labour was restricted, except at a few critical periods of the year, such as the harvest, when it was met by the employment of casual free labour. With the growth of trade, however, it became constant and almost unlimited, chiefly for transport, quarrying and the mines. In the fifth century, slaves were plentiful and cheap, but in the sixth, before the Persian wars had opened up the east, the main source of labour, at least in Attica, was the peasantry. In this period, the miners of Laurion were men, and no doubt women and children as well, who had been driven off the land. For these reasons the Orphic movement is likely to have reflected the outlook of a dispossessed peasantry. Now, we have already learnt something of the peasant outlook from the poetry of Hesiod, and we may therefore begin our account of Orphic teaching by comparing its exposition of the origin of the world with the view expounded in the Hesiodic *Theogony*.

According to Hesiod, in the beginning there was the Void. Then Earth came into being, and Love. Out of the Void sprang Erebos and Night, and Night gave birth to Aither and Day. Earth gave birth to Heaven, to whom in turn she bore Ocean, Rhea, Kronos and the Titans. Kronos overthrew his father Heaven and was overthrown by his own son Zeus. According to the Orphics, in the beginning there was Time. Then Aither and the Void came into being, and from them Time fashioned a silver egg, out of which sprang Phanes, or Love. The parentage of Zeus is the same as in Hesiod, but, having come to power, he swallows Phanes and so identifies himself with him. By Persephone he becomes the father of Dionysus, whose death at the hands of the Titans has been described in an earlier chapter (p. 111). When the Titans were blasted by the thunderbolt, they were still reeking with the blood of Dionysus, and from this blend of blood and ashes the human race is sprung. That is why the nature of man is partly good and partly bad. It is divided against itself.

Time, the egg, the swallowing of Phanes, the passion of Dionysus and the origin of mankind—all these are Orphic innovations, the last of them, we are told, being invented by Onomakritos, the *protegé* of Peisistratos at Athens. Yet, notwithstanding these important innovations, it is clear that the
Orphics were building on the Hesiodic tradition. To Homer they owed almost nothing, but their debt to Hesiod was profound. This is in itself enough to indicate in what direction the origins of the movement are to be sought.

In the Homeric poems, the word *dike* means a way, a custom, what is fitting, and in a few passages a judgment. In Hesiod it is used to denote the abstract idea of justice, which is personified as a goddess who sits at the right hand of Zeus and informs him of the wickedness of the nobles who give crooked judgments. The Hesiodic use of the word is an extension of the Homeric, but it is an extension which has been effected by the peasants, who, oppressed as they were, developed the abstraction because they needed it. In the Orphic writings, Dike reappears beside the throne of Zeus.\(^{11}\) She also appears in the poetry of Solon, whose reformist attitude to the peasantry had brought him into contact with the same stratum in the development of thought.\(^{18}\)

Finally, the Orphic conception of Love, derived as we have seen from Hesiod, represents a principle that involved a direct challenge to aristocratic thought. To the nobility Love was a dangerous thing, because it implied desire, ambition, discontent. As we saw in our account of Anaximander, the tendency of aristocratic thought was to divide, to keep things apart. To the Orphics, Love was a thing to be revered, because it implied the reunion of what had been sundered, the recovery of what had been lost. In the philosophy of Empedokles, an Orphic of the west, it is Love that brings the world together, Strife that forces it apart, and the world is best when Love overcomes Strife.\(^{13}\) The tendency of popular thought was to unite.

The core of Orphism lay in its mystical teaching, which was part of its heritage from the agrarian magic of Dionysus. The agricultural origins of mystical religion have already been discussed in connection with the Mysteries of Eleusis. What we have to consider now is the specific character of Orphic mysticism. It is a difficult question, because, once established at Athens, the Orphic movement was brought in close contact with Eleusis, and, owing to their fundamental affinities, the two cults reacted on one another to such an extent that it is not always possible to distinguish them.
The cult of Eleusis enjoyed the official patronage of the state. Securely harnessed to the established order, it served as a medium through which the thwarted aspirations of class society could find expression along channels which led away from conscious realisation of their causes. The Orphics, on the other hand, were organised in small and scattered units, based on the Dionysiac, *phìsas*, which were bound together by personalities, and their mysticism was consequently more individualistic. Not being state-controlled, they developed more fully and consistently the essential function of mystical religion, which is, as we have seen, to renounce life except in so far as it can be made a preparation for death.

Life is a penance by which man atones for the sin of the Titans. The immortal part of him is encased in the mortal; the soul is imprisoned in the body. The body is the tomb of the soul. We are chattels of the gods, who will release us, when it so pleases them, from the prison house of life. All life is a rehearsal for death, for it is only through death that the soul can hope to escape from its imprisonment, to be delivered from the evils of the body. Life is death and death is life. After death the soul is brought to judgment. If it has corrupted itself so deeply by contact with the body that the sin is past cure, it is consigned to eternal torment in the prison house of Tartarus. If its sin is curable, it is purged and chastised, then sent back to earth to renew its penance. When it has lived three lives unspotted of the body, it is released for ever and goes to join the celestial company of the blessed.

Such is the Orphic doctrine of the soul as we find it in Plato. It must have taken some time to achieve so conclusive a formulation, and in the sixth century, no doubt, it was still rudimentary; but through it runs one clear thread—the idea that man is to God and body to soul what the slave is to his master. As Plato says, the soul is by rights the ruler and master, the body its subject and its slave. This dichotomy of human nature, which through Parmenides and Plato became the basis of idealist philosophy, was something new in Greek thought. To the scientists of Miletos, as to the Achæan chiefs and to the primitive savage, the soul was simply that in virtue of which we breathe and move and live; and although, the laws
of motion being imperfectly understood, no clear distinction was drawn between organic and inorganic matter, the basis of this conception is essentially materialist. The worlds of Milesian cosmology are described as gods because they move, but they are none the less material. Nowhere in Milesian philosophy, or in the Homeric poems, is there anything that corresponds to this Orphic conception of the soul as generically different from the body, the one pure, the other corrupt, the one divine, the other earthly. So fundamental a revolution in human consciousness only becomes intelligible when it is related to a change equally profound in the constitution of human society; and what that change was is clearly revealed by the symbolism in which the doctrine was expounded.

In an earlier chapter the idea of Moira was traced to the principle that all the members of society are entitled to an equal share in the product of their collective labour. In the period we have now reached, when the last vestiges of tribal society are being rapidly swept away, there arises by the side of Moira the Orphic figure of Ananke, or Necessity. In literature, Ananke makes her first recorded appearance in the writings of Herakleitos and Parmenides, both of whom were influenced by Orphism. Herakleitos couples the two figures as being virtually identical; Parmenides gives the same attributes to Moira, Dike and Ananke. A century later, in Plato’s Republic, Ananke usurps the place of Moira and is even equipped with her spindle. What is the significance of Ananke?

Throughout Greek literature, from Homer onwards, the ideas of anánke, “necessity,” and douleia, “slavery,” are intimately connected, the former being habitually employed to denote both the state of slavery as such and the hard labours and tortures to which slaves are subjected. The sight of slaves harnessed for transport or toiling under the lash suggested the image of a drove of oxen, and accordingly we find that zygón, “yoke,” is the metaphor traditionally associated with both douleia and anánke; and in a painting of the Orphic underworld we see Sisyphos rolling his stone uphill, while over him, lash in hand, stands the slave-driver Ananke. Ananke represents the principle that the labouring members of society are denied all share in the product of their labour beyond the minimum
necessary to keep them labouring. When Moira became APhilanke, she was transformed into her opposite.

One of the formulae which the Orphics learnt for recital after the soul had left the body, was: "I have flown off the wheel of grief and misery." 28 This wheel, which is variously described as the Wheel of Birth, the Wheel of Fate and the Wheel of Necessity, is clearly descended from the totemic cycle of birth and death; but the primitive concept has been invested with a new meaning, expressed in a contemporary symbol. 29 The wheel was a common instrument of torture used for the chastisement of slaves. The victim was tied hand and foot to the wheel, which was then revolved. Therefore, to fly off the wheel of birth was to be released, delivered, to find escape, to gain a breathing space, from the miseries of mortality. This doctrine of deliverance from labour or from evil, which we have already met at Eleusis, is now charged with an allusion to a grim reality.

Having determined the origin of Orphic symbolism, we must guard against a hasty conclusion as to the social composition of the movement. In the course of its long history, Orphism penetrated into all classes of society, influencing democrats like Euripides, aristocrats like Plato, and respectable bourgeois like Plutarch. When the Greek city-state had passed the zenith of its development, and mystical religion was drawing fresh vitality from the diffusion of idealism, pessimism and social desperation, men of all classes expressed their sense of disunion in terms of the deepening cleavage in society. There is consequently no reason to suppose that, even in its earliest period, the Orphic movement was a slave movement. At the same time the distinctive character of Orphic symbolism does confirm the conclusion to which we have been tending, that the movement drew its initial inspiration from the sufferings of the peasantry, turned off the land and enslaved or driven into industry by the urban revolution. The clearest guide in this matter is the early history of Christianity.

Ever since the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, Christianity has been, in its official form, as distinct from revolutionary heresies, a religion of the ruling class; yet, like Orphism, it began among the workers and it retains to this
day the marks of its humble origin. We still sing in the Magnificat, forgetful of its social implications, "The hungry he hath filled with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." We still adhere to the doctrine of redemption, which originally connoted the action of a slave in purchasing his liberty. We still bend the knee before the Cross, which, like the Orphic Wheel, was once the symbol of a contemporary reality.

With this proviso, let us see whether it is possible to form any idea of what life was like in the mines of Thrace and Laurion. Direct evidence is lacking. At the end of the second century B.C., when there was an unsuccessful revolt, the number of slaves employed in the Attic mines ran, we are told, into tens of thousands. In 413 B.C., during the Peloponnesian War, 20,000 Attic slaves deserted to the Spartans, and a large proportion of these were probably miners. Under the tyranny, a century earlier, the number employed in the mines was doubtless much smaller. Of the conditions in which they worked, all that is known is what we can infer from the account given by Diodoros in the first century B.C. of conditions in the gold and silver mines of Egypt and Spain. This evidence, though indirect, is not so remote as at first sight it appears, because it is clear that, in these Egyptian and Spanish mines, the actual labour of extracting the ore from the rock, which is the part of the process that concerns us, was entirely unskilled, and is therefore unlikely to have altered.

On the borders of Egypt, and in the adjacent districts of Arabia and Ethiopia, there are many large gold-mines worked intensively at great expense of misery and money. The rock is black, with rifts and veins of marble so dazzling white that it outshines everything. This is where the gold is prepared by the overseers of the mines with a multitude of labourers. To these mines the Egyptian kings send condemned criminals, captives in war, also those who have fallen victim to false accusations or been imprisoned for incurring the royal displeasure, sometimes with all their kinsfolk—both for the punishment of the guilty and for the profits which accrue from their labour. There they throng, all in chains, all kept at work continuously day and night. There is no relaxation, no means of escape; for, since they
speak a variety of languages, their guards cannot be cor-
rupted by friendly conversation or casual acts of kindness. 
Where the gold-bearing rock is very hard, it is first burned 
with fire, and, when it has been softened sufficiently to yield 
to their efforts, thousands upon thousands of these unfor-
tunate wretches are set to work on it with iron stone-cutters 
under the direction of the craftsman who examines the stone 
and instructs them where to begin. The strongest of those 
assigned to this luckless labour hew the marble with iron 
picks. There is no skill in it, only force. The shafts are not 
cut in a straight line but follow the veins of the shining stone. 
Where the daylight is shut out by the twists and turns of the 
quarry, they wear lamps tied to their foreheads, and there, 
contorting their bodies to fit the contours of the rock, they 
throw the quarried fragments to the ground, toiling on and 
on without intermission under the pitiless overseer’s lash. 
Young children descend the shafts into the bowels of the 
earth, laboriously gathering the stones as they are thrown 
down, and carrying them into the open air at the shaft-
head, where they are taken from them by men over thirty 
years, each receiving a prescribed amount, which they break 
on stone mortars with iron pestles into pieces as small 
as a vetch. Then they are handed on to women and older 
men, who lay them on rows of grindstones, and standing 
in groups of two and three they pound them to powder as 
fine as the best wheaten flour. No one could look on the 
squalor of these wretches, with not even a rag to cover their 
loins, without feeling compassion for their plight. They may 
be sick, or maimed, or aged, or weakly women, but there is 
no indulgence, no respite. All alike are kept at their labour 
by the lash, until, overcome by hardships, they die in their 
torments (en ταῖς ανάνκαις). Their misery is so great that they 
dread what is to come even more than the present, the punish-
ments are so severe, and death is welcomed as a thing more 
desirable than life.

It is not for the citizens of an empire which still employs 
children in mines and factories to point an accusing finger 
at the Roman; but it is necessary for us to remember the 
blood and tears that were shed on the raw materials of Greek 
art.

The account of the Spanish mines is equally illuminating.
The workers in these mines produce incredible profits for the owners, but their own lives are spent underground in the quarries wearing and wasting their bodies day and night. Many die, their sufferings are so great. There is no relief, no respite from their labours. The hardships to which the overseer's lash compels them to submit are so severe that, except for a few, whose strength of body and bravery of soul enable them to endure for a long time, they abandon life, because death seems preferable.

In this passage, apparently without noticing it, Diodoros has slipped into the traditional phraseology of Orphism.

Surely, these are the realities that first inspired the imagery that underlies so many Orphic parables and fables of this life and the next—the Platonic Cave, in which men are chained hand and foot from childhood and have never seen the daylight; or the topography of Tartarus, with its subterranean torrents of water, mud, fire, brimstone; or the upper regions, under a clear sky, where the souls of the righteous are at rest. 87

Those who are judged to have lived lives of outstanding purity, these are they who are liberated and delivered from the subterranean regions as from a prison, and they are brought up to dwell on the surface of the earth; while those who have purified themselves sufficiently by the pursuit of wisdom, enjoy eternal life, free altogether from the body, in the fairest land of all, which would be hard to describe even if there were time to do it. And so, Simmias, for these reasons we must do everything in our power to attain to virtue and wisdom while we live. The prize is fair and the hope is great.

Plato was not a miner—far from it—but he was drawing on an old tradition. Surely it was in the mines that men first thought of life as a prison house and of the body as the tomb of the soul. 88

In ritual, the Orphics seem to have maintained the traditions of the Dionysiac thiasos. It is probable, though not quite certain, that the animal sacrament persisted in a modified form, which was interpreted as a means of reuniting the banished soul with its divine original. 89 Admission was still by initiation of the type already described, but the Orphic hierarchy of degrees
was possibly less elaborate than the Eleusinian. On the other hand, the Orphic thiasoi were not confined to women. Not only were men freely admitted, but at least in Attica, if we may judge from the *Hippolytos* of Euripides, they were encouraged to remain celibate. It is probable that in this matter the Orphics were influenced by local conditions, which varied greatly in different states; but the myth of Orpheus himself, who is said to have incurred the hostility of the Bacchants by initiating a band of armed men, suggests that the admission of men was an early and memorable innovation.\(^{30}\)

So far as we can judge, Orphism was never, even in its early days, a revolutionary movement. It did not seek to change the world, but to escape from it. In this respect, like the Lutheran movement of sixteenth-century Germany, it reflected the incapacity of an uprooted peasantry to organise effectively. It voiced a deep protest, but it made no demands, and so it served to divert the pressure of material needs by otherworldly promises.

To appreciate the crudity of the Orphic theogony, we have only to compare it with the scientific theory that was being worked out in the same period by the philosophers of Miletos. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that the Orphic movement was a retrograde step in the evolution of Greek thought.

In the first place, the primitive character of Orphism was due entirely to its class origin. The ruling class of Ionia had risen to a far higher level, but only because it was the ruling class. They lived on the proceeds; the others paid the price. Moreover, it must be remembered that the scientists and philosophers were only a section of that class. At Miletos itself, the heart of Ionian enlightenment, the priestly clan of the Branchidai, whose cult of Apollo exercised a political influence second only to that of the other Apollo at Delphi, owed their power to the skilful manipulation of oracles.\(^{31}\) These Milesian nobles had outgrown superstition in their private lives, but there was no question of abandoning it as an instrument of public policy. We do not know from what source the prophets of Miletos drew their inspiration. At Delphi, the oracles were delivered by a priestess after she had intoxicated herself by
chewing laurel leaves and inhaling vegetable gases from a fissure in the rock.

In the second place, as we have already observed, the Orphics issued a challenge to the time-honoured code of aristocratic morality. Hope is dangerous, love is dangerous, it is dangerous to strive overmuch, dangerous to emulate the gods; keep measure in all things, rest content with what you have. The Orphics delivered men from these timid and intimidating lies. They could not rest content with what they had because they had nothing, and their hopes were as infinite as their desires. All life was strife and struggle, and if man would only run the race with courage, there was none so humble or debased but he might win the prize of glory and become a god. In all this the Orphics revealed—in an inverted, mystical form—the objective potentialities of the democratic movement, and it remained for the people, aroused out of its lethargy, to translate their mysticism into action.
X

DITHYRAMB

Let us now examine the ritual of the City Dionysia, founded or re-founded by Peisistratos. The form in which we know it dates only from the fifth century, and it was reorganised at the end of the sixth. The antiquity of particular elements is therefore uncertain, but for our purpose this does not present a difficulty, because in ritual even innovations tend to conform to a pre-existing pattern.¹

The festival was celebrated at the end of March, in the month of Elaphebolion, the beginning of spring, when the sea was subsiding after the winter storms, and when traders and visitors from other parts of Greece were beginning to appear in the streets. It lasted for at least five days, possibly six. The present chapter will be mainly concerned with the first.

On the first day, the image of Dionysos Eleutherereus was removed from the temple in which it was housed throughout the year and carried out of the city to a shrine near the Akademia on the road to Eleutherai, a village on the frontier between Attica and Boiotia. The story was that the image had originally belonged to Eleutherai, from whence it was transferred to Athens, and that this part of the festival was a commemoration of that event. The image was escorted by the ἐφεβοί marching in armour and followed by a brilliant procession, which included animals for sacrifice, unmarried girls carrying on their heads baskets containing the sacrificial implements, and the general public, men and women, natives and foreigners, all gaily attired, the rich driving in chariots, many of them wearing crowns or masks. In the market-place a halt was made while a chorus performed before the statues of the Twelve Gods. Then the procession pursued its course as far as the Akademia. The image was deposited on a low altar, hymns were sung in praise of the god, and the animals were sacrificed. The chief of these was a bull offered on behalf of the
state and described in an official inscription as being “worthy of the god.” 2 Details are lacking, but, if the normal procedure was followed, the beast was slaughtered, roasted and cut up into motrai, which were then distributed among the official representatives of the state. There were many other victims beside the bull, some also provided by the state, others offered on behalf of civic organisations or individual citizens. The celebrants were also supplied with wine, and, 3 after the feast was over, they reclined by the roadside on beds of ivy leaves, drinking and merry-making. 4 At nightfall the procession returned to the city by torchlight, but instead of being restored to its temple, the image of Dionysus was escorted by the ἐπήβοι to the theatre and set up on an altar in the middle of the orchestra, where it remained until the end of the festival.

There is no reason to question the tradition that this image had been transferred to Athens from Eleutherai. On the contrary, it is confirmed by independent evidence, which will be examined in due course. At the same time, it is permissible to doubt whether the procession was simply a commemoration of that event and nothing more, because, taken together, the first day’s programme constitutes a ritual sequence which explains itself.

In our study of tribal initiation, we observed that the ceremony consisted of three parts. The boy was taken away from the settlement, subjected to an ordeal, and then restored to the community as a man. In Greek, these three stages appear as the pompē, or “send-off,” the ἀγών, “ordeal” or “contest,” and the kómos or “triumphal return.” In our account of the Olympian Games (pp. 115–18), we saw that the ἀγών was represented by the athletic contests, and that the victors, after being crowned, were escorted in a triumphal procession or kómos to the ἐπτάνειον of Olympia, where they were feasted. To this account we may now add that one of the entrances to the Altis, where the contests were held, was called the pompike hodós, the Proces-sional Road, which was the entrance used for the purpose of a pompē or procession. 4 What this procession consisted of we are not told, but it may be assumed to have included the competitors who were about to take part in the athletic contests. The Olympian festival consisted therefore of a pompē, an ἀγών and a
kòmos. Finally, in our account of the Bacchants of Euripides, we observed that Dionysus was described as the escort or pompós of Pentheus; that, after leaving the city, the Bacchants spent the night sleeping on oak leaves; that the sacrifice of Pentheus was described as an agón, and the triumphal return of the Bacchants to the city as a kòmos (p. 141).

At the City Dionysia, the procession from the city is expressly described in an Athenian law as a pompé, and the return as a kòmos.\(^5\) The only doubt that arises is in regard to the agón, which is not mentioned in the law, but I think it can be shown that the agón is represented in this case by the sacrifice which took place after the conclusion of the pompé. The agón of the Bacchants was also at the same time a sacrifice, Pentheus being the victim, Agaue “the priestess who began the slaughter.” And the parallel is really closer than that, because there is reason to believe that the bull of the City Dionysia performed the same function as the human victim of the Bacchants.

The bull was one of the commonest incarnations of Dionysus. As Plutarch says, images of Dionysus in the form of a bull existed in many parts of Greece,\(^6\) and we have seen that, when the Kouretes of Crete tore and devoured the bull, they believed that they were eating their god. The women of Elis, at a festival of Dionysus, sang a hymn which has been partly recorded by Plutarch:\(^7\) “Come, hero Dionysus, to the holy temple of the people of Elis, come to the temple with the Charites, raging with bull’s feet, worthy Bull, worthy Bull!” In this hymn the bull is expressly identified with the god, and presumably the animal which is being addressed is ready to be sacrificed. That presumption is confirmed by a remarkable vase painting, which portrays a Dionysiac pompé or procession.\(^8\) The procession is led by a bull, escorted by attendants carrying vine sprays, and followed by Dionysus himself seated in a waggon. It has even been suggested that the subject of this painting is the actual procession at the City Dionysia; but, without committing ourselves so far as that (the vine sprays are against it), we may say that, whatever the occasion may have been, Dionysus is here present both in his own person and in the bull, just as he was present in the Bacchants both in his own person and in that of Pentheus. Lastly, the words of the hymn from Elis, “worthy
bull,” recall the Athenian inscription already quoted, which stated that the victim sacrificed at the City Dionysia was a bull “worthy of the god.” This was evidently a ritual formula. For these reasons it is safe to conclude that the sacrifice of the bull at the City Dionysia, like that of Pentheus in the Bacchants, was a sacrament, the bull being the incarnation of the god.

The remaining days of the festival were devoted to the contests in the theatre. These, too, were described as an agón, the significance of which will become clear when we have discovered their origin. They were of two kinds—the dramatic competitions and the dithyrambs. There were two dithyrambic competitions—one between five choirs of boys, the other between five choirs of men. The men’s choirs were not introduced until after the fall of the tyranny.

In the form which it had assumed under the democracy at Athens, the dithyramb was a hymn, in honour of Dionysus, but not necessarily about him, sung to the accompaniment of a flute by a choir of fifty boys or men grouped in a circle round the altar in the centre of the orchestra. That this was not its primitive form is certain. But what was its primitive form? In exploring this question, we must remember that, so far as our knowledge goes, the majority of the dithyrambs composed in the fifth century were designed for performance at Athens; yet the dithyramb had had a long history, and it had a wide distribution.

The origin of the dithyramb is attributed by Pindar in one of his poems to Corinth, in others to Thebes and to Naxos. Having many patrons to serve, he did not hesitate to give different answers to the same question. Thebes and Naxos both claimed to be the birthplace of Dionysus. The claim of Corinth to the dithyramb rested on the story of Arion, recounted in the last chapter. “Arion,” says Herodotus, “was the first man of whom we have knowledge to compose, name and produce a dithyramb in Corinth.” This statement, reproduced by Suidas in a somewhat different form, is understood by Pickard-Cambridge to mean that Arion “first produced a chorus which kept to a definite spot (e.g. a circle round an altar) instead of wandering like revellers at random; and he made their song a regular poem, with a definite subject from which it took its
name.” This is the accepted interpretation, and it is almost certainly correct.

Arion belonged to the latter part of the seventh century. We also hear of dithyrambs composed at an early period by Bakchiadas of Sikyon, where the worship of Dionysus was encouraged under the tyrant Kleisthenes (c. 590 B.C.), and by Archilochos of Paros, who sang: “I know how, thunderstruck with wine, to lead the dithyramb, the fair strain of Dionysus.” As the exarchon, or leader, Archilochos may be presumed to have improvised a series of stanzas, after each of which his companions sang a refrain; but, of course, it does not follow in the least that the artistic standard of this improvised revel song was low. Primitive poetry is a magical utterance issuing spontaneously from a state of ecstasy or elation, and that state is often induced by drink. The interconnection of inspiration, improvisation and intoxication can still be studied in the peasant poetry, which often reaches a degree of technical elaboration far higher than our own, of modern Europe. Let us not be misled in this matter by Pickard-Cambridge, who, in commenting on the words, “thunderstruck with wine,” declares: “Archilochos may have led off the revel song in that state; it may be doubted if he composed it so, or indeed if it was ‘composed’ at all.” That is what comes of judging Greek poetry by the canons of Greek verse composition.

The evidence of Archilochos is confirmed by Æschylus, who lived at a time when, at least in Athens, the dithyramb had long ceased to be a revel song. “It is fitting,” he says, “that the mingled notes of the dithyramb should accompany Dionysus in his kómos.” This gives us a further clue. Without pressing the kómos too closely, we may surely infer that the dithyramb began as a processional sung on the occasion of the ritual sequence which we have traced in the Dionysiac thiasos and in the opening festivities of the City Dionysia. A victim is conducted in procession to a certain spot, there it is sacrificed, and then the procession returns.

At the City Dionysia, not only was the principal victim a bull, but a bull was the prize of victory at the dithyrambic contests. Moreover, it appears that the winning poet was mounted in a chariot and escorted in a triumphal procession,
which included, we may suppose, the bull he had just received as a prize. Thus, addressing himself after having won fifty such victories, Simonides writes: "Fifty times, for training a lovely choir of men, thou didst mount the bright chariot of glorious Victory." We may also suppose that the bull was sacrificed by the poet, who then gave a feast to his friends.

Pindar describes the dithyramb as "the bull-driving dithyramb." In what sense did the dithyramb "drive the bull"? The current answers to this question are admittedly unsatisfactory. Pindar may possibly have meant that it was in virtue of the winning dithyramb that the victorious poet was able to drive his bull home. In that case, he was alluding to the contemporary festival at Athens. But it seems more likely that the epithet was traditional. If the dithyramb was originally a processional sung on the occasion we have described, it was the song sung when the bull was being driven to the sacrifice.

The situation implied by the hymn of the women of Elis is rather different. There the women seem to be at the temple awaiting the arrival of the procession. We are reminded of another hymn, in which the Kouretes of Crete greeted the arrival of their god: "Hail, greatest kokhos, Kronios, lord of all, . . . thou hast come at the head of thy daimones. Come for the year to Dikte, and rejoice in the song that we weave for thee with mingled pipe and harp and sing as we take our stand about thy altar!" It is noteworthy that this hymn consists of a series of stanzas interpolated with a recurrent refrain. The text, which is incomplete, contains no reference to a sacrifice, and the god invoked is Zeus, not Dionysus, to whom however the Cretan Zeus is closely akin. Of course, we cannot assert that either of these hymns was a dithyramb. All we can say is that they closely resemble what, in the light of other evidence, the primitive dithyramb appears to have been.

The association of the dithyramb with the bull reminds us of the myths of Boutes, the ox-man, and of Lykourgos, who wielded an ox-goad or an axe for slaughtering oxen. From one point of view, each of these figures clearly stands for the priest at the head of the thiasos; but from another, since both of them suffered what was also done to their god, they appear to impersonate Dionysus. This ambiguity, which was evidently
an inherent feature of the cult, is reproduced by Euripides in the Bacchants, where Dionysus is at once the leader of the thiasos and its god.

What was the relation, in the mature dithyramb, of the poet to his choir? At the City Dionysia, the expenses of production were defrayed by the state, with the exception of the flute-player, who had to be provided by the poet himself. This regulation implies that in earlier times the flute-player’s function had been performed by the poet in his own person. The poet had once been the leader of the choir, like Archilochos at Paros, improvising the stanzas and accompanying the refrains. And this comes near to saying that he was originally the officiating priest, who impersonated the god.

If, as our argument suggests, the dithyramb began as a musical accompaniment of the procession of the Dionysiac thiasos, it follows that the singers were originally women. The hymn of the women of Elis cannot be used as evidence in this connection, because it is not expressly described as a dithyramb; but we have already remarked that at the City Dionysia the boys’ choirs were older than the men’s, and there is one piece of evidence which perhaps carries us a step further into the past. It is an epigram celebrating a victory won by a poet otherwise unknown with a choir provided from the Attic tribe of Akamantis, and it begins: “Often in the past, in the choirs of the tribe of Akamantis, the Horai, the Dionysiades, cried Alleluia on the occasion of ivy-carrying dithyrambs, and shaded the hair of skilful poets with headbands of blooming roses.” It is natural to connect these Horai with other mythical projections of the female votaries of Dionysus, such as the Mousai and the Charites, especially since they are described as Dionysiades, which was the name of a real thiasos at Sparta; and it is difficult to understand why they should be thus associated with past performances of the dithyramb unless the performers had once been women.

The villagers of Eleutherai, to whom the Athenians said the image of Dionysos Eleuthereus originally belonged, had another image of the god which was a replica of the one they had surrendered. This is recorded by Pausanias, who had seen both. In the same village was located the myth of the daughters of
Eleuther, who, after beholding a vision of the god clad in a goat-skin, slighted him, and were driven mad. They were cured when their father in response to an oracle instituted the worship of Dionysos Melanaigis, Dionysus of the Black Goat-skin. This tradition helps to explain how the goat came to be associated with the City Dionysia; for at the tragic contests, as distinct from the dithyrambic, the prize was not a bull, but a goat. And further it indicates that the cult of Dionysos Eleuthereus had once belonged to a woman's thiasos of the normal type. Indeed, it may well have been this thiasos that gave the village its name; for hai eleutherai is equivalent to hai aphetai, women who have been "set free" or "let loose," like the daughters of Proitos or Io, who were turned adrift in the open country after the god had driven them mad.

It appears therefore that the dithyramb had originally belonged to the Dionysiac thiasos of women. The first stage in its evolution as an art-form was the decline of the thiasos which followed the declining social status of women. The second stage was reached when, instead of being sung as a processional, it was brought to a stand at an altar, and so became a stásimon or standing-song—a "station" in fact. We have seen how the procession of the City Dionysia made just such a stand at the altars of the Twelve Gods in the market-place and again at the altar on which the image was deposited at the end of the pompé. And if it is asked what was the theme of this stásimon, it must surely have been in the first instance the myth corresponding to the rite which was about to be celebrated—the passion of Dionysus. And finally, since there is reason to think that the leader of the choir impersonated the god, it is plain that we have here the germ of a ritual drama. When the leader of the dithyramb begins to speak in character to his chorus, the dithyramb is becoming a passion-play. As Aristotle said, the art of tragedy was evolved "from the leaders of the dithyramb."

At this critical point in its evolution, the primitive dithyramb segmented, and the two forms that emerged out of it developed by dissimilation. Since they were coexistent, each limited the development of the other. They could only grow in contrary directions. In one, the music dominated the words, the leader became the instrumentalist, and the mimetic element
was suppressed. In the other, the words became so dominant as to shake themselves free of their musical integument, while the leader became an actor, then two actors, and finally three. Yet, long after it had grown wings, there still clung to the art of tragedy fragments of the chrysalis that had once secreted it. An examination of the extant plays suggests that, before Æschylus, they had normally begun and ended with a passage from the chorus as it entered or left the orchestra. In these two elements we can discern the last vestiges of the pompé and the kómos, and by the same reasoning we are led to the conclusion that the performance which began and ended in this way was, in origin and essence, an agón—an ordeal or contest, a purge or purification which renewed life.
EVOLUTION OF THE ACTOR

- TOTEMIC CLAN
- SECRET Priest
- SOCIETY Initiates
- PHALLIC Leader
- HYMN Chorus
- OLD COMEDY Actors
- CHORUS
- PRIMITIVE Leader
- DITHYRAMB Chorus
- TRAGEDY Actors
- CHORUS
- MATURE DITHYRAMB Chorus
- LATE COMEDY Actors
XI

TRAGEDY

Our next task is to bridge the gap of at least half a century that lies between the critical moment at which we left the art of tragedy at the end of the last chapter and the earliest work of Æschylus. This is the most difficult problem we have yet had to face, because not only is the evidence fragmentary, it is also for the most part of dubious quality. For an adequate solution we must wait until fresh light has been thrown on the whole subject by a comparative study of primitive, Oriental and European drama, such as has never yet been attempted. Meanwhile we must do our best with the resources at our command.

Hitherto we have been tracing the course of tragedy in the order of its development. That procedure must now be abandoned. Almost all that we know of Greek tragedy in this period is what can be inferred from the surviving plays, supplemented by Aristotle’s Poetics. How precious that supplement is may be judged from the fact that, of the 250 odd plays known to have been written by Æschylus, Sophokles and Euripides, we possess only thirty-three, whereas Aristotle possessed them all, not to mention an unknown number of plays by other writers, which have completely disappeared. That being so, we shall regard as a crucial test of any reconstruction of the early history of tragedy its compatibility with the evidence of Aristotle, who, besides being incomparably better informed than we are, was the masterly exponent of a scientific method. Beginning with a study of the actor, we shall proceed to an examination of the chorus, and then, after adverting to Aristotle’s analysis of the tragic climax, we shall conclude with some remarks about the stage. In all this our attention will be concentrated on the history of tragedy before Æschylus. At the end of the chapter much will still remain to be accounted for,
but this must be reserved until we have resumed our history of Athens.

Aristotle informs us that the second actor was introduced by Æschylus, the third by Sophokles. This number was never exceeded. Of the seven surviving plays of Æschylus, the third actor is employed only in the last four—the trilogy of the Oresteia, and the Prometheus Bound, which was probably the last of all. Since the introduction of the third actor lies well within the period covered by the surviving plays, it should be possible to follow the way in which his function was developed; and the knowledge thus gained may throw light on the development of the second actor.

The full use of the third actor is seen in those dialogues in which three characters are present on the stage and each converses freely with both the others. There are many such in Sophokles and Euripides, but in Æschylus the interchange is never completely reciprocal. Thus, in the Choephoroi, Pylades is present when Orestes discloses himself to Clytemnestra, but his part is confined to answering a question addressed to him by Orestes; during the trial in the Eumenides, Athena converses with Apollo, and Apollo is addressed by Orestes, but nothing passes between Orestes and Athena until the trial is over, and by that time Apollo’s part is at an end. In the Agamemnon, Kasandra is present during the dialogue between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, but says nothing at all; and similarly in the prologue of the Prometheus Bound the hero remains silent until Might and Hephaistos have gone. In these two cases the silent character is introduced for the sake of the sequel. The only other dialogue of this type is in the Antigone, the earliest of the extant plays of Sophokles, where Antigone remains silent during the dialogue between Kreon and the Guard and then engages with Kreon after the Guard has gone. In all three instances the silence is, of course, dramatically effective, and Æschylus in particular was famous for his dramatic silences, but the absence of such effects from the later plays shows that they are a sign of immaturity.

Let us now apply the same considerations to the development of the second actor. For this purpose we turn to the three earliest of the surviving plays, all by Æschylus—the Suppliants
The Seven opens with a speech from the King to his people, represented by the audience. A messenger enters, gives his report, and withdraws. The King prays for victory, and the scene ends. This can hardly be called a dialogue. Later in the play the Messenger delivers a series of speeches, describing in turn the appearance of the enemy champions, each of whom is about to attack one of the seven gates; the King replies to each with a description of the defending champion; and each pair of speeches is followed by a passage from the Chorus in strophic lyric. This may be called a dialogue, but, since it consists entirely of set speeches, it is of a very formal character. On the other hand, both King and Messenger, when alone on the stage, converse freely with the Chorus.

In the Persians, when the Messenger arrives with news of the defeat at Salamis, the Queen is on the stage, but he delivers his message to the Chorus, who reply in strophic lyric. At length the Queen, after declaring that grief had rendered her speechless, questions the Messenger, and there ensues a dialogue between them, in which the Chorus take no part. Later in the play, the Queen is again on the stage when the ghost of Darius appears, but the ghost addresses the Chorus, who reply in strophic lyric as before. On this occasion the Queen’s silence is unmotivated. Then follows a dialogue in which the ghost converses first with the Queen, the Chorus remaining silent, and later with the Chorus, the Queen remaining silent. Clearly, the dramatist has not yet learnt to manage a dialogue in which the two actors and the Chorus converse together. On the other hand, though earlier than the Seven, this play is marked by greater freedom in the handling of dialogues between the actors. The reason is perhaps that it is self-contained, whereas the Seven is the third play of a continuous trilogy; for, when we examine the Æschylean trilogy in detail, we shall find that the third play is the least elaborately constructed.

In the Suppliants, though there are several dialogues between one of the actors and the Chorus, there is only one between the actors—the King’s altercation with the Herald; and it is significant that the Herald is probably speaking from the
orchestra. Earlier in the play, Danaos is present throughout the King's long interview with the Chorus, but he takes no part until the end, when he addresses a short speech to the King, and even then he is met with a reply in which the King refers to him in the third person. The silence of Danaos in this scene, protracted and unmotivated, is extremely crude. Indeed, throughout the play his function is mainly that of a messenger; and, even as a messenger, he reports little that could not have been reported by the King. It may be suspected that Danaos has been introduced chiefly for the sake of the second and third plays of the trilogy, in which he must have had a prominent part. So far as the first is concerned, it would have suffered little if it had been written for a single actor.

We saw that, in the Persians, when the Messenger brings the news, and again when the ghost appears, there follows a dialogue between the actor, speaking in iambic trimeters or trochaic tetrameters, and the Chorus, who reply in strophic lyric. There are three dialogues of this type in the Suppliants—where the Chorus appeal to the King, and again to Danaos, and where they are assaulted by the Herald. In the Seven against Thebes there are two, while the description of the champions, in which two actors are involved, is an elaboration of the same principle. It is probable therefore that at an earlier period the actor's part had been largely of this character. And perhaps we may go even further. In the Suppliants, where the Chorus is assaulted by the Herald, the latter begins in lyric, like the Chorus itself—it is only later that he drops into iambic. It is possible, as Kranz has suggested, that this technique dates from a time when there had been no spoken part at all, only a lyrical exchange between chorus and actor.

The problem which Eschylus set himself by his introduction of the second actor was how to reorientate the actors towards each other and away from the chorus. By solving it, he revolutionised the relationship of stage to orchestra, because he was then able to develop the plot through the actors alone without the intervention of the chorus. Now, we learn from Aristotle that the actor's part was originally played by the poet; and it is easy to see that, if Eschylus took the part himself, he was in a peculiarly strong position for grappling with the problem of
developing it—a pretty example of the unity of theory and practice. And further, if the actor was the poet, engaged in a lyrical exchange with the chorus, we are not far removed from the primitive dithyramb, which was based, as we have seen, on precisely this relationship. As Aristotle said, the art of tragedy was derived from the leaders of the dithyramb.

The characters of Greek tragedy were mostly drawn from a limited number of traditional types, each of them distinguished by a conventional costume—the king, the queen, the prophet, the herald, the messenger, and so on. The most important is the king, of whom more will be said later, but in one respect the most remarkable is the messenger. This type differs from the others in that, with one exception (the Corinthian Messenger of Sophokles), it is never individualised. The function of messenger is, of course, sometimes performed by another character, such as Danaos in the *Suppliant* and the Phrygian slave in the *Orestes*; but, where the messenger appears as such, he lacks personality. The most conspicuous example is the *Seven against Thebes*, in which (apart from the spurious finale) the King and the Messenger are the only acting parts. The King and the Chorus are both well characterised, but the Messenger, who has a long part and is on and off throughout the play, remains a speaking voice and nothing more. The explanation appears to be that this type is an archaic and perfunctory element, which, being designed for the merely technical purpose of reporting what has happened off stage, has remained in its primitive condition. When there was only one actor, and the hero was killed in the course of the play, his death was reported in an undramatic narrative.

In the light of these considerations it is not difficult to envisage the outline of a pre-Æschylean tragedy. The chorus entered with a song or recitative, and after taking up their positions round the altar they sang a *stasimon*. Then the hero appeared, explained his identity and expounded the situation in a dialogue with the chorus. Then he disappeared, and, after another *stasimon* from the chorus, a messenger entered to announce the hero’s death. There followed a lament, the messenger retired, and the chorus left the orchestra in the same manner as they had entered.
At this point we must pause to meet a difficulty. If tragedy arose out of the worship of Dionysus, its plots must originally have been drawn from the myths of Dionysus. That follows from our argument, and it is confirmed by the Greek tradition, which is quite clear on this point. But we are told by Aristotle that its plots were for a long time "small" and its diction "ridiculous."\(^4\) How are these two traditions to be reconciled? The difficulty has been expressed by Pickard-Cambridge in his remarks on Thespis, the traditional founder of tragedy, who is said to have written a play on the myth of Pentheus.\(^5\) "The language of Thespis," he says, "may have been in some ways rude and grotesque; but the story of Pentheus . . . must always have been tragic." This is a questionable assumption.

One of the myths of Eleutherai concerned a duel between Xanthos (Fair Man) and Melanthos (Dark Man) in which the former was slain by his opponent with the help of Dionysos Melanaigis. As Usener has explained, this myth is founded on a ritual drama of a well-known type, in which Summer is killed by Winter; and Farnell has even maintained that in this drama of Eleutherai we have the prototype of Athenian tragedy.\(^6\) Farnell's view must be rejected, for two reasons. In the first place, there is nothing to show that it was played in this form, or indeed in any form, during the critical period of the sixth century B.C.; and further, so far as it can be reconstructed from the myth, it involves three actors and no chorus. It lies off the direct line of descent. On the other hand, it is a Dionysiac subject—the stuff of which tragedy was made; and, moreover, it is clearly a subject that would lend itself to boisterous treatment. We have only to think of our own mumming-plays derived from the same origin, such as the duel between St. George and Captain Slasher.\(^7\)

But could the story of Pentheus have been treated in this way? There is positive evidence that it had been. There can be no doubt that the scene in the Bacchants of Euripides, where Pentheus appears immediately before his death dressed up in woman's finery, with his belt unfastened and a curl out of place, which the god laughingly puts straight, is intentionally ridiculous; and, as Bather pointed out, the comic treatment of this stage in the myth is explained by the corresponding stage
in the ritual. Pickard-Cambridge's attitude on this matter springs from a misunderstanding of the nature of primitive religion. The idea that such things as laughter, ribaldry and obscenity have no place in divine worship has little validity outside the narrow circle of our own Protestant tradition.

Further, if the diction of tragedy was originally ridiculous, that quality was in keeping with its metrical form. The measure originally employed was the trochaic tetrameter—a light and tripping rhythm which Æschylus and Euripides continued to use occasionally for imparting animation to the dialogue; but in general it was superseded by the iambic trimeter, which was nearer to the rhythm of common speech. Both these metres were of popular origin, and the iambic was closely associated with the lampoon, which was certainly ridiculous.

It is clear therefore that there is no real discrepancy in our evidence at this point, although at a later stage of our enquiry we shall have to face the question as to why in the later period the comic element was eliminated.

Let us now examine the tragic actor from a different point of view. The Greek for an actor was hypokritos, corresponding to the verb hypokrinomai, which, except when it is used of acting, means always either "answer" or "interpret." Was the Greek actor an answerer or an interpreter? Whom did he answer or what did he interpret? This problem has been mishandled by modern scholars, who have assumed it is merely a matter of choosing between the two. Before we can do that, we must explain why the two senses were covered by a single word.

In the Iliad, the Trojans see an omen—an eagle carrying a snake. Polydamas explains what he understands the omen to mean, and concludes: "That is how a diviner would interpret it." In the Odyssey, Penelope has had a dream; she says to Odysseus, "Interpret my dream"; and Odysseus replies, "It is not possible to interpret your dream." There is no question what the verb means in these three passages. In another passage of the Odyssey, an eagle is seen carrying a goose. Peisistratos turns to Menelaos and asks him: "Is this omen intended for you or for us?" Menelaos ponders, wondering "how he should interpret it (or answer) aright." In this last passage, where the word might be translated either way, the essential unity of the two senses is
clearly revealed: *hypokrinomai* means to “interpret a dream or omen” or alternatively to “answer an enquiry about a dream or omen.” It was a ritual term, describing a function of the priesthood.

In the generalised sense of “answer,” the verb *hypokrinomai* is found only once in the *Iliad* and once in the *Odyssey*, the normal word for “answer” being *amethomai*, which occurs many hundreds of times. It follows that the generalised usage of *hypokrinomai* was only just beginning in Homeric Greek. In Ionic it became the dominant usage, but in Attic *hypokrinomai* is only used of “acting,” being the verb corresponding to the substantive *hypokrités*, and the idea of “answer” is expressed by another formation from the same root, *apokrinomai*. It may be inferred that in Attic *hypokrinomai* lost its original sense when the corresponding substantive acquired the sense of “actor.”

The problem is now reduced to this: when the word *hypokrités* was first applied to the actor, did it connote *hypokrinomai* in its primitive sense of “interpret” or in its derivative sense of “answer”? Now, in Attic, there is no evidence that *hypokrinomai* ever meant “answer” or that *hypokrités* ever meant an “answerer.” The verb is only used in the sense corresponding to the substantive, and the substantive is always used of an actor or declaimer, except in one passage of Plato.12 This passage is instructive. Plato is discussing the exact meaning of the word *prophétes*. Some people, he says, speak of *prophétai* as though they were the same as *mántes*, “prophets,” but this usage is incorrect: the *prophétai* are not prophets, but interpreters (*hypokritai*) of enigmatical utterances and appearances. Now, since Plato is here concerned to point out the strict sense of the word *prophétes*, we must presume that he is being equally strict in his use of *hypokrités*—that is to say, he is aware that the latter was originally applied, like *krités*, to an interpreter of oracles, dreams, or omens.

The current Attic for interpreter in this sense was *hermeneús*, the origin of which is uncertain. The Ionic was *exegetés*, which was also the title of a priesthood at Eleusis. The Eleusinian *exegetai* were exponents of the *legómena*, the “things said” at the Mysteries, and in that way they interpreted the *drómena*, the “things done” in the symbolic ritual. Now, the word *exegetés*
means primarily a "leader." It is therefore synonymous with *exárchon*, which is the term used by Archilochos and Aristotle of the leader of the dithyramb. These considerations suggest that the *hypokrités* and the *exárchon* were originally identical.

The *exárchon* was the poet-leader of the dance and song of the dithyrambic chorus, descended from the god-priest of the Dionysiac *thlasos*. How did he become an interpreter? The *thlasos* was a secret society, and consequently its ritual was a mystery, which only those who had been initiated into the secret were able to understand. Accordingly, when this ritual became a drama in the full sense of the word, a mimetic rite performed by initiates before an uninitiated audience, it needed an interpreter. Let us suppose that the guild of Eleutherai is performing a choral dance before a crowd of spectators. The dance is designed to symbolise the wanderings of the daughters of Eleuther after they have been driven mad by Dionysus. The performers understand this, but the spectators do not. Accordingly, at some point, the leader comes forward and says in plain language, "I am Dionysus, and these are the daughters of Eleuther, whom I have driven mad." In doing this, the leader is already an interpreter, and he is on the way to becoming an actor. Tragedy was derived from the leaders of the dithyramb.

The art of tragedy has now been traced back to a point at which it makes contact with the most advanced ritual dramas of the North American Indians; for it will be remembered that, though these dramas were sometimes performed in public, their inner meaning was understood only by the initiated members of the secret society that performed them. On this point Hutton Webster writes as follows:¹⁸

The rites, in part secret, in part public, constitute a rude but often very effective dramatisation of the myths and legends. Usually only the members of the particular society which performs the rites understand their significance. The actors, masked or costumed, represent animals or divine beings whose history the myths recount.

Among the North American Indians, the growth of drama was arrested at the critical point, the reason being that the
social status of the secret societies was sufficiently secure to resist secularisation. In Attica, where the Dionysiac thiasos was in decline, it only survived by becoming a guild of actors.

The choral odes of Greek tragedy are constructed on the rhythmical pattern known as antistrophic form. A rhythmical system (strophe), or stanza as we should call it, is introduced and repeated; then a second system is introduced and repeated in the same way, and so on. The ode falls therefore into a series of pairs (AA BB CC). Sometimes each pair is followed by an epyrtion or refrain (AAX BBX CXX).

The structure of the mature dithyramb is different. It is based on what is known as triadic form. A system is introduced, repeated, and followed by a second system, called the epytoidos or "after-song"; then the first system is reintroduced, again repeated, and followed by a repetition of the epytoidos; and so on. The dithyramb, therefore, is founded on a single triad continuously repeated (AAB AAB AAB). The epytoidos is employed occasionally in tragedy, but only at the end of the ode as a coda. The triad is said to have been invented by Stesichoros, and it is the dominant form, not only of the dithyramb, but of the later aristocratic choral lyric. Nearly all the odes composed by Pindar and Bakchylides for victories at the games are triadic.

Lastly, there is the form known as monostrophic, consisting of the continuous repetition of a single system (AAA). This is used occasionally by Pindar and Bakchylides in their victory odes, and by the latter in a few of his dithyrambs. Before the invention of the triad, it had been the dominant form of the aristocratic convention. All the extant odes of Alkman, Sappho and Alkaios belong to this type.

We must endeavour to reconstruct the origin and growth of these conventions. In the first place, we observe that of the three forms the antistrophic is the most flexible, because, since each pair is different from the last, the rhythm of the ode can be varied and developed. It is therefore the most dramatic. Secondly, the reason why, in both antistrophic and triadic form, the systems are grouped in pairs must be that the ode was, or had once been, antiphonal. Finally, the dithyramb belongs to the aristocratic convention, being either triadic or
monostrophic. Which of these two forms is the more primitive? The answer seems to be that neither is primitive, but both have a common origin.

In the *Iliad*, the women of Troy perform a dirge over the body of Hector. They are led by Andromache, Hecuba and Helen. Each of these “leads off” in turn with praise of the dead man, and each solo is followed by a general wail. The word used to describe the function of the leaders is the word applied by Aristotle and Archilochos to the leaders of the dithyramb (*exârkontes*). The ritual basis of this performance is plainly a series of improvised solos from the leaders followed in each case by a refrain from the chorus, and it may be assumed that the solos conformed to a common rhythmical pattern. As treated by Homer, the solos are the vital element, the refrains being merely perfunctory. This subordination of the refrain to the solo, of the many to the few, corresponds to the distinction between the people and the nobility or the laity and the priesthood. Moreover, if we eliminate the popular element entirely, we are left with a series of improvised solos on a repeated musical pattern. This is the aristocratic *skôlion* or drinking-song. Seated round the table, one after another of the banqueters sings a stanza, improvising the words to a repeated musical accompaniment. And if we adapt this convention to the conscious art of an individual poet, we have the monostrophic ode of Sappho, Alkaios and Alkman.

Later, the *epondos* reappears in the aristocratic tradition—not however as a popular refrain but as an artistic elaboration. The ode is now sung by two semi-choruses—the strophe by the first, the antistrophe by the second, and the *epondos* by the two together. After the practice of antiphony is abandoned, the triad is maintained as the basis of the rhythmical structure, and it passes from the aristocratic ode to the mature dithyramb. Finally, in tragedy, the triad is superseded by the antistrophic pair. On the other hand, the tragedians continue to make occasional use of the refrain, which, owing to the changed significance of *epondos*, is now known as the *ephîmnion*. It may be inferred that they derived this element from the primitive dithyramb.

This reconstruction involves the assumption that, although
absent from the older aristocratic tradition, the *epoidós* was primitive, and consisted originally of a refrain. We must remember that the convention we have been examining was an artistic one. The traditional hymns used in the everyday service of the gods must have been simpler and more primitive. Of these hymns we know little, but what we do know is significant. The Hymn of the Kouretes, to which we referred in the last chapter, is a monostrophic ode with a refrain attached to each strophe; and the refrain in the hymn to Dionysus sung by the women of Elis—"worthy Bull, worthy Bull"—is described by Plutarch in terms which show that he regarded it as an *epoidós*.17

The word *epoidós* had two meanings. In a technical sense, it was applied to the third member of the triad, and in this application it was understood to mean an "after-song." But it was also used in a non-technical sense of a charm, spell, or incantation. In this sense it was synonymous with *epoidé*. The idea of incantation takes us back to primitive magic, and shows that the original significance of *epoidós* was not an "after-song" but a song "sung over" somebody, like the wail of the Trojan women over the body of Hector or the spell recited over the sick man to heal him or over the sinner to effect his damnation. Indeed, we may go further and say that the primitive refrain was an incantation. In the *Orestes* of Æschylus the Erinys perform a magical dance with the object of effecting the death and damnation of the matricide. The dance is a *stásimon* of the normal type except that the first member of each antistrophic pair is followed by an *ephýmnion*, which is repeated at the end of the second, and it is through these refrains, sung as the Erinys leap round their victim, that the magic operates. The refrain is used by Æschylus in the same way in the first *stásimon* of the *Suppliants*, where the fugitives are cursing their pursuers and calling down a storm upon them before they can reach harbour. These refrains are simply the incantations of mimetic magic. They are the primitive kernel out of which, by the stages already indicated, the Greek chorus had evolved.

The choral odes of Greek tragedy are of three kinds—the *párods*, sung while the chorus is entering the orchestra; the *stásimon*, sung after they have taken up their positions; and the
κομμός. Of the first two, which conform to the normal anti-
strophic structure, nothing further need be said, but the third is
rather different. We have already encountered one example of
the κομμός in the lyrical exchange between the Herald and the
Chorus in the Suppliant of ΑEschylus, and in discussing that
passage we referred to the view advanced by Kranz that in
these lyrical exchanges we have the nucleus of tragic dialogue.
The κομμός is a lament in which the chorus and one or more of
the actors participate, and its normal place is immediately
before or after the tragic crisis. It is properly a "beating of the
breast"—that is to say, a θρένος or lament; but it is noteworthy
that the word is never used in Attic prose except as a technical
term to describe this part of a tragedy. It was therefore an
archaic word, and that accords with Kranz's view that what it
denoted was a primitive feature of the tragic convention. There
are other indications that point in the same direction.

In the simplest type of κομμός the actor sings a strophe, which
is followed by another from the chorus, then the actor sings his
antistrophe and the chorus sing theirs (ABAB CDCD). If we
eliminate the antistrophic principle, which as we have seen
was probably no older than tragedy itself, this structure reduces
itself to a monostrophic solo with refrains (Ab Ab Ab); and that,
according to our argument, was the form of the primitive
dithyramb. Further, it is evident both from the rhythm to
which it was set (normally πανοικ) and in some cases from the
accompanying words that the dance-movement of the κομμός
was excited and impassioned. We know next to nothing
of how the musical modes were employed in Greek tragedy,
but it seems possible that the κομμός was further distinguished
by the use of the excited Phrygian mode, described as ένθεος
or "possessed"; and we know that this was the mode employed
in the dithyramb. 18

Thus, the climax of the tragedy, corresponding to the
crucial moment, the αγών, in the passion of Dionysus, was
commonly cast in a distinctive form which embodied the re-
 mains of the primitive dithyramb—a musical dialogue between
the leader and his θλασος.

In his analysis of tragic plots, Aristotle distinguishes the
complex from the simple plot as one in which the change of
fortune coincides with a *peripécía* or an *anagnórisis* or both. What he meant by the former term is a fundamental question which we shall not attempt to answer at this stage. The *anagnórisis* or recognition he defines as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, resulting in friendship or hatred on the part of the characters marked out for good fortune or for ill." He divides these recognitions into four categories according to the means by which they are effected—by tokens, by deliberate self-revelation, by some inadvertent cry or action, and by inference.

His remarks on this subject make it clear, not only that the recognition was a constant and radical feature of the convention, but that one of its commonest forms, which he regards as the crudest, was recognition by means of hereditary tokens. Two examples of this type are known to us from the extant plays—the recognition of Orestes by his embroidered swaddling-bands, and the recognition of Ion by the *gnorismata* in which he had been exposed as an infant. The significance of these two cases has already been explained, and Aristotle mentions others which clearly belong to the same type—the spear of the Spartoi (p. 49), and the star of the Pelopidai—another traditional birthmark. What was the origin of the *anagnórisis*?

It is agreed that the themes of early tragedy were drawn from the myths of Dionysus, and I have argued that the original theme was the god's death. It is also known that in the fifth century the Dionysiac cycle was no more prominent in tragedy than other mythical cycles. We may now go a step farther. It stands to reason that, before the early tragedians began to draw on other cycles, they must have made full use of the Dionysiac. They must have dramatised, not only the death of Dionysus, but his birth and his resurrection. This, as I have said, stands to reason, and it is supported by the analogy of the mediæval mystery-plays. The nucleus of these was the *Quem quaeritis* of the Three Mariæ in the Easter liturgy. This nucleus was developed by the dramatisation of other elements in the Easter myth—the meeting of the Mariæ with the angel, with the apostles, and with Christ himself. The second stage was reached when the same process was applied to the myth
the Nativity, and in the third the themes range from the Creation and the Fall to Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.

For these reasons it is permissible to conjecture that the theme of the recognition is derived from the self-revelation of the god after his re-birth or resurrection. His appearance was followed, we may suppose, by an interrogation on the part of the chorus, at the end of which he proved his identity by revealing to them the sacred objects or mystical symbols associated with his cult. This conjecture derives some additional support from another feature of the convention which has still to be examined.

No characteristic of Greek tragedy is more familiar than the set passages of line-for-line question and answer which are called in Greek stichomphthia. Throughout its history this feature retained its severely formal character, except that Sophokles and Euripides sometimes relaxed it to the extent of permitting a change of speaker in the middle of the verse. To our ears the effect is often incongruous or even absurd, as for example at the crisis of the Agamemnon; and, if the Athenians accepted it, it was mainly, we must suppose, because it was a fundamental, and therefore primitive, feature of the convention.

These formal dialogues are equally remarkable for their content. Not only do they proceed by the symmetrical arrangement of question and answer, but it often appears, especially in Æschylus, as though the speakers were more concerned to veil their meaning than to elucidate it. "Thy utterance is a riddle—speak in plain words." Such verses are typical. Sometimes the utterance takes the actual form of a riddle. Thus, in the Choephoroi, after the murder of Aigisthos, when Clytemnestra asks the slave what the shouting is about, the slave declares darkly, "The living, I tell you, are being killed by the dead," and Clytemnestra replies, "Ah me, a riddle, yet I read its meaning." The full effect of her reply is lost in translation, because the word she uses—xynēka, "I understand"—recalls the term commonly applied to initiates—hoi xynētai, "those who understand," those who have been admitted into the mystical secrets. Here then is a riddle, which we must try to solve.

The riddle is as deeply imbedded in Indo-European folk-
lore as it is widespread among primitive peoples at the present day. The data collected by Schulz, which would repay closer analysis, suggest that it formed originally the spoken part of an initiatory test or ordeal.\textsuperscript{23} For the present however I must confine myself to the evidence from ancient Greece, which is sufficient to establish provisionally the immediate point at issue.

The riddle was defined by Klearchos of Soloi as "a humorous problem requiring the use of intelligence in discovering the solution and propounded for the sake of a penalty or reward."\textsuperscript{24} The normal Greek type may be illustrated by the riddle of the Sphinx, by reading which Œdipus became king of Thebes:\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{verbatim}
A thing there is whose voice is one,
Whose feet are four and two and three;
So mutable a thing is none
That moves in earth or sky or sea;
When on most feet this thing doth go,
Its strength is least, its pace most slow.
\end{verbatim}

The essential feature is that the thing to be identified is described in symbolical and apparently contradictory terms.

The Sphinx was a female monster who dwelt on Mount Phikion, Phix being the Æolic form of her name. The legend about her relations with the royal house of Thebes is recorded by Pausanias.\textsuperscript{26} She learnt her riddle from Laios, who had presumably learnt it from his father, for we are told that originally it was given by the Delphic Oracle to his great-grandfather, Kadmos, the founder of the dynasty. Laios had sons by other women besides his queen, and accordingly, when one of them wished to lay claim to the succession, he was sent up into the mountain, where the Sphinx asked him her riddle, and, if he failed to solve it, he was put to death. This legend implies some form of initiation into the secrets of a royal clan.

At Sparta, it will be remembered, the boys used to be questioned by the \textit{etren} after supper about public affairs, and, if they gave him a wrong answer, he bit them on the thumb (p. 104). It seems probable that these questions too were
originally concerned with initiatory secrets, for we have seen that one of the primitive rites of initiation, which can be traced in the legend of Orestes, is the amputation of a finger (p. 108). Athenaios records that in ancient times riddles used to be asked at drinking-parties for the purpose of educating the young, and he refers to a passage of Diphilos describing three girls of Samos asking one another riddles at a drinking-party during the festival of Adonis. Finally, Plutarch says that, at the Theban festival of the Agrionia, it was the custom for the women, after they had returned from their search for the lost Dionysus, to ask one another riddles after supper. 27

This evidence suggests that, at least in Greece, the custom of asking riddles was a traditional pastime derived from catechism in the secrets of initiation, the purpose being to test the novice’s knowledge of the mystical symbols. It is possible therefore, since so much in Greek tragedy goes back to initiation, that the *stichomythia* are a vestige of such catechisms; and it is easy to see how the identification of the god might be used as a means of expounding those symbols in the course of a ritual drama.

Finally, we have to see whether anything of value can be extracted from what we know of the stage on which the actors acted. Unfortunately this is very little. Of the stage as it was in the time of *Æschylus* no trace remains, probably because it was made of timber. Judging from the remains of the earliest stone buildings, which date from the end of the fifth century according to Puchstein, or according to Dörpfeld from the middle of the fourth, it seems probable that the old wooden structure was a long building with wings at either end projecting towards the orchestra, and that the stage was a narrow platform running in front of this building from wing to wing. 28 The front of the building therefore served as a background to the stage, and in it were doors leading from the stage to the actors’ changing-rooms. The depth of the stage is unknown, but it cannot have been very high, because we know that the actors conversed freely with the chorus and that there was easy access from stage to orchestra.

The stage was called *skéné*, a term also applied to the front of the building behind the stage and to the stage-buildings as
a whole. The primary meaning of *skene* is a "tent," and it is also used of the tilt or awning of a covered waggon. This is important, because we are told by Horace that Thespis and his actors used to tour the Attic countryside in a waggon. We also know that waggons were a regular feature of the Dionysiac *kômos*. All this hangs together, and tells us something worth knowing about Attic drama before the institution of the official contests at the City Dionysia. Thespis is said to have won the tragic prize (a goat) about 534 B.C., which was the time when the festival was being organised by Peisistratos.

**RITUAL PATTERN OF GREEK TRAGEDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primitive Initiation</th>
<th>Greek Initiation</th>
<th>Tragedy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departure as child</td>
<td><em>pompe</em></td>
<td><em>párodos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death and resurrection</td>
<td><em>agón</em></td>
<td><em>peripèteia</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>sparagmos</em>.</td>
<td><em>kommós</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation of sacred objects</td>
<td><em>anakálypsis</em></td>
<td><em>anagnórisis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catechism</td>
<td><em>ainígmata</em></td>
<td><em>stichomýthia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>dokimasia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Return as adult</td>
<td><em>kômos</em></td>
<td><em>éxodos</em></td>
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If the tradition preserved by Horace is genuine—and, although Horace would not be a reliable authority in himself, it has everything else in its favour—it provides us with an important link in the chain we have been trying to reconstruct. After it had ceased to be the ritual of a secret society, and before it secured a footing in Athens, Dionysiac drama was in the hands of a guild or guilds of actors, who toured the country villages. No doubt, these guilds were still organised on a religious basis, derived from the organisation of the *thiasos*, and their performances were still invested with a religious significance and associated with the welfare of the crops; but it is
Fairly clear that, if they had remained in this environment, they would have degenerated into the peasant mummery with which we are still familiar in modern Europe. This then was the period in which were developed those qualities of boisterousness and crudity which Aristotle noted as characteristic of early tragic diction.

In his study of the mediaeval English stage, Chambers has shown that, with the rise of the bourgeoisie in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the so-called liturgical plays, which had grown out of the ritual of the mediaeval Church, were transferred from the clergy to the bourgeois guilds, from the cathedral to the market-place, and at the same time their themes were secularised. The English drama had fundamental elements in common with the Greek; for these liturgical plays were influenced by the mumming-play, folk-dance and other performances derived from the agrarian ritual of the Germanic tribes; and, after being secularised, the drama was further developed by the patronage of the Tudor monarchy. But there is one radical difference, of profound importance for the history of both. In England, the Church stood for the feudal nobility, and its liturgy, as the ritual of a ruling class, had long been stabilised in a rigid form inimical to change. For this reason, the impulse to dramatisation, which came in the first instance from the peasantry, who instinctively sought to turn the liturgy into something useful—into mimetic magic—was only carried forward in the face of strenuous opposition from the ecclesiastical authorities; and for the same reason, when these plays were taken over by the bourgeoisie, the rivals of the feudal nobility, and later patronised by the Tudors as leaders of the bourgeoisie, the drama was developed in conscious opposition to religious ritual, of which it rapidly became entirely independent. In Attica, on the other hand, the worship of Dionysus, out of which the drama evolved, had always been popular, and was therefore revived and reorganised by the tyrants in opposition to the clan-cults of the old nobility. Consequently, when the drama was brought to Athens, the tendency towards secularisation, which had set in with the dissipation of the Dionysiac mysteries among the peasantry, was reversed. Instead of continuing to move away from
ritual, it was brought back into it; and thereafter throughout its history it remained first and foremost a divine service, which, once established on its new ritual pattern, imposed on its exponents a severe artistic discipline. That is one reason why Athenian tragedy is technically more perfect than Elizabethan.

We have seen that in his religious policy, Peisistratos was pursuing a consciously realised objective. The same is true of his attitude to the drama. When he instituted the tragic contests, his aim was not merely to gratify the tastes and interests of the Athenian merchants and artisans, but to use the art-form which the people had created as a means of raising their cultural level and welding them into a nation. Just as the new art-form was an expression of the progress already made, so under his direction it became a stimulus to further progress. Athenian tragedy was from the beginning inseparably bound up with the material and social advancement of the Athenian people.

He also saw that, if the Athenians were to develop a distinctive national culture, they must absorb the culture of other Greek states, especially those which at this time were more advanced than they were. It was for this purpose that he instituted the public recitation of Ionian epic, thus throwing open to Athenian dramatists a storehouse of richly elaborated traditional material. But the most striking testimony to his far-sightedness is the history of the mature dithyramb.

Under the tyrants, Athens rapidly became the principal centre in Greece for the performance of dithyrambs, yet almost all the dithyramid poets known to us were foreigners—Lasos of Hermione, Hypodikos of Chalkis, Pindar of Thebes, Simonides and Bakchylides of Keos, all of whom wrote mainly for the City Dionysia. Why did the Athenian tyrants do so much to encourage an art-form for which their own poets, pre-occupied with tragedy, showed little inclination? The reason must surely be that they appreciated its value for the development of tragedy. In the Peloponnese, at Corinth and Sikyon, the popular movement, and with it the Dionysiac revival, had begun much earlier than at Athens; and moreover its characteristic art-form, the dithyramb, had been assisted from the
outset by close contact with the choral tradition of the Dorian aristocracy—a tradition which had never taken root in Attica. By establishing the dithyramb at the City Dionysia, the tyrants made this tradition accessible to the Athenian dramatists, who were thus able to infuse it into their treatment of the tragic chorus.

Thus, while the power came from the people, it was their leader who made them conscious of it and so enabled them to use it. Without this union of mass-impetus with individual leadership, the art of tragedy could not have advanced as rapidly as it did, and so would not have been ready to take full advantage of the tremendous stimulus it was shortly to receive from the democratic revolution.

Our argument up to this point may be recapitulated as follows. The Dionysiac thiasos was a secret magical society which preserved in modified form the structure and functions of the totemic clan, out of which it had evolved during the later phases of tribal society. It was composed of women led by a male priest. Its principal rite, derived from initiation, contained three elements—an orgiastic exodus into the open country, a sacrament in which a victim was torn to pieces and eaten raw, and a triumphant return. This ritual was projected as a myth of the passion of Dionysus. Since its function was to promote the fertility of the soil, it persisted only among the peasantry, and so at a later stage became closely identified with the popular movement against the landed nobility. In some parts of Greece, owing to changes in the social relations of the sexes, the ritual passed into the control of the men and underwent further modification. It ceased to be secret, and began to disintegrate. The orgiastic procession became a hymn, which was developed most rapidly in the Peloponnese; the sacrament became a passion-play, developed principally in Attica, where the popular movement, after beginning later, progressed further. From the first arose the dithyramb, from the second tragedy. Both were urbanised and consciously directed by the tyrants, the former maturing under the influence of aristocratic lyric. Thus, looking back over our argument, we may say definitely that the art of tragedy was descended, remotely but directly, and with each stage in its evolution conditioned by
the evolution of society itself, from the mimetic rite of the primitive totemic clan.

EVOLUTION OF GREEK POETRY