit: "Generally, art on one hand completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, on the other hand imitates her."[33]

Prima facie, these statements are likely to strike us as paradoxical, for how could any human achievement which surpasses the achievements of nature and perhaps is even specifically calculated to correct the deficiencies of nature nevertheless be (even in part) an imitation of nature? Yet this can be understood on the basis of the ways of thinking I have commented on. A Greek like Aristotle was apt to assume that every rational human activity must have a predetermined end which it is designed to bring about, although this end might exist only as an *eidos* in the mind of the agent. In a very precise sense, all rational activity was therefore comparable to imitation; all *poiesis* was *mimesis*, as we can say by generalizing and sharpening one of Aristotle's opening statements in his *Poetica*. Imitation in the ordinary, narrow sense of the word thus could not be dis-

tinguished from other rational activities by saying that it has a "ready-made", predetermined end; the difference must lie elsewhere. One possible way of looking at the distinction was to interpret the statement that activity x imitates activity y as a statement about the ends or goals of these two activities. Thus interpreted, it meant simply that the ends of activity x were the same or similar to those of y. This is the unfamiliar idea which we encountered in Aristotle's views on the relation of human arts to nature. They "imitate nature" because they aim at the same ends as nature. The question which of the two gets closer to the goal on some particular occasion is not essential; what is essential are the goals and their relation to each other. Arts, in brief, do not only or primarily imitate nature's *achievements,* but rather nature's *ends.* It is in this sense that a *polis* exists by nature.

An interesting further example of this way of thinking is offered by Aristotle's *Poetica.* There Aristotle at an important juncture argues that since "tragedy is an imitation, not of men as such", but of an activity, or of life, and since the *telos* of life and indeed of any activity or *praxis* is itself an activity, not any particular quality, the end of tragedy must consequently be the activity which the plot depicts, and not the depiction of different characters. "Thus the course of events, the plot, is the goal *(telos)* of tragedy, and the goal is the most important thing of all."[34] Here the argument proceeds in a direction opposite to that of Aristotle's reflections on the relation of art and nature. Since tragedy imitates life, Aristotle argues, the ends of tragedy must be the same as those of life, which Aristotle saw in a specific form of life rather than in any concrete "life work". On the earlier occasion, an imitative relationship was inferred from the similarity of ends. Here a moral concerning the ends of tragedy is drawn from the readily admitted imitative relationship between art and life.

Further Possibilities

It would be fascinating to try to pursue further the ideas which have been illustrated in the preceding sections. A major question one can raise here pertains to Plato's failure to reform the Greek ways of thinking of moral and social excellence, a failure impressively documented by Adkins. It seems to me that this failure was to some extent due to Plato's adherence to the ways of thinking I have tried to expound and to illustrate in this essay.

Adkins outlines in a very interesting way the background of Plato's moral and political thinking, especially the reliance of the traditional values on success and competitive excellence which Plato was trying to change by emphasizing the importance of justice and other co-operative virtues. To what extent does this help us to understand Plato's own views and arguments? One reviewer says that Adkins' "exposition clarifies one of the major puzzles of the *Republic,* that Plato attempts to prove, against the 'immoralist' Trasymachus, that Justice is more *profitable* than Injustice — — that it is in fact a prerequisite of success both for the individual and for the city."[35] That Adkins' exposition helps us to appreciate

Plato's attempted proof is certainly true. A major puzzle nevertheless remains. It is most remarkable that Plato's argument for linking "the major cooperative virtue, *dikaiosune*," with the highest standard of excellence, i.e. with the concept of *agathos*, should turn out to be an attempt to show that justice leads to success. It looks as if Plato, in trying to reform the standards of social and moral excellence which his compatriots applied, falls right back to another version of the same traditional idea of a close connection between excellence and success. If Plato was really trying to reform Greek ideas of moral excellence, it is not "inevitable", *pace* Ralls, but rather extremely paradoxical that Plato should have conceived of his attempt in these terms. Ralls says that this "was inevitable, given the competitive connotations of *agathos*". But the real problem is due to the fact that these connotations were precisely the elements which Plato was trying to get rid of; hence this kind of explanation of Plato's failure becomes virtually equivalent to the tautological statement that Plato failed in his task because he did not succeed in eliminating those components of the Greek ideas of excellence which he was trying to dispense with. An explanation of this kind works only if the deeper presuppositions of Plato's procedure are spelled out.

One of these further presuppositions might be the conceptual teleology I have been commenting on. Even though Plato wanted to replace a standard of excellence which relied exclusively or predominantly on success in competitive activities by a standard that included justice and certain other "quiet virtues", as Adkins calls them, even these had to be discussed and justified in terms of their results. And since the idea of a law considered (even "for the sake of argument") apart from the consequences remained foreign or at least awkward to Plato, these consequences had to be either consequences of the individual just acts, or consequences of being just in the moral sense of having a just mind, as distinguished from "merely" doing what is just in the sense of acting in accordance with the law. In brief, justice had to be vindicated by showing that these consequences (consequences to the individual man in question) were good. Thus the obsession of Plato with the idea that a just man must be successful and therefore happy. What Plato found the greatest difficulty in doing was to ask: What laws, if they are followed (by assumption) blindly and literally, will *in the long run* produce the best results? It is only at the very end of his life, in the *Nomoi*, that this kind of question begins to approach the center of the stage. Even though there might have been materials present in the Greek conceptual system for an idea of rule-utilitarianism, one important element of this idea was missing. For this reason, Plato had to revert to the idea of individual, personal happiness to an extent fatal to his main concern.

Perhaps we can also understand Plato's successes better in this way, and not only his failures. One of the most progressive doctrines of this reputedly reactionary thinker was his unambiguous acceptance of a reformatory theory of punishment. It need not be derogatory to suggest that this acceptance was partly due to Plato's implicit teleology. In order to be rational, each individual act of punishment must have an end it is calculated to bring about. It is irrational to

punish merely in order to follow a rule that tells one to punish. What else is there that could constitute such an end except the restitution of the criminal as a useful member of the community?

I am not claiming that this is all there is to Plato's doctrine of punishment. In fact, my last two suggestions concerning Plato are really bigger claims than I can argue for here. I shall have to let them remain just what they are: suggestions for further interpretation. Even so, they may perhaps illustrate the interest and promise that there seems to be in our insight into the conceptual teleology of the Greeks for the purpose of understanding their political and social theories.

NOTES

[1] See e.g. A. J. Ayer, *Philosophy and Language* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 22, where Ayer discusses "the appraisal of conceptual systems", and P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London, Methuen, 1959), pp. 9—10. What Strawson calls "descriptive metaphysics" is said to deal just with "the most general features of our conceptual structures".

[2] It has been criticized *inter alia* by Gregory Vlastos in the *Philosophical Review* vol. 66 (1957), pp. 226—238 and by Norman Gulley in Philosophy vol. 31 (1956), p. 377, in my opinion rather convincingly. Cf. also my paper "Tieto, taito ja päämäärä" ("Knowledge, Skill and Purpose"; in Finnish), *Ajatus* vol. 27 (1965), pp. 49—67.

[3] It is interesting to see that both Adkins and Gould are to some extent inspired by Bruno Snell's earlier work. Adkins says (op. cit. p. vi) that Snell's work *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (Hamburg, Classen & Goverts, 1948) "has greatly affected my thought on the subject of aretê". Gould relies frequently on Snell's excellent work, "Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in der vorplatonischen Philosophie," *Philologische Untersuchungen*, ed. by Werner Jaeger, N.S. vol. 29, Berlin, 1924.

[4] In this essay, I am not asking to what extent the characteristics I am emphasizing are peculiar to the thought of the Socratic school and to what extent they are simply Greek *Gemeingut*. My working hypothesis is that the preoccupations of the Socratic school served to bring to the fore and to reinforce certain widespread tacit ways of thinking and conceptual preferences which are in no way peculiar to any philosophical school.

[5] Since a process or any other phenomenon often could be satisfactorily discussed only in terms of its completion or end, it was easy to forget or to under-emphasize the difference between what was said of this outcome or end and what was said of the process itself. In other words, implicit teleology was apt to encourage what is now often called "process-product ambiguity". It is interesting to see that this ambiguity attaches to some of the most salient philosophical terms of the Greeks, for instance *physis*, *ergon*, and *prattein*, and often also to the arguments in which these terms occur.

[6] See "Päämäärä, sattuma ja välttämättömyys" ("End, Chance, and Necessity"; in Finnish), *Ajatus* vol. 26 (1964), pp. 61—81.

[7] We moderns usually think of laws as a system of prohibitions (negative orders). The Greeks seem to have been much more inclined to view their laws as positive orders. This perhaps explains Aristotle's remarkable statement that the law prohibits everything that it does not explicitly allow (*Eth. Nic. V*, II, 1138 a 5—7). Cf. also what Barker says of "the Greek conception, that the function of the State is not preventive, but positive" (Sir Ernest Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, Dover edition, New York, Dover Publications, 1959, pp. 7, 132—133, 246, 408).

[8] Cf. Tuttu Tarkiainen, *Demokratia: Antiikin Ateenan kansanvalta* (Porvoo — Helsinki, WSOY, 1959), pp. 286—288. Also published in German: *Die Athenische Demokratie* (Zürich & Stuttgart, Artemis Verlag, 1966), pp. 230—232.

[9] Cf. Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and his Predecessors* (London, Methuen & Co., 1947), pp. 207—208.

[10] Tarkiainen, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

[11] See my paper "Tieto, taito ja päämäärä" (note 2 above).

[12] See *Met. XII*, 4, 1070 b 33 and 3, 1070 a 28.

[13] See e.g. *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 66—169.

[14] See Glenn Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960).

[15] G.E.L. Owen, "The Place of *Timaeus* in Plato's Dialogues", *Classical Quarterly* N.S. vol. 3 (1959), pp. 79—95; conveniently reprinted in R. E. Allen, editor, *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 313—338 (see especially pp. 329—336).

[16] Ingemar Düring, "Aristotle's Method in Biology", Aristotle et les problèmes de méthode, in the series *Aristotle, Traductions et études* (Louvain, Publications Universitaires, 1961), pp. 213—221, especially p. 213. Cf. also Friedrich Solmsen, "Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought", *Journal of the History of Ideas* vol. 24 (1963), pp. 473—496.

[17] See T. Ando, *Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition* (Kyoto, 1958. Distributor: Blackwell, Oxford), pp. 177—179. It is especially striking to see how widely Aristotle used the terms which he had ostensibly restricted to production.

[18] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 195 (Anchor Book edition, Doubleday & Company, 1959, p. 174).

[19] *Metaphysica* I, 7, 981 a 31 ff.; cf. b 30—32. The translation is by Sir David Ross.

[20] Arendt also does not pay enough attention to the fact that Aristotle's quoted statement does not refer to a law proper *(νόμος)* but only to a decree or statute *(ψήφισμα)* which somewhat restricts its scope. For the difference between these, see Tarkiainen, *op. cit.* p. 47.

[21] Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, p. 305. Cf. also Aristotle's *Politica* IV, 1, 1289 a 15 ff.

[22] Cf. Aristotle, *Politica* VII, 2, 1325 a 6 ff.

[23] It must be noted, however, that Aristotle seems to come rather close to the contrary view at the end of *Ethica Nicomachea* where he says that "laws are as it were the 'works' [*erga*] of the political art" *(Eth. Nic.* X, 9, 1181 a 23 ff.). The precise attitude of Aristotle's to legislation is a matter of considerable subtlety.

[24] Barker, *Op. cit.* p. 323; cf. pp. 132—133.

[25] *Op. cit.* p. 173.

[26] See *Poetica* 25, 1460 b 15 ff. (The interpretation of this passage is a matter of considerable difficulty, however.).

[27] Barker, *op. cit.* p. 323.

[28] Cf. Alwin W. Gouldner, *Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory* (New York, Basic Books, 1965), p. 281: "The most characteristic aspect of Plato's approach to planned social change may be highlighted by terming it 'Model-Guided Strategy of Change'; for this appropriately focuses attention on the way it emphasizes the detailed specification, in advance, of a set of social arrangements that are deemed the best."

[29] *Politica* VIII, 1, 1337 a 27—31; cf. *Eth. Nic.* V, 15, 1138 a 8—14.

[30] *Analytica Priora* I, 3, 25 b 14—15; I, 13, 32 b 5—18.

[31] *Politica* I, 2, 1252 b 31 ff.;tr. Barker. Family was one of the primitive forms of organization Aristotle had mentioned earlier.

[32] Aristotle speaks in so many words of the men who created the *first polis;* see *Politica* I, 2, 1253 a 31—32.

[33] *Physica* II, 8, 199 a 15—17. Most current translations render $τὰ μὲν - τὰ δὲ$ by "partly — partly". I cannot find any trace of a separation between these two alleged "parts" in Aristotle, however.
Cf. also Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle*, tr. by Richard Robinson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 74—75.

[34] *Poetica* 6, 1450 a 22—23; tr. by Gerald F. Else. In his commentary *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1957), Else emphasizes the difficulty of keeping apart the ends of life and the ends of the tragic characters (the ends of tragedy) in Aristotle's pronouncements. This difficulty is not surprising if Aristotle's argument essentially turns on assimilating the two to each other.

[35] Anthony Ralls reviewing Adkins in *Mind* N.S. vol. 70 (1961), pp. 568—569.