

COSMOS AND DIKE IN ANCIENT GREEK THOUGHT

Every genuine philosophy of history is first of all a «metaphysics», in the sense that it recognizes the prominence of historical time against the physical space and sees in the historical event the actualization of a value and the integration of a concept of salvation, different from those one can seek in the eternal order of nature. However such a philosophy, with the inflexible comparisons it carries along, between nature and mind, necessity and freedom, and with the value it attaches to the generative activities of history, is opposed to the inner intentions of the Greek intellect, such as they emerge from its essential conception of the cosmos. It is taken for granted that the Greeks sought to locate reality and rationality in the objective world. So the intellect was discovered «objectively» in the natural world as the principle of its order, its beauty and motion.

The universe consists of an order, a *cosmos* arranged in a perfect harmonious finite totality. Nature realizes in an eternal movement of coming-to-be the infinity of the possibilities of this totality. This world which, for Heraclitus, is «no god or man made»¹ would suffice, through its various features, to manifest the wish of the Greeks to allow the world to impose itself as a limit of knowledge and as an internal law. Therefore, cosmos means the universe or the totality of beings and the political structure which is based on the law², and the principle of order and harmony which regulates the relations between isolated beings and between the components of every beings as well³. The universal character of this search for knowledge and recognition of the cosmos as a formative and normative totality constitutes the essence of ancient humanism. What this humanism expresses is not the predominance of the earthly elements upon whatever transcends it, but the internal harmony (κοσμιότητα) of the soul which has acknowledged the law of the universe as its own law and whose the internal discipline is in absolute agreement with the order of the totality of existences.

If the soul is relatively able to impose a harmony upon its movements and to act in such a way that human life does not constitute a disorder (ἄκοσμία), but a *cosmos*, this happens because the soul has been able to contemplate the timeless Being which the essence of gods emanates from⁴; with the only difference that, in the divine nature, the conditions of contemplation are arranged in a perfect

1. HERACLITUS, fr. 30 (D.-K.,¹⁶): οὐτε τις θεῶν οὐτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησαν.

2. Cf. HERODOTUS, I, 65; EURIPIDES, *Suppliants*, 245; PLATO, *Laws*, H, 846 d.

3. Cf. IDEM, *Gorgias*, 504 a; *Laws*, Ev, 734 a-741 a.

4. Cf. IDEM, *Phaedrus*, 247c-d.



way: in other words, that the attainment of an internal harmony (κοσμιότητος) and of a perfect collaboration between the faculties of the soul is presupposed by the knowledge of harmonies, and rotations of the universe, and requires the harmonization of the three parts out of which the soul is composed, compared to the three chords that give the lowest, the highest and the medium sound⁵. However, the human soul as a whole is only partly able to attain such a harmony. Hence the imperfect character of its contemplative activity and motion. Therefore, the human world, such as it directly appears, in itself, is the most remote from the divine perfectness. Indeed, the fact the divine displays the character of the supreme Good is due to its own perfectness which renders it infinitely desirable. Therefore, as an object of the universal Eros (ὡς ἐρώμενον), the divine participates of both heaven and nature. Order, harmony, justice, measure, beauty are successively of such use in Plato as that express or define the Good towards which tends everything which, in the sensible world, wishes to acquire a constant form and structure and which in the supracelestial world, serves as a model to the fragmentary efforts of mortals. The Good is the final purpose (*telos*), as long as it simultaneously constitutes the order of the mustering of every work and every reality, as well as its completed expression. This is the Good realized through every positive work be it that of the divine craftman in the *Timaeus* (29a-d) or that of the painter, the architect, the physician and the educator in the *Gorgias* (503-504) or even that of the weaver, which is the model of the royal man's activity in the *Politicus* (279 a-b). Therefore, everything which takes place in the world, exists because of the purpose at which it aims. If the divine is the purpose (*telos*) which gives a significance to the overall becoming of the world, this happens because of the erotic attraction it exerts: while seeking for the order the individual beings must attain, they obey to the universal Eros, whose supreme object is the divine perfection. God is the direct object of Eros of the eternal natural beings, namely the heavenly spheres; these imitate the perfect life of the divine by executing the only natural motion which is «perfect and eternal»⁶, i.e. the circular one. It obeys to an absolute necessity and reveals, at the level of the visible, the supreme Good towards which tends every divine or human being seeking for the perfection of the Being. As it, then, appears in its circular progression, the world is eternal. It can not have an aim; however, it can exist. It is only through his participation in the *cosmos* that man can develop what is divine in him.

The Greeks have expressed in a tragic way the contrast between the *cosmos*, the beautiful order that rules upon the universe and the disorder (ἄκοσμία)

5. IDEM, *Rep.*, A, 443 d: συναρμόσαντα τρία ὄντα ὥσπερ ὄρους τρεῖς ἁρμονίας ἀτεχνῶς, νεότης τε καὶ ὑπέρτης καὶ μέσης.

6. ARISTOTLE, *Phys.*, E, 1, 265 v. a25 sq.

which is innate within the earthly world. This contrast is used by Plato to indicate the difference between Being and appearance as a difference between pure knowledge whose objects are eternal and sensorial knowledge whose object are born, the Heraclitean law of coming-to-be and passing-away, that of the continuous alternance of everything, the attempted comparison between the circular motion of the *cosmos* and pure intellect (νόησις) in the myth of the *Phaedrus* (246-251) shows clearly enough the symbolic charge of the universal relation between the sidereal rotations and pure Ideas. Nevertheless, the problem here is not about a clearly epistemological distinction. A passage of the *Timaeus* (476 b-c), in which the earthly disorder is contrasted with the «sidereal motions which do not undergo any disturbance», reveals already the general meaning that the Greeks attributed to this opposition. Towards this regularity presented by the cosmic motions and without which the cosmos would return immediately to the chaotic matter which perpetually accompanies it, the Greek feels to be surrounded by dreadful powers which continuously treat to invade him, aiming at restoring in him the primordial disorder, the absence of rules and form which qualified the initial conditions. However, geometry, which the astral bodies obey to, acts in such a way, that these perfect beings «neither do wrong to, nor suffer wrong by, one another»⁷. One thus reaches the idea of justice (δίκη), which the idea of cosmos is inseparable from. The essence of the idea of justice is Reason (Λόγος). The term of *cosmos* refers to the whole universe and to a good ordered state as well. In the same way the term of δίκη is projected by the society which, it is supposed to regulate, upon the universe, whose unity and connection it secures. The Greeks have discovered the rational regularity and the harmonious totality that dominate the relations and the movements of the universe at a decisive moment in their procession, namely at a moment when, after a period of revolts (στάσεις), they sought to establish a political order based on the rule of law equally applied to all (ἰσονομία). In the order and harmony of the universe they discovered not only the manifestation of a causal necessity but also that of a divine justice whose endless creative, as well as destructive, power resides in the connection of antagonistic principles and, consequently, presupposes the imperishableness of the universe.

Such a justice occupies the centre of the cosmos, as a power that connects and regulates it, and to which everything must obey, «in the same way», Heraclitus says, «that the polis ought to submit itself to the law» (fr. 114). Justice is as life: it saves what can be conserved and destroys what cannot be but lost⁸. It conserves the existence of the cosmos, because «law and order carriers of measure»⁹ derive from it. Its work is «divine» and at the same time, salutary

7. PLATO, *Rep.*, ΣΤ, 500 c.

8. On the classic definition of law, cf. e.g. PLATO, *Laws*, Α, 638 b; ARISTOTLE, *Pol*, Γ3, 1289 b 25; *Nicom. Eth.*, K, 9, 1191 b 21.

9. PLATO, *Phil.*, 26 b.

for some, destructive for others¹⁰. It is salutary because only within the terms it defines, every action the whole nature and every existence finds Reason, rationality, the necessity and the legitimation of its being. And it is destructive because the distancing from it means the contest of the principle through which the unlimited and the multiple acquire form and unity: the violation of the terms defined by the cosmic order means disruption, abandonment to destiny and annihilation.

This justice, both creative and destructive, which seems to protect the Being against the beings, is the one which Greek tragedy taught¹¹. The cosmos appeared as the supreme Good, whose possession still remains an unsatisfied postulate and it was understood rather as a threat of destruction than as a positive presence. Participating in this justice was not yet Plato's prudence (σωφροσύνη), but what the Greeks, from Heraclitus to Aeschylus, called σωφρονεῖν¹². At this point one can appeal to the tragic feelings of life supporting the apollinian idea of the world: among all the beings which justice brings together for the perfection of the universe, only man has the ability to contemplate the order and harmony that dominate the world. In this sense, man is a «heavenly plant» (οὐράνιον φυτόν)¹³ capable of deepening and developing his participation in the *cosmos*. However, of all the creatures that fill the incomplete world man alone is inclined to move away from his origin and to contest the universal law which preserves all powers in a divine balance. The term δεινός (dreadful) used by Sophocles in the famous chorus of *Antigone*: «πολλά τὰ δεινὰ κούδέν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει», is the most expressive way to qualify anything wonderful, supernatural and imposing that exists in every being that surpasses the measure due to its inherent force. For Sophocles, as well as for Aeschylus, man remains δεινός because of the excess of his will¹⁴, because of ὕβρις (hybris) that impels him to peril the whole system of the relations that compose the cosmos which he belongs to. For the Greeks, the supreme fear would be to see this *cosmos*, which is the condition of every being and every reality, be jeopardized because of the arbitrariness and exaggeration of will, which, once hypostatized, may strike, thunderwise, anyone: Eteocles and Oedipus as well. Here, what seems to have been significant here it is not the inner necessity of the action, but the problem of the right set by every human action. The tragic arises because man ignores how to preserve his right and always looks for something more. The intensity of the tragic is measured by the fact that the right, which legitimizes the existence, goes away (μεταβαίνει) and

10. *Ibid.*

11. Cf. e.g. AESCHYLUS, *Agam.*, v. 177: πάθει μάθος.

12. HERACLITUS, fr. 2 (D.-K.¹⁶): φρόνησιν; AESCH., *loc. cit.*: σωφρονεῖν.

13. PLATO, *Tim.*, 90 a.

14. Cf. AESCHYLUS, *Libation - Beares*, v. 595: ὑπέρτολμον φρόνημα; SOPHOCLES, *Antig.*, v. 372: τόλμας χάριν.

«all is completed in direction of the right»¹⁵. So man, abandoned by the right, attends helplessly his own destruction and, «there is greater need to extinguish the *hybris* than a blazing fire»¹⁶ through law in order to restore timeless presence of the latter. The *catharsis* (κάθαρσις) is the means for the restoration of the equilibrium and of the feeling that the eternal cosmos remains an unshakable foundation.

The source from which Greek tragedy acquired its «sacred power», and for which Plato envied it¹⁷ is manifest: to constantly encourage man orient all his power towards the cosmos and justice, the Greeks have used the reminder, coming from the scene, of the primitive disorder, out of which man emerge and which he would never be able to fight off completely, since he is part of it. While recognizing his own demons in the passions which the tragedy represented, man had to do his best to protect himself from them, by respecting the god of justice who «from their hightowering hopes [he] hurleth mankind»¹⁸. This is the same tower to which Pindarus alludes when he wonders: «Is it from justice, is it from the unsincere treacheries that the earthly race rises to a higher tower?»¹⁹. It seems that the criticism of injustice in ancient Greece was founded neither on the vision of a *Dies Irae*, historically defined, nor on the nearness of the eschatological Zero, but on the contemplation of the Good, in other words of what is the brightest, clearest (φανότατον), and most blessed (εὐδαιμονέστατον) that exists in the Being²⁰. It now appears that, in their conception of justice, the Greeks, poets and philosophers, as well, undertook to express or restore the link which, according to them, existed between the *polis* and the *cosmos*. Thus justice seems to be the participation of the political order in the eternal order. Only such a participation allows man to deliver himself from the «ancient sin»²¹ and to proceed towards the Being. In this way, the proclamation of the independent character of justice, which «does not loosen its chains and allows nothing to come to the light of day or disappear, but preserves unswervingly what exists»²², vigorously indicates the close bond which in Greece tied together the philosopher and the legislator.

A. CHRISTODOULIDI - MAZARAKI
(Athens)

15. AESCHVLUS, *Lib.-B.*, v. 301-308.

16. HERACLITUS, fr. 43 (D.-K.¹⁶): ὕβριν γὰρ σθενύναι μᾶλλον ἢ πυρκαϊήν.

17. PLATO, *Gorg.*, 502 b; cf. *Laws*, Z, 817 b-c.

18. AESCHVLUS, *Suppliants*, vv. 96-68: ἰάπτει δ' ἐλπίδων ἄφ' ὑψιπύργων πανώλεις βροτούς.

19. PINDARUS, fr. 213 (Schröder).

20. PLATO, *Rep.*, Z, 518 c; 532 c; 526 e.

21. AESCHVLUS, *Agam.*, v. 1197.

22. PARMENIDES, fr. 8, 13-15 (D.-K.¹⁶): τοῦ εἶνεκεν οὔτε γενέσθαι οὔτ' ὀλλυσθαι ἀνῆκε Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδησιν, ἀλλ' ἔχει.

«ΚΟΣΜΟΣ» ΚΑΙ «ΔΙΚΗ» ΣΤΗΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΝΟΗΣΗ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Οί Έλληνες ως γνωστό αναζητούσαν την πραγματικότητα και την ὀρθολογικότητα στὸν αντικειμενικὸ κόσμο. Ἐτσι τὸ πνεῦμα ἀνακαλύφθηκε ἀντικειμενικά στὸ φυσικὸ κόσμο ὡς ἀρχὴ τῆς τάξης του, τῆς ὁμορφιάς καὶ τῆς κίνησής του. Ἄρα τὸ σύμπαν σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ἀρχαία ἐλληνικὴ ἀντίληψη ἀποτελεῖ μιὰ τάξη, ἓναν *κόσμο* ὁ ὁποῖος ἐντάσσει σὲ μιὰ τέλεια ἀρμονικὴ καὶ πεπερασμένη ὁλότητα τὴν ἀπειρία τῶν δυνατοτήτων τῆς φύσης πραγματώνει ὡς αἰώνια κίνηση γέννησης. Ἀλλωστε οἱ Έλληνες ἀνακάλυψαν τὴ λογικὴ κανονικότητα καὶ τὴν ἀρμονικὴ ὁλότητα ποὺ διέπουν τῆς σχέσεις καὶ τῆς κινήσεις τοῦ σύμπαντος σὲ μιὰ ἀποφασιστικὴ στιγμή τῆς ἱστορίας τους, ὅπου μετὰ τὴ διέλευση μιᾶς περιόδου στάσεων ἐπιθυμούσαν τὴν ἐγκαθίδρυση μιᾶς πολιτικῆς τάξης βασισμένης στὴν *ἰσονομία*. Στὴν τάξη καὶ στὴν ἀρμονία τοῦ σύμπαντος ἀνακάλυψαν ὅχι μόνο τὴν ἐκφραση μιᾶς αἰτιώδους ἀναγκαιότητας ἀλλὰ καὶ μιᾶς θείας δικαιοσύνης (*δίκης*), τῆς ὁποίας ἡ ἀπέραντη δημιουργικὴ καὶ καταστρεπτικὴ δύναμη εἶναι ἡ σύζευξη ἀντιτιθέμενων ἐξουσιῶν καὶ ἄρα ἡ προϋπόθεση τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τοῦ σύμπαντος.

Α. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΔΟΥΛΙΔΗ-ΜΑΖΑΡΑΚΗ
(Ἀθῆναι)

