PART TWO

FROM TRIBE TO STATE

SLAVES DIGGING FOR POTTER'S CLAY
IV
MONARCHY

The earliest settlers in Crete were probably of North African origin, belonging to the same stock as the primitive inhabitants of Lower Egypt. They were joined at an early period by immigrants from Cyprus and Asia Minor. Their social and cultural development was continuously stimulated by contacts with the advanced states of Egypt and the East, and by the middle of the second millennium B.C. they had built up a highly organised, commercial, theocratic state centred in the city of Knossos. The commercial connections of Minoan Crete radiated all over the Mediterranean, and its relations with Lycia, the Cyclades, and parts of the Greek mainland were particularly close. The legends of Argos and Attica suggest that these areas had at one time been ruled from Knossos or at least subjected to tribute. All this presupposes command of the sea and an advanced state organisation; and these are precisely the features of the Minoan age which impressed themselves most deeply on the Greek tradition. The sea power of Minos is mentioned by Thucydides as a historical fact, and his fame as a legislator survived in the mystical tradition, which made him the supreme judge of the dead who allotted to each soul its portion in eternal life.

This high degree of social organisation was not reproduced outside Crete itself. The cities of the mainland—Orchomenos, Thebes, Argos, Tiryns and Mycenae—were comparatively small and isolated military strongholds, whose massive walls frowned menacingly over the surrounding plains. Soon after the middle of the second millennium the city of Knossos was destroyed, and the centre of power shifted to Mycenae, whose ruling dynasty exercised an uncertain hegemony over its neighbours. The power of these dynasties rested mainly on conquest and plunder. There was a protracted war between Mycenae and
Thebes. It was a period of intense social disturbance, culminating in maritime raids of marauding bands as far as the borders of Egypt and in the siege of Troy. It was brought to an end by the incursion of the Dorian tribes (1000 B.C.), which plundered the plunderers and established new dynasties in Thessaly, the Peloponnese and Crete itself. After the Dorian conquest, more settled conditions supervened. The wealth of Minoan civilisation had been exhausted.

The origin of these pre-Dorian dynasties is uncertain, but it is probable that many of them spoke Greek. The distribution of dialects in historical Greece suggests that Greek speech had been carried into the Ægean basin in three successive movements. The first brought Ionic to Boiotia, Attica and the northern Peloponnese. This is the period in which the political influence of Crete was at its height—a fact which is reflected by the absorption into Greek of a large and important alien element, including the words for “brother” and for “king.” The second movement, associated with the fall of Knossos (1450 B.C.), brought the parent dialect of Æolic and Arcadic to Thessaly, the Peloponnese, Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus. It is highly probable that this was the speech of the Achæan princes described in the Homeric poems. The third movement was the spread of Doric, which overlaid the Achæan dialects throughout the Peloponnese, except the Arcadian highlands, and extended overseas as far as Crete, Rhodes and the Lycian seaboard. Meanwhile, Æolic and Ionic were carried across the Ægean to the northern and central coasts of Asia Minor by fugitives from the Dorian conquest.

The same process is reflected, though naturally with less precision, in the history of religion. The cults of Earth at Dodona and Delphi, of Demeter at Eleusis and in Argos and Arcadia, of Athena in Boiotia, Attica and Sparta and of Hera in Argos, Arcadia and Elis—all these are pre-Hellenic. At Dodona, Earth was joined at an early date by Zeus; at Delphi she was superseded by Apollo, who has both northern and Ægean connections. The supremacy of Athena in Attica, of Hera in Argos, and of Demeter in Arcadia, was disputed by Poseidon, and at Olympia Hera gave way to Zeus. Since the name of Zeus is certainly Indo-European, and since most of
the Achaean dynasties claimed descent from him, it is likely that they were instrumental in diffusing his worship through the Peloponnese and overseas to Crete.

Beginning with peaceful infiltration, the process became progressively more violent, and the Achaean period was catastrophic. These northern invaders, disguising their obscure origin under the royal name of Zeus, had pillaged the rich treasuries of Mycenae, Sparta and Minoan Crete. Their tribal organisation must have been far from primitive when they entered the Aegean, but hitherto the germs of decay had been working slowly from within. Now, in the clash of conquest, the accumulated intensity of the contradiction between the old structure of society and its transformed content precipitated a convulsion, out of which, after the Dorian conquest, there emerged a new and different structure. Henceforward the community was divided against itself between those who produced wealth and those who enjoyed it. It was this internal opposition which, by multiplying the divisions of labour, rendered possible the immense technical and cultural advances which marked the transition from barbarism to civilisation. But this opposition was not static—it was a struggle, intensely and incessantly accelerating the whole tempo of social change. The interval between the Achaean conquests and contemporary Europe is but an insignificant fraction of the countless ages that had elapsed since the emergence of those conquering tribes out of the primitive horde.

The social organisation of the Achaean has been reconstructed from the archaeological remains with the aid of the Homeric poems. The king lives in a palace on some rocky eminence, surrounded by the dwellings of his vassals. The relation between king and vassal is such as we find in similar conditions among the primitive Germans 2,000 years later. In reward for military service, the vassal holds in fee the rule of some portion of the conquered territory, and in return he takes up arms for the king when called on to do so. Such was the relation of Bellerophon to the King of Lycia, of Phoinix to the father of Achilles; and we remember how Odysseus endeavoured, but in vain, to evade military service. The vassal is entitled to be consulted on matters of policy and to feed at
the royal table. There are many such councils in the *Iliad*, and in the *Odyssey* the offence of the suitors lies in their abuse of a recognised privilege. Finally, each vassal stood in the relation of king to vassals of his own. Odysseus was a vassal of Agamemnon's, but to the princes of Ithaca he was king.

The revolutionary feature of this relationship is that it is personal, independent of kinship, and therefore anti-tribal. The resulting conflict among the ruling chiefs between personal and tribal loyalties has already been discussed, and it explains a remarkable feature of the Homeric poems. We learn from a single verse of the *Iliad* that the Achæan army, like those of Athens and Sparta many centuries later, was organised on a tribal basis; but the fact is mentioned incidentally, and it is never mentioned again. This reticence on the subject of tribal institutions does not mean that they had ceased to exist, but that the poems belonged to the tradition of a ruling class which instinctively made little of the loyalties it had defied. The common soldiers continued to be marshalled phratri by phraternity, but the vassal followed his lord.

This distinction between the *esthlot*—rich, well-armed, valiant and so "good"—and the *kakot*, who simply followed their leaders, is not yet so rigid as it was eventually to become, because the power of the chiefs is based on wealth in the form of plunder, not yet on land, and such wealth can be lost as easily as won. Nevertheless, it is already recognisable. When Thersites was bold enough to raise his voice against the war, Odysseus thrashed him. The upstart was given a salutary lesson. Achilles declared he would rather be a serf among the living than a king among the dead; and meanwhile, as we learn from Hesiod, the serf fortified himself against the wrongs of this world with the hope that they would be punished in the next. The community is divided against itself. Its outlook is no longer unified.

The characteristics of these Achæan princes—their social organisation, their personal ideals, their attitude to the common people—are all mirrored in the stories told to them by their poets about their gods.

The dwelling of Zeus is on the cloud-capped peak of Olympus. In the beginning, as cloud-gatherer and thunderer, he
had dwelt alone, the other gods residing elsewhere—Hera in Argos, Aphrodite in Paphos, Athena in the House of Erechtheus; but now they have been gathered together in a single celestial city—Zeus in the central palace, the others in the surrounding mansions built for them by Hephaistos. The supremacy of Zeus is recognised, though in practice it is often challenged. He summons his subordinates to councils, at which the affairs of mankind are discussed, and entertains them to meat, wine and music. These gods are selfish, unscrupulous, passionate, intensely alive to all delights of the senses. In one thing only are they divided from their worshippers—they can never die; and of that privilege they are extremely jealous. Mortals must not aspire above their mortal state, or they will be blasted with the thunderbolt. As the common people are to their chiefs, so are the chiefs to their gods.\textsuperscript{11} These Achæans expressed their sense of the limitations to their control of natural forces by personifying those forces as a class of supernatural beings which controlled them in the same way as they controlled their subject class. The Achæan Olympus was the mythical mirror of social reality.\textsuperscript{12}

It will be remembered that, in the hunting tribe, the authority of the elders had been projected as ancestor worship, and that later, when power was concentrated in the hands of a chief or king, a god was worshipped in the king’s image. The further evolution of human society promoted an increasing complexity in the relations of the divine powers believed to govern it. Some gods were subordinated to others: wars between tribes and peoples were waged again in heaven. The galaxy of totemic emblems which made up the royal insignia of the Pharaohs was a crystallised symbol of the fusion and subordination of originally independent tribes which had led to the unification of the kingdom; and the ever-shifting relations between the rival cities of the Tigris and Euphrates are reflected in the composite and unstable Babylonian pantheon. In the same way, the suzerainty of Zeus over his turbulent Olympians reproduces the organisation of Achæan Greece under the loose hegemony of the royal house of Atreus.

Myth was created out of ritual. The latter term must be understood in a wide sense, because in primitive society
everything is sacred, nothing profane. Every action—eating, drinking, tilling, fighting—has its proper procedure, which being prescribed, is holy. In the song and dance of the mimetic rite, each performer withdrew, under the hypnotic effect of rhythm, from the consciousness of reality, which was peculiar to himself, individual, into the subconscious world of fantasy, which was common to all, collective, and from that inner world they returned charged with new strength for action. Poetry and dancing, which grew out of the mimetic rite, are speech and gesture raised to a magical level of intensity. For a long time, in virtue of their common origin and function, they were inseparable. The divergence of poetry from dancing, of myth from ritual, only began with the rise of a ruling class whose culture was divorced from the labour of production. In Greece, as among the primitive Germans, this class was a military aristocracy which ruled by right of conquest, and its first product was in both cases the art of epic poetry. After the battle was over, tired but contented, the warriors forgot their fatigue as they listened to a lay, chanted by one of themselves or later by a minstrel, in honour of their victory. The function of these lays was not to prepare for action, like that of choral poetry, but to relax after action, and therefore they were less tense, less concentrated, less sacral. Moreover, their themes were not the collective traditions of clan or tribe, but the exploits of individuals; and therefore their technique was freer from convention, more open to innovations.

Behind Greek epic there probably lies the custom of collective chanting, such as we find among some of the North American tribes, but if so it has left no traces. The decisive stage in the evolution of epic was the rise of the military dynasties, which furnished the art of song with new themes and a new technique. The new themes were the wars of conquest, and the new technique was the lay sung by a trained minstrel at the feasts to which the king entertained his vassals. From this point the evolution of the art can be traced in written records. As Chadwick has shown in his masterly study of the subject, the history of Greek and of Teutonic epic presents a number of common features, which enable us to relate both to their social environment.
The themes of the Teutonic lays were originally contemporary. The minstrel sings to-day of the victory of yesterday. Thanks to his training, the metrical form of the lay has become a second language to him, in which he is as fluent as in ordinary speech. The court minstrel is a vassal of the king, whose power he consolidates by perpetuating the memory of his achievements.

The Homeric poems do not belong to this stage, but they point back to it. We hear little about minstrelsy in the *Iliad*, because its theme is actual fighting, but on one occasion Achilles consoles himself in idleness by singing of "the glories of men," which must mean their exploits in battle, and the Olympian banquet in the first book concludes with songs and dances from Apollo and the Muses. In the *Odyssey*, Phemios sings of the homecoming of the Achæans, Demodokos of the Trojan horse, and we are expressly told that contemporary themes are the most popular. We also hear of a minstrel at Mycenæ, to whom Agamemnon had entrusted the guardianship of his Queen—evidently a vassal of high standing.

The Homeric poems themselves belong to the second stage. The Achæan monarchies have succumbed to the Dorian invaders, and the wealthy families of Thessaly and the Peloponnesian have fled to Asia Minor, taking their cultural traditions with them. There they found new kingdoms, formed partly from the indigenous population and partly from the refugees now swarming across the Ægean. These new settlements are petty agricultural states, in which the king is merely the principal landowner. In these conditions, the minstrels no longer sing of contemporary victories, because there are none to sing of, and so they turn back to the idealised traditions of the past.

It was in this environment, with the monarchy already in decline, that Greek epic matured. It may be assumed that the lays which these emigrants had brought with them were already of a high artistic order. Now they were brought to perfection. The major factor underlying the last phase in the evolution of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is this uneventful period of concentration on a number of rich and already well-handled themes by craftsmen who had behind them a centuries-old
tradition, formed under the influence of Minoan civilisation, which they now re-fashioned all the more boldly because it had been uprooted from the country of its origin. The masterly construction of these poems is so impressive that it has been adduced as evidence of single authorship; but there is no reason why the same effect should not have been produced over a number of generations in the conditions of oral transmission. One may still encounter among the peasantry sagas or folk-tales which are artistically perfect—not because they are the work of a conscious artist, but because in the course of centuries they have been progressively shaped and polished by a sort of natural erosion, which has worn away excrescences and fashioned by slow degrees a final unity. And the hereditary poets of the Homeridai were conscious artists, cultivated and refined, who perfected the traditional material by infusing into it their own personal outlook.

In the same way, the tragic intensity with which the story of the Iliad is imagined arises out of the historical conditions in which the poem had evolved. The Achæan dynasties had risen and fallen while it was being composed. These sophisticated poets of Smyrna and Chios were far removed from the semi-barbarous robber chiefs of whom they wrote. The result was a dynamic tension between themselves and their material; and so deeply had they absorbed their material that this tension appears as something internal in the heroes of the story. \textquotedblleft If,	extquotedblright says Sarpedon to his vassal, \textquotedblleft we were destined to live for ever like the gods and never grow old or die, I should not send you into battle nor would I go myself; but, since in any case we are encompassed on every side by a thousand deaths and dangers, let us go—to give glory, or to win it.\textquotedblright That is not the voice of a robber chief. The Achilles who drew his sword upon the king, sulked in his tent, sobbed like a child, spurned the offer of cities, rolled in the dust for grief, dragged his enemy’s corpse at the tail-piece of his chariot and begged the aged Priam to go for fear he should be seized by a sudden paroxysm and kill him—that is the authentic Achæan chief, the restless cattle-raider, the pillager of Knossos. But Achilles is doomed; so is Agamemnon, and Ajax. The empire they carved out by robbery and rapine has been swept away, to be remembered in
melodious hexameters by the quiet and sensitive poets of Ionia, who loved to note the movement of sheep stampeded in the fold, the long sweep of scythes in the grass or the deft grace of a woman's fingers at the loom. And so, as they see him, Achilles is tormented by foreknowledge of his future. "Shall I go home to Phthia and live out my life in uneventful ease, or die young in battle and live for ever on the lips of poets?" That is the dilemma of the Iliad, which crystallises in a single masterpiece five centuries of revolutionary change.

In the Odyssey, which is later than the Iliad, the technique is the same, but the material is less traditional—the scenes in Ithaca must be largely fiction; and the tone is gentler, less heroic. If, as Nilsson has maintained, the stories about the Phoenicians belong to the late eighth century, when maritime trade was just beginning to revive, it may be inferred that one of the main themes of the poem—the fear and fascination of the sea—was evoked by the early beginnings of the commercial movement which was soon to precipitate a new crisis completing the evolution of the city-state.

The art of epic had grown up with the monarchy, and with the monarchy it declined. The king had been needed to lead the tribes in war, and, when the wars were at their height, the Greek kingdoms became federated under a supreme monarchy at Mycenae; but this system rapidly collapsed, not merely because it was threatened by the Dorians, but because it was unable to adapt itself to a peacetime basis. The instability of the Achæan kingship is apparent in the Homeric poems. Even on the field of battle, Agamemnon is unable to control his strongest vassal, and meanwhile his palace at home has been seized by a usurper. In the generations following the Trojan War, the Achæan federation dissolved into a multitude of petty principalities, in each of which, as the pressure of military needs relaxed, the king was forced to share his privileges with his vassals, until nothing was left of his office but the name.

When the royal courts broke up, the minstrels went out among the people, taking with them their traditional technique and adapting their themes to their new environment. Composed for a rich and leisured aristocracy, the Homeric poems had been designed to please; but the peasants to whom these
minstrels now addressed themselves had no use for poetry unless it could help to fill hungry mouths. The poetry of Hesiod was designed to teach. In the Works and Days, the peasants received instruction in farming, star-reading, weather lore, charms and omens, and generally how to make the best of their hard lot; in the Theogony, they were told of the origin of the world, and how by violence and cunning the Olympians had subjugated the gods of the Golden Age, when all men had lived contentedly without having to win their bread in the sweat of their brows. In the poetry of Hesiod, the peasants were urged to "work, work, work," and at the same time they were fed on folk-memories of primitive communism.\textsuperscript{18}
V

ARISTOCRACY

To placate Achilles, Agamemnon offered him, among other things, seven townships in Messenia, inhabited by people rich in flocks and herds, who, he said, would honour him with gifts like a god. These townships were evidently royal demesnes which the king wished to bestow on a vassal because they were too far from his capital to be ruled directly. This method of organising conquered territory is analogous to the feudal system of western Europe, being based on a similar gradation of rank from the king through his vassals and his vassals’ vassals to the serfs. It represents an advance on the têmenos, because it implies that the land belonged, in fact if not in name, to the sovereign. It did not last, because in peacetime, as we have seen, the centrifugal tendencies of the local chiefs were too strong for it, and it was swept away by the Dorian invaders.

When the Dorians entered the Peloponnese, their tribal organisation was still largely intact. The tribal assembly, composed of the adult men, was still able to assert its authority. That is shown by the treatment of the sons of Temenos and by the subsequent history of the Spartan apêlla. Similarly, at Sparta, the effective administrative body was for a long time the gerousia, the council of tribal elders. The function of the Spartan kingship remained essentially military and, though in the historical period the office was hereditary, the part played by the assembly after the death of Temenos shows that the succession had once been subject to popular ratification.

The Dorian settlement of Sparta derived its distinctive character from the fact that the tribal system, confined to the conquerors, who formed a small minority of the total population, was thereby converted, with little internal change, into a rigidly exclusive ruling caste. Since their numbers were few, the Spartans could only hold down the serfs by maintaining their military organisation in a state of constant readiness, and
the basis of that organisation was tribal. For the same reason, they had to close their own ranks against the disruptive inequalities that would follow from the growth of private property. Accordingly, they did everything in their power to maintain among themselves the tribal principle of common ownership. The land was divided into family estates, but these estates were inalienable, and their function was, by exploiting the serfs who worked them to the extent of 50 per cent. of the produce,\(^3\) to provide each Spartan with his contribution to the collective food supply, for they continued to eat in common. At the same time, they set their faces against the development of trade, and refused to publish a code of laws, without which organised commerce was impossible. In this way a system which had evolved on the basis of equality was transformed into an instrument of class domination. Its structure was still tribal, but in function it had become a state.

Notwithstanding these precautions, inequalities did develop. The law against alienation was evaded, and there arose a class of landless Spartans. The internal pressure thus set up was met by a policy of cautious expansion. It had to be cautious, because a defeat in war would have presented the serfs with the opportunity for which they were always waiting.\(^4\) And for the same reason Spartan foreign policy was guided by the determination to maintain so far as possible the supremacy of the landowning class in other states.

In Thessaly and Crete the subject population was treated by their Dorian conquerors in the same way, although the actual form of serfdom appears to have been rather less severe.\(^5\) In Crete we find a similar system of common meals and family estates, but, thanks no doubt to its maritime position, its social organisation was in some respects more advanced, or at least had become so by the fifth century. In that period, and perhaps earlier, the Dorians of Gortyna had a code of written laws, which, though more primitive than the Attic Code of Solon, implies a considerable development of private property. As I have already remarked, the legal institutions of Dorian Crete may have owed something to the influence of Minoan culture.

It was only in these three areas that the domination of the Dorians was complete. In Sikyon and Argolis, besides the
three Dorian tribes, there was a fourth, composed of pre-
Dorian elements, and this implies that the pre-Dorian popula-
tion had not been reduced to serfdom by the act of conquest.⁶
The Dorian aristocracies of these areas were weaker, and
therefore less successful in resisting the growth of trade.

In other parts of Greece—in Attica and Ionia—the new
social system which emerged after the wars of invasion was not
based on a racial and cultural cleavage such as divided the
Dorians from their subjects. By the end of the seventh century
B.C. the Attic landowners had succeeded in reducing their
peasantry to a condition worse than serfdom, but, since they
were themselves bound to the peasantry by a common culture
and by the common ties of tribe and clan, the process took a
long time, and it engendered among the peasantry a fierce
resentment. The Spartans had won the land by the sword;
the Attic nobles had to steal it.

The germ of property in land was, as we have seen, the
témenos. This germ was bound to develop, because it was
economically progressive.⁷ Under the tribal system, the land
belonging to the clan had either been worked collectively or
else divided family by family and periodically re-distributed.
These two methods correspond to successive stages in the de-
velopment of agriculture. Originally, the land had been worked
collectively because that was the only way in which it could be
worked, and similarly the division into family holdings reflects
the rising efficiency of the smaller unit. And, naturally, the
smaller unit emerged first among the ruling classes. The témenos
usually consisted of the best land; not being liable to re-
distribution, it could be enclosed and so better protected; and
the chief who owned it could cultivate it with the labour of
slaves brought home from the wars. Nor were the economic
advantages of enclosure lost on the common people. The small
man could not hope for a témenos, but he could clear and enclose
a piece of waste land, which became his by acquisition. This is
the eschatié, of which there are already instances in the Odyssey.⁸
His supply of slave labour was limited, but after the Dorian
invasions cheap hired labour was available from thousands of
detribalised and demoralised outcasts, who could be put to
work on the harvest and then turned adrift for the winter.⁹
In these conditions the effect of appropriation was both to enhance the value and to extend the area of the cultivated land.

It was, however, only a matter of time before this process of expansion reached its limit, and then the ownership of land began to concentrate. By loans of seed and stock after a bad season, the big landowner became a creditor of the small, and after a succession of bad seasons the smallholder reached the point at which he could only redeem his debt by surrendering his holding or tying himself to his creditor by some system of annual tribute. He lost his land or became a serf.

The têmenos was primarily a reward for military service, but it might also be dedicated to the service of a god. Indeed, since the chief was commonly a priest, the two types were not strictly distinguishable. The assignation of temêne to priestly families was one of the principal means by which the land passed into the control of the nobility. Just as the god had a chief to be his servant, so he demanded a house to dwell in and cornfields for his maintenance. In many cases the produce of his têmenos was supplemented by the receipt of tithes. The origin of the tithe lay in the contributions made to the common meal shared by the clan with its god; but the priests had now become the accepted intermediaries between the people and their god, who accordingly shared his meals with them alone.

The priesthood was already well organised in the Mycenean period. That is clear from the antiquity of such clan cults as those of the Branchidai at Mileto and the Eumolpidai at Eleusis, and the priesthood of Apollo at Delphi, which was recruited from a limited number of noble families. But it was only in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. that religion was consciously organised as a means of reinforcing the economic domination of the landowning class. The process was the more difficult to resist in that it involved no open break with the past, because the clan chief had always been recognised as a religious leader. The clan cult now became a hereditary office confined to the chieftain's family, and, as the largest landowners, the clan chiefs combined against their clans, using their religious authority to secure their material interests. In virtue of that authority, they became the accepted interpreters
of ancestral traditions and customary rights, the accepted judges of civil disputes; and, since in an agricultural economy these disputes were concerned almost exclusively with land, their interests as landowners were well protected. Thus, by extending the privileges accorded to them under the tribal system, they had converted that system into the state.

This transition from tribe to state manifests itself very clearly in the development under the aristocracy of the law of homicide. In tribal society, as already explained (p. 34), homicide within the clan was punished by excommunication, while homicide between clans imposed on the victim’s clan the obligation of obtaining satisfaction from the offender’s. In both cases the initiative rested with the clan. But now, in the new conditions created by the appropriation of the land, the clan is divided against itself. Accordingly, the obligation to avenge is abolished, except in so far as the initiative in prosecution is still left to the victim’s kinsmen, and all acts of manslaughter are treated indiscriminately as crimes punishable by excommunication.

We saw that, in tribal society, the man who had been excommunicated for manslaughter within the clan might be admitted by adoption into another clan. This is quite clear in the Germanic evidence, and in Greece it can be traced in the customs relating to the reception of suppliants. The suppliant was a hikêtes, one “who comes” to you—a stranger; and the act of supplication was in essence an appeal to be adopted. Thus, after entering the royal palace of the Phæcians, Odysseus clasped the knees of the Queen and then squatted on the hearth, whereupon the King took his hand and led him to a seat at table vacated for the purpose by his favourite son. The suppliant could hardly have said more clearly, Let me be your child, or rather, I am your child. He asks to be adopted, and, when his appeal is granted, he is treated as a kinsman.

This adoption of the outcast explains another feature of the aristocratic law of homicide. The manslayer was excommunicated, but he could be readmitted to the community by being purified. This too was a ritual act performed by the priesthood, who thus reserved to themselves full discretion in the treatment of crimes of violence. But, as we shall see when we examine the ritual of initiation, the practice of purification,
like adoption, is based on the idea of regeneration or rebirth. Both features therefore—excommunication and purification—were derived from tribal society, and in both cases the change effected under the aristocracy was to transfer the initiative from the clan to the state. The idea of kinship was too deeply rooted in men’s minds to be simply set aside, and so the nobles said to the people, We are all one kin, and therefore all homicide is a crime against the kin to be dealt with by the accredited authorities. The tribal conception of kinship has been widened, but the class division has deepened.

This development of criminal law, reached in Attica early in the seventh century, owed much to the political influence of the priesthood of Apollo at Delphi, which worked in close co-operation with Sparta and became the religious stronghold of the aristocracy, as conscious of its social function and proportionately as powerful as the mediæval Papacy. For the common people, it meant, not merely a break with immemorial traditions, but a complete surrender to their rulers in the treatment of a crime to which incentives grew with the growth of private property.

Let us now turn to the early history of Attica, which developed differently from Sparta and more slowly than Ionia. Attica was one of the few parts of the mainland which passed without much disturbance through the period of invasions, and consequently its traditions take us back a long way into the Mycenean Age. Though much still remains obscure, this subject has been greatly clarified by Wade-Gery’s careful analysis of the evidence from Thucydides and Aristotle.

Under Kekrops and his successors, Attica had been a loose federation of scattered tribal communities, each with its own chiefs (archontes) and its own prytaneion or council house—an institution of which we shall have more to say in a later chapter. There was also at Athens, under the presidency of the Athenian king, a Royal Council, to which these chiefs belonged; but in peacetime they did not attend it, being content with their local autonomy. This we learn from Thucydides, who thus confirms the evidence of the Homeric poems that the basis of the early kingship was military.

In course of time, for the reasons we have given, these local
chiefs developed common interests distinct from those of their followers. They began to reside in Athens, where they attended the Council regularly in the new *prytaneion* built by King Theseus, and the local councils disappeared. Local autonomy was superseded by centralised control. The chiefs had combined to form a governing class. Henceforward the state was administered by officials, still called *archontes*, elected by and from the families descended in the male line from the original members of the reconstituted Council. The Council itself was composed of *archontes* whose term of office had expired with the addition of others co-opted from the same families. In this way there arose the ruling caste of the Eupatridai.

In the Attic tradition these changes were all concentrated in the reign of Theseus, but in point of fact they must have extended over several centuries. The decline of the kingship, in particular, was very gradual. The office was first made elective within the royal clan, then it was thrown open to the rest of the Eupatridai, then its tenure was reduced to ten years and finally to one. This last stage was only reached at the beginning of the seventh century. Even after that, the *archon basileus*, as he was now called, continued to perform priestly functions derived from the kingship and to preside over the Council.

As Wade-Gery has shown, the accounts given by Thucydides and Aristotle of these developments, though independent, are quite consistent. There can be little doubt that they are essentially correct—except in respect of chronology. Here the tradition has been deflected by the claim put forward by Athenian nationalists in the fifth century that the founder of their democracy was Theseus. The centralisation of Attica was regarded as a democratic reform forced upon reluctant local chiefs, and the decline of the monarchy as a crowning act of self-abnegation on the part of Theseus himself, who, after thrusting their new honours on the Eupatridai, abdicated!

The subjective element in Thucydides and Aristotle is easily eliminated, but unfortunately Wade-Gery has introduced preconceptions of his own, which, being contemporary, are more insidious. Thus, when he asks why it was that membership of the Council was confined to the Eupatridai, and gives as his answer that “its functions were such as in an aristocratic
society could only be properly performed by hereditary *dristoi,*" he seems to be in danger of forgetting that it was these *dristoi* who, in pursuit of their own interests, had made society aristocratic. 20 It is necessary to resist the uncritical assumption that the governing class owes its power to a natural capacity for government.

There are signs that in the period following the Dorian invasion Attica made some progress in the development of overseas trade, 21 which was perhaps assisted by the disorganisation of the Peloponnese; but this movement appears to have been checked in the seventh century by competition from Aigina, which was more favourably situated on the trans-Ægean trade route. About 632 B.C. a nobleman named Kylon (the name of his clan is unknown), who had married a daughter of Theagenes, tyrant of Megara, attempted to set up a tyranny at Athens. Since the power of Theagenes appears to have been based on the woollen trade, 22 it is possible that Kylon too had commercial connections; but, if so, the mercantile interests at Athens were not yet strong enough to challenge the landowners successfully, for Kylon's attempt was abortive. After taking sanctuary in the temple of Athena Polias, he was put to death at the instigation of Megakles, the leader of the Alkmaionidai, who was *archon* at the time. Kylon's brother and family were sentenced to perpetual banishment, but his adherents secured the banishment of the Alkmaionidai as well for violating the sanctuary. 23 A few years later, the Eupatridai published a code of laws, drawn up by Drakon, and, since they are not likely to have taken such a step on their own initiative, it is possible that this too was the result of pressure from the merchant class. 24 Apart from the provisions for homicide, which have already been discussed, all we know of the Code of Drakon is that petty thefts of agricultural produce were made a capital offence and that in general it was said to have been written in blood.

Turning to the cities of the Asiatic coast, we find ourselves again in a very different situation. In the first place, these communities are all new, being founded by emigrants from the mainland in accordance with the traditional method of occupying conquered territory; but they differed from the Dorian settlements of the Peloponnese in that the newcomers,
who were themselves a mixed lot, fused more completely with the indigenous population, which was non-Greek.

In the second place, these states had important geographical connections, continental and maritime. The Asiatic hinterland was dominated by the wealthy commercial kingdoms of Phrygia, Maonia and, later, Lydia, which in turn were in contact with Babylonia and Assyria. The influence of Oriental art can be traced even in the Homeric poems. Moreover, as we learn from the *Odyssey*, Phoenician traders were already active in the Ægean, and from them the Asiatic Greeks acquired the technique of trade, including the alphabet.

So far as can be gathered from the Homeric poems, down to the end of the eighth century the economy of Ionia remained primarily agricultural, but in the ensuing period maritime trade and colonisation developed so rapidly and widely—ranging from the Crimea to southern Italy, Sicily and North Africa—that the struggle for the land was of relatively brief duration. Landless men were encouraged to seek their fortunes overseas. The internal stresses set up by appropriation of the land found an outlet in colonial expansion, which in turn weakened the position of the landowners by multiplying the possibilities of trade. By the end of the seventh century, in the leading cities of Ionia, political control had been wrested from the landed aristocracy by the tyrant or merchant prince, whose historical function will be examined in the next chapter. What we have to consider now is the effect of the economic and social changes underlying the rise of the aristocracy on Greek poetry and thought.

The poetry of Hesiod, who lived in eighth-century Boiotia, is particularly valuable as a record of his times, because he was not himself a member of the ruling class. He was a yeoman farmer, the son of an immigrant from Kymai on the other side of the Ægean, and it was doubtless from there that he derived his training in the epic tradition. His attitude to the peasantry is at once protective and repressive. He is alive to the growing intensity of competition and to the sufferings inflicted by the rapacity of the ruling landowners; but, since his aim is conservative—to maintain the established order—he appeals to each class in turn to moderate its claims. The nobles are
warned not to abuse their powers—above all, not to give “crooked judgments”; the peasants are exhorted to make the best of their lot by industry and thrift, and to remember that it is better to enjoy what you have than to covet what you lack. This attitude is crystallised in some proverbs which now appear for the first time: Nothing too much; do not strive overmuch; measure in all things is best; suffering teaches sense.87 He reminds us of the mediaeval schoolmen, whose outlook is voiced by Chaucer’s Parson: “I wot well there is degree above degree, as reason is, and skill it is that men do their devoir thereas it is due, but certes extortions and despite of your underlings is damnable.”88 The England of Chaucer’s Parson was also based on an agricultural economy, in which the peasant was bound by similar obligations to his lord.

This proverbial doctrine of “measure” or métron does not appear in the Homeric poems. The nearest approach to it is the passage in which Poseidon warns Zeus to keep within his moïra;89 but in general, as we have seen in our discussion of this subject, what moïra connotes is the positive right enjoyed by each member of the community to a share in the products of his labour. The idea of métron is moïra in a new guise, with a significant shift of emphasis to its negative aspect: so much and no more. In the Homeric poems, the word is used only in a concrete sense of an instrument for measurement or a measured quantity of corn or oil or wine. Under the landed aristocracy, the serf was bound to pay over a fixed portion of his produce to his lord, and the lord must not demand, nor the serf retain, more than his due.90 The economic relations characteristic of an agricultural economy are projected as a moral precept, which in turn invests those relations with an apparently external sanction.

The same idea runs through aristocratic poetry from Alkman to Pindar. The formula, “Know thyself,” inscribed on the entrance to Apollo’s temple at Delphi,91 is simply a variant of “Nothing too much”: it means that you must recognise your mortal limitations and not invite divine retribution by aspiring too high and seeking to become a god. It is an inherent element in this outlook that all passionate longings are dangerous and reprehensible. In Pindar, who clung to his aristocratic ideals
in an age in which their social foundation had been largely swept away, the Olympian gods and goddesses, though outwardly the same as Homer's, have lost their irresponsible gaiety—they are splendid to look at, majestic, but they are heartless.

After Hesiod, the art of epic gradually ceased to be creative, but out of it emerged the elegiac couplet, based on the epic hexameter and the epic dialect. Elegiac poetry is mainly secular, and in this respect too it maintains the epic tradition. Much more important, however, and more distinctive of the aristocracy, is the art of choral lyric.

The Achæan chiefs, rewarded by the people for their leadership in war with the lion's share of the spoils, broke loose from the shackles of tribe and clan into an impetuous career of self-assertion; and accordingly their poetry, the epic, was secular, dynamic, individualistic. These chiefs had now been succeeded by sedentary landowners who had combined against the people in a close corporation cut off from the labour of production. They too had ruptured the clan ties between them and their subjects, but in their own ranks each family sedulously maintained its traditional cult as the emblem of its hereditary privileges. Accordingly, aristocratic poetry is religious, static, collective, and in structure more primitive than epic. Its most characteristic form, the choral ode, is in fact directly descended from the ancestral rite of the totemic clan.

The choral ode is a hymn, a processional chant, a dirge for the dead, or a song of triumph for a victory at the Games. Its essence is still the ritual act—the act of sacrifice or dedication or acclaiming the victor on his return to the ancestral home. The centre of the Pindaric ode is the myth, set in between praise of the victor at the opening and the close, and the function of this myth is to celebrate the ancestral glories of his clan. Similarly, in keeping with the static unity of the class for which they are composed, the structure of these odes is severely formal and entirely undramatic. In diction, too, they are far removed from epic. The diction of Homer is simple, spontaneous, free from self-conscious artifice; it is the medium of a community in which social distinctions have not yet petrified into caste. Something of the same fluency is found in the choral odes of
Alkman, who composed for the Spartans at a time when they had not yet become conscious of their historic mission. The mature Sparta is seen in the fragments of Stesichoros—solemn, martial, grandiloquent; and these tendencies are perfected by Pindar, in whose hands the formal, elevated tone of ritual is raised to the highest pitch of elaborate, self-conscious, fastidious, aristocratic art.

The development of aristocratic poetry was most rapid, as we should expect, along the seaboard of Aiolis and Ionia. That the long collective choral ode had once existed on the coast of Asia Minor is clear from the records of Alkman of Sardis and Terpandros of Lesbos; but these poets migrated to Sparta, and in Asia Minor itself the choral ode contracted into the monody—the personal lyrics of Alkaios and Sappho. They both belonged to the old nobility, but in the Lesbos of their day the political supremacy of the landowners was already collapsing and consequently the social barriers between them and the people were breaking down. The Sapphic ode has the simplicity and intensity of the folk-song refined and enriched by the sensitive individualism of a small but enlightened aristocratic circle.

But the greatest achievement of the Greek aristocracy—greater than their poetry—was Ionian science. This movement was confined to the Asiatic seaboard, because it was only there that, thanks to the rapid growth of trade, their vitality had been renewed by fresh contact with the labour of production. Ionian science was the work of a mercantile aristocracy. Its founder, Thales, was himself a merchant who had travelled widely and is said to have made a corner in oil. Of the two sciences which he developed, geometry and astronomy, the first had been called into being by the demands of agriculture and architecture, the second by the need for an adequate technique of navigation in the development of overseas trade. In both he did little more than introduce to the Greeks knowledge that he had acquired from contact with Egypt and Babylonia; but none the less he was serving an immediate need, and in this way he laid the foundations for the Ionian school of philosophy, which aimed at co-ordinating the results obtained from these techniques in a single theory of the origin
and growth of the universe. It is significant that this final stage was only reached when Ionian commerce was in decline. The work of Anaximander (611–547 B.C.) was done during the destructive civil wars which followed the collapse of the tyranny at Miletos.

The fundamental question to which these philosophers addressed themselves was the problem of change: how had the world come to be what it was? This question was fundamental, because the ancient structure of human society, which, though never at rest, had maintained an unbroken continuity from the first segmentation of the primitive horde to the Greek settlement of the Asiatic seaboard on the basis of tribe and clan, had now been shattered by the class struggle. As we saw in our analysis of Moira, this structure was the mould in which Greek thought had taken shape; but that mould was now breaking up, and the traditional modes of thought which had been fashioned to express it were defied by the new social structure that was superseding it. It was this abrupt contradiction between inherited ideas and contemporary reality that impelled the Ionian aristocracy to call in question the origin and evolution of the world in which they lived. The traditional ideas were co-ordinated for the first time as a consciously applied scientific method.

The word they used for the world order was kósmos. The primary connotation of this word was social, and that connotation still survived in a number of political terms—the kósmai of Crete and the kosmopóleis of Lokroi. In the Iliad, the verb kosméo is used in two senses only—the marshalling of troops for battle and the settlement of tribes on occupied territory; and these two senses were really the same, because the troops were marshalled in tribes and phratries. Thus, the Ionian philosophers described the world order in terms of the tribal order. In reducing the world to order, they proceeded, naturally and inevitably, from the conception of order inherent in their traditional modes of thought.

The tribal structure of society had evolved by organic division of an undifferentiated primary nucleus. The primitive horde had segmented into clans, the clans into groups of clans. These units within units were held together in an intricate
network of co-operation and competition, mutual rivalries and reciprocal services. The clans collaborated in the work of production, competed in the struggle for prestige. They were united by intermarriage, divided by the vendetta. The tension set up by the interaction of these contrary forces—co-operation and competition, combination and opposition, attraction and repulsion—was the dynamic of the tribal system, which survived until the growth of private property destroyed its internal equilibrium. In Greece, it had received its first shock during the wars of conquest, which threw up a ruling class of military leaders—a class which had subsequently solidified as a landowning aristocracy. And nowhere had the forces of disruption developed so swiftly as in Ionia. The Ionian settlers of the Asiatic coast, like the Dorian conquerors of Sparta, had organised themselves on a tribal basis, which they reproduced in their colonies overseas; but, whereas the Spartan conquerors were able to close their ranks, the Ionian Greeks had seen their system dissolve almost before their eyes in the crucible of trade.

Anaximander taught that the physical universe was composed of a number of substances, which had been brought into being by motion out of what he called to ápeiron, the boundless, that which is spatially infinite and qualitatively indeterminate. In other words, the universe had evolved by differentiation out of a single original nucleus. And, just as the world order has been brought into being by differentiation, so it is destroyed by assimilation. The derivative substances are continuously encroaching upon one another, with the result that they lose their identity by reabsorption into the undifferentiated primary matter out of which they have emerged. In the words of Anaximander, “they render unto one another the penalty of their injustice according to the ordering of time.”

All this has been explained by Cornford—one of the few modern scholars to grapple seriously with the origins of Ionian thought. His account is substantially complete except for one point. The statement of Anaximander’s which has just been quoted clearly rests on the idea of métron, the notion that due observance of prescribed “measures” or limitations is necessary for the maintenance of the established
order; and, as we have seen, this notion is merely the aristocratic reinterpretation of the primitive idea of *moira*. Cornford is therefore quite right in relating the secondary substances of Anaximander to the *moira* of Greek tribal society. And his conclusion is confirmed by a scrutiny of the expression used for “paying the penalty”—*didonai diken kai tisin*, corresponding to the Latin *poenas dare*. Now, as Calhoun has pointed out, the phrase *diken didonai* (of which *tisin didonai* is merely an Ionic variant) is used only in reference to private suits, derived from primitive self-help; and, moreover, it is used primarily of giving satisfaction or compensation for homicide.  

Thus, Anaximander has described the encroachment of one substance on another in terms of a feud or vendetta between rival clans.

It seems clear, therefore, that Anaximander’s theory of the physical universe was essentially a conscious realisation of the implications inherent in primitive thought. It was the characteristic outlook of primitive man crystallised and formulated at the moment when primitive society was passing away. And it was an intellectual achievement of the first magnitude. We have only to compare Anaximander’s consistent materialism and his organic view of evolution with the obscurantist cosmology of Plato and the later Pythagoreans to see that the advance from tribe to state involved loss as well as gain. And, further, having determined the philosopher’s position in the world he was endeavouring to explain, we can see where his method failed him. Applying it to the origin of life, he said that man was descended from animals of another species (an idea implicit in totemism) and that life first arose out of the moist element as it was evaporated by the sun. This, too, was a masterly conclusion, to which he was led by actual observation; for he had found fossilised sea-shells above sea-level, and one of the features of Ionia is the advance of the coastline round the estuaries owing to the accumulation of alluvial deposits—a feature so marked that the coastal plain adjoining the city of Smyrna was once described as “a gift from Poseidon.”  

Organic life, therefore, arose out of the encroachment of the dry element on the moist. But at this point Anaximander was faced with an insoluble contradiction; for
his social preconceptions had impelled him to assume that the process of encroachment was destructive. Further progress in the understanding of human evolution was impossible until those preconceptions had been superseded as a result of further progress in society itself.
VI

TYRANNY

The economic and political changes of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.—the growth of trade, the rise of a merchant class, the building of towns—were intensified by a technical advance of far-reaching significance which these changes had promoted. The story of Meidas, the Phrygian king who turned all that he touched into gold, is still remembered as a popular fable; and equally famous in antiquity was Gyges of Lydia, who, with the aid of his gold ring, which had a magic seal, made himself invisible, stole into the king’s palace, killed the king and became king himself.¹ Both these myths have a historical foundation. It was the merchants of Phrygia and Lydia, exploiting the gold and silver mines of Sipylos and Tmolos, who invented the coinage. Meidas and Gyges were merchant-princes who used their financial position to seize the royal power. These money-made kings were so different from the kings of the past that they were called by a new name—tyrannoι, or tyrants.

The fable of Gyges embodies the final step in the evolution of the coinage—the use of metal stamped with the emblem of a prominent merchant as a guarantee of value. Iron spits and gold and silver utensils had long been employed to facilitate exchange, but their circulation had been limited by their bulk and by the lack of a recognised standard. In general, trade had been dependent on barter, which meant that it was confined for the most part to the satisfaction of immediate needs. In contrast to these rudimentary expedients, the new coins were light, standardised and state-guaranteed. Like Gyges’ ring, they penetrated everywhere. In the words of Herakleitos, who taught that fire is the primary substance of which the world is made, “fire is exchanged for all things and all things for fire, just as gold for goods and goods for gold.”²

In one city after another, as the use of money spread, the
merchants challenged the political privileges of the old nobility, who drew their power from birth and their wealth from land. Sappho and Alkaios had seen the overthrow of the Penthilidai by the tyrant Pittakos, who had married into a noble family; the Basilidai of Ephesos had fallen about the same time; and at the end of the seventh century Thrasyboulos was tyrant at Miletos. Meanwhile, on the mainland, the Bakchiadai of Corinth had been overthrown by Kypselos, and a little later tyrannies were set up by Orthogoras at Sikyon and Theagenes at Megara. Of these early tyrants, several are known to have belonged to the merchant class, and all belonged to cities situated on the trans-Ægean trade route.  

In Attica the development of the tyranny was slower and is therefore easier to follow. The Athenians had played little part in the colonial expansion of the seventh century, and therefore the internal struggle for the land became all the more intense.

Freedom for trade meant freedom from the control of the Eupatridai, who in turn saw the economic basis of their power being undermined by money. Faced with the competition of these nouveaux riches, the landowners recouped themselves by intensifying their exploitation of the peasantry. The result was, however, that, by driving the peasants to clamour for a re-division of the land, they played into the hands of their rivals, who took advantage of agrarian unrest to extort concessions for themselves. In so far as both were opposed to the land-owning aristocracy, the merchants and the peasants had a common interest; but the peasants suffered acutely from the introduction of money, and the worst landowners of all were not the nobles, whose relations with the peasants were at least traditional and personal, but the merchants themselves, who had no use for tradition and managed their estates on a strictly commercial basis. These estates they had acquired either as speculators by buying out the impoverished noblesse—for one of the first effects of money had been to facilitate the alienation of land—or else by marrying into the noble families and so securing a share in their political privileges.

The attitude of the aristocracy to these developments is revealed in their poetry. Landed wealth comes from God, who sends the rain from heaven, and is therefore honourable
and enduring, but wealth won by trade is man-made, hazardous and unstable.\textsuperscript{6} The losses of a bad season can be made good, with God’s grace, in the following year, but a squall at sea may sink the merchant’s ship with all his capital. The pursuit of riches is dangerous, because it invites the jealousy of heaven. Ambition tempts man to overreach himself. He loses what he has in his eagerness for more. Led on by the lure of winged hopes, he is a child in chase of a bird. The gods are also jealous of those who marry above their station. That was the sin of Ixion, as related by Pindar. Infatuated by the honours which the gods had conferred on him, he attempted to ravish the Queen of Heaven, but he embraced only a cloud and was then hurled into Tartarus.\textsuperscript{6}

In Attica, the first great crisis came early in the sixth century. The peasants were on the verge of insurrection. The lowest class were permitted to retain only one-sixth of their produce.\textsuperscript{7} Preyed on by usurers, whose rates of interest soared to 50 per cent., they had been forced to sell their land, their children, themselves. Many had been driven overseas, many were beggars or slaves, homeless in fields once their own. The Eupatridai perceived that, if they were to avert a peasant revolt, they must enlist the co-operation of the merchants, who were as alarmed as they were at the threat to property. Accordingly, Solon, a member of the Eupatridai who had been actively engaged in trade, was entrusted with dictatorial powers (593 B.C.).

If Solon had been a revolutionary, he would have made himself tyrant and so perhaps have anticipated the progress of his people by more than a generation; but, of course, if that had been his intention, he would not have been appointed. The Eupatridai knew their man.

First, he relieved the economic pressure on the peasantry with the minimum of change. By cancelling outstanding debts and prohibiting enslavement for debt, he evaded the demand for a re-division of the land. He did nothing to modify the sixth-part system or to restrict current rates of interest. The smallholder was still exposed to the depredations of the usurer, still in danger of being driven off the land. That was no doubt part of Solon’s intention, because, so long as the peasantry was attached to the soil, it was not available as a source of cheap
labour for the development of industry. This factor was of great importance for the merchant class at a time when the industrial exploitation of slave labour had hardly begun. It was in this period, moreover, that the Athenians began to work the silver mines of Laurion, and the main source of labour must have been the peasants driven off the land.

Further, Solon gave the working class a voice in the government by reviving the popular assembly, which since the decay of the tribal system had ceased to function. It was this body that elected, though not from its own members, the archontes and other officers of state. It also met as a court of justice to try cases other than homicide. The revival of the assembly can hardly have been of direct benefit to the peasants, who were naturally too poor to travel to Athens for its meetings, but it improved considerably the position of the artisans, who could now settle their own legal disputes. On the other hand, by the side of the Assembly, Solon created a new body, the Council of the Four Hundred, from which the working class was excluded, and the Assembly could only vote on resolutions placed before it by the Council. His motive in instituting this body was to put a check both on the working class and on the Council of the Areopagus, which was the name now borne by the old Council of the Eupatridai. The class which gained by this innovation was therefore the new middle class.

Having saved the Eupatridai from expropriation, Solon was in a position to demand something in return. They surrendered their claim to serve as archontes by right of birth. The qualification for administrative office and subsequent membership of the Council of the Areopagus was fixed in terms of landed property. This meant that wealthy merchants could now become archontes by investing their capital in land, and it was a substantial breach in the aristocratic monopoly; but, since a merchant turned landowner tended to become a landowner in his outlook and interests, it did not meet the full demands of the merchant class. As Wade-Gery has put it:

Under Solon, the new rich had been prepared to buy land in order to enter the governing class; they turned themselves into country gentlemen . . . presumably by converting
personal into real property. But after a little time those who had done so ranked and felt as "landlords," solid with the old aristocracy; and the new rich maintained the right of a merchant, as a merchant, to enter the governing class without becoming a country gentleman first.  

The institution of the Council of the Four Hundred by the side of the Council of the Areopagus reflected the growing differentiation between religious and secular interests in consequence of the development of trade. Nevertheless, although no longer composed exclusively of Eupatridai, the latter remained the stronghold of reaction. Besides its jurisdiction in cases of homicide, it had the right to prosecute in cases where the popular court had declined to do so, and it exercised over the observance of the laws a general supervision which must have been the more effective for being undefined.

The general significance of Solon's reforms emerges very clearly from Adcock's remarks on his attitude to the working class:  

The effect of his limitations on the Assembly was to keep administration and the initiative in policy in the hands of the well-to-do or middle classes. It was true that years of aristocratic government had left the commons politically uneducated, the easy dupes of ambitious leaders, and Solon's poems show him well aware of the dangers of their un instructed hopes. But the alternative, to deny to the commons all political power, was a greater evil and a greater danger, and Solon might hope that the new economic order would keep the poorer Athenians too busy or too contented to lend themselves to faction. Given that little power which was enough, the people might not be misled into grasping at more. And both policy and justice demanded that, if they did not really govern, they should be protected from misgovernment and injustice.

When Solon claimed that he had given the people a measure of power that was neither too much nor too little, he made a significant contribution to the development of Greek thought. The motto of the old aristocracy, nothing too much, had set an upper limit to man's earthly lot, but no lower limit. Solon
claimed to have found the mean, and was thus the first to express the characteristic outlook of the rising middle class.

During the next thirty years, as wealth in personal property continued to grow, the aristocratic front began to crack. Solon himself had been a landowner who turned to trade, and now other noble families followed suit—above all, the Alkmaionidai, who had commercial connections with Sardis, the great entrepôt for the hinterland of Asia Minor, and the Peisistratidai, who were interested in the mines of Laurion. Each of these princely houses cultivated its own political following. Megakles, son of Alkmaion, organised the merchants and artisans of the ports, Peisistratos the mining population. They were both opposed by Lykourgos of the Eteoboutadai, at the head of the big landowners, and at the same time they were in competition with one another. So long as the opposition was divided, the established régime survived. Twice Peisistratos attempted to seize power, but both times he was driven out by combination of his opponents. He employed his second exile in developing important financial interests in the silver mines of Mount Pangaion in Thrace; and, meanwhile, in 546, Sardis had fallen to the Persians. This must have been a blow to his rival, Megakles. Six years later he made his third attempt, and this time he was successful.\textsuperscript{11}

Like other tyrannies, the rule of Peisistratos was necessarily autocratic, because a strongly centralised monarchy was the only safeguard against a counter-revolution. In the absolute character of his rule, as in his championship of the new middle class, he bears a recognisable relationship to the English Tudors.

He used the lands vacated by the exiled grandees to solve the agrarian problem. The peasants were settled on the confiscated estates with government assistance as small proprietors. Their demands were satisfied. This was an enduring achievement. Meanwhile, his vigorous commercial policy in developing the coinage and the export trade ensured the continued support of the merchants, and his comprehensive programme of public works, including the demolition of the old city wall and the construction of an aqueduct, which is a sure sign of the urban revolution, gave employment to the working class in addition to
the demands of private enterprise in shipbuilding, pottery and metalurgy. A century later, Sparta still had the appearance of a village; Athens was already a city.

These social changes necessarily involved a transformation of the religious and cultural life of the community, and under Peisistratos this, too, was consciously directed. He completed the temple of Athena Polias and reorganised the Panathenaia as a great national festival. He gave official recognition to the worship of Dionysus, who hitherto had been scarcely recognised as an Olympian, in order to offset the exclusive clan cults of the aristocracy, and he founded or reorganised the festival of the City Dionysia, which in civic splendour was soon to outshine even the Panathenaia. And, finally, he instituted public recitals by Ionian minstrels of the Homeric poems, which now became known in Attica for the first time. The aim underlying all these cultural innovations was to reinforce the commercial expansion of the new city-state by fostering a spirit of national self-consciousness.

The success of Peisistratos was due primarily to his correct estimate of the objective possibilities of the situation with which he had to deal. It was indeed fortunate for him that his rule coincided with the Persian advance to the Aegean, which freed him from the commercial competition of Ionia, but he was quick to turn his good fortune to account. In foreign policy, his most important achievement was the occupation of Sigeion on the Hellespont. Control of the Dardanelles thus became for the Athenians one of their vital interests, ensuring them of a plentiful supply of cheap corn, and so enabling them to support a far larger industrial population than they could have done from their own resources at the existing level of production. This policy had, of course, its negative side. It depressed the home market and discouraged the improvement of agricultural technique; but, so long as Athens was able to control the Hellespont and absorb the influx into the towns, it was justified.

Peisistratos died in 528 and was succeeded by his two sons, Hipparchos and Hippias. Hipparchos was assassinated nine years later in the course of a personal vendetta. Athenians of the next century persuaded themselves that the assassins of Hipparchos were responsible for the overthrow of the tyranny,
but in point of fact Hippias remained in power for another eight years. His growing unpopularity during the latter part of his reign, though doubtless accentuated by personal factors, was due primarily to the changes taking place in the balance of political forces. In strengthening the middle classes, Peisistratos had done his work so thoroughly that they now felt strong enough to dispense with a protective dictatorship. Consequently, they grew increasingly impatient of the expenses it entailed, while Hippias became involved in financial difficulties, which he could only meet by still further exactions. Thus, having begun as a progressive force, the tyranny had become an obstacle to progress. The final blow came in 512, when Hippias was deprived by the Persian conquest of Thrace of his main source of revenue. He was expelled two years later.

It was not, however, the progressive forces that actually effected his overthrow, but a combination of his opponents on the other side—Kleisthenes, the son of his father’s enemy, Megakles, who was playing his own hand, and the other exiled aristocrats, who saw in the weakening of the tyranny an opportunity for a counter-revolution. For many years past the Alkmaionidai had been assiduously repairing their fortunes, and, in particular, they secured an enormous contract for rebuilding the temple at Delphi, which had been destroyed by fire. Kleisthenes used his influence at Delphi to break the friendly relations which Peisistratos had cultivated with Sparta, and in 510 he entered Attica with the Spartan King at the head of a Spartan army. It was evidently intended by his allies that the tyranny of Hippias should be followed by a restoration of the aristocracy, but Kleisthenes aimed at taking his place. When his aims became apparent, the aristocratic leader Isagoras appealed to Sparta to intervene a second time. Kleisthenes replied by appealing to the people. He put through a number of democratic reforms in the teeth of the aristocrats and enfranchised hundreds of resident aliens and slaves. The result was that, when the Spartan King reappeared in Attica to restore the ancien régime, with Isagoras acting as informer, he was shut up together with his troops in the Akropolis and only released on the understanding that he would desist from
further intervention. It was a great victory for the people.

The function of the Greek tyranny was transitional. By forcing and holding a breach in the rule of the aristocracy, it enabled the middle class to consolidate its forces for the final stage in the democratic revolution, which involved the overthrow of the tyranny itself. That is why, in Greek tradition, it was almost unanimously condemned. It was denounced in advance by the aristocrats because it was progressive, and in retrospect by the democrats because it had become reactionary. The only poets who have anything to say in its favour are Pindar and Simonides, who served their patrons for pay. Doubtless the first poets at the City Dionysia were warm in their praises of Peisistratos, but their writings have perished; and to the contemporaries of Æschylus the tyranny meant, above all, Hippias, who, after his expulsion, joined forces with the national enemy in the hope of being restored as the puppet of a foreign power. And, finally, since it was everywhere transitional and in many states had been terminated by a successful counter-revolution, it came to symbolise in popular imagination the spectacular rise to power of the man who, having amassed great riches, forgets that he is mortal and is lured by divine wrath to self-destruction. Behind this tradition there lies a consciousness of the treacherous mobility of money, which turns king into beggar as rapidly as beggar into king.

The violent resistance which the democratic movement had encountered is vividly mirrored in the poetry of Theognis. True to type, this reactionary bon vivant identified civilisation with the privileges of his class:

Shame has perished; pride and insolence have conquered justice and possess the earth. . . . The city is still a city, but the populace is changed: once they knew nothing of laws, wrapped their flanks in goatskins and dwelt like deer beyond the walls; but now they are nobles and the one-time nobles—O who can bear the sight? . . . Grind them hard and let their yoke be heavy—that is the way to make them love their masters. . . . The mass of the people knows one virtue, wealth; nothing else avails. . . . Not to be born is best, nor look upon the sunshine; or once born to hasten through the gates of death and lie beneath a heap of earth.
Because the old caste system has broken down; because the serfs are no longer content to be burdened like asses; because, too, the old unwritten code of personal allegiance and liberality has been translated into cash—therefore civilisation has perished. But civilisation did not wait for Theognis. The old culture, it is true, was breaking up, but only because new aspirations, new values, new ideas were bursting into life.