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J. Adam

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THE MYTH IN PLATO'S *POLITICUS*.

THE importance of the myth in the *Politicus* for the right understanding of Plato's cosmology has never been sufficiently insisted on. It has been too much the fashion to treat the story as a mere fable, introduced to embellish the dialogue; and the importance of the doctrine has been denied before the language has been thoroughly examined.

The myth, as will be remembered, describes the life of the world as two revolutions of the same circle, the one forward and the other backward. In the forward revolution God accompanies the world; during the latter he remains in his watch-tower (272 E). The completion of either revolution is attended by convulsions which are destructive of life, till the wheel steadies and begins to retrace its course. The change in the movement of the whole leads to a change in the movement of the parts: for example the sun which in the previous cycle rose in the west and set in the east now rises in the east and sets in the west, and creatures that were born old and grew young and vanished are now born young, grow old, and die.

The myth is introduced by a reference to the sun's change of direction in the time of Atreus: ὅθεν μὲν ἀνατέλλει νῦν, εἰς τοῦτον τότε τὸν τόπον ἐδύτο, ἀνέτελλε δ' ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου (269 A). Plato is by no means the only Greek who rationalises the story of the sun's change in his course on that occasion as the expression of a permanent physical fact. Euripides (*Orestes* 1001 ff. and *Electra* 726 ff.) takes nearly the same view, albeit he is careful to observe that he 'little believes that the sun did so because mortals quarrelled,' though the doctrine is a good one to preach (φοβεροὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι μῦθοι

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κέρδος πρὸς θεῶν θεραπείας). See also Sir G. C. Lewis's *Historical Survey of Ancient Astronomy*, p. 133, where it is shown that Oenopides also regarded the change as a lasting one. The further developments of the story are not found in Euripides, but there is an interesting trace of them in Hesiod which I have never seen explained. In the *Works and Days* (178, 179) we read: Ζεὺς δ' ὀλέσει καὶ τοῦτο γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων, εὖτ' ἂν γεινόμενοι πολιοκρόταφοι τελέθωσιν. The iron race in which we live, says Hesiod, will be destroyed, as soon as they are hoary-headed at their birth. It is unfortunate that Professor Campbell in his edition of the *Politicus* should have mistaken the meaning of Plato in *Polit.* 273 E (τὰ δ' ἐκ γῆς νεογενῇ σώματα πολιά φύντα πάλιν ἀποθνήσκοντα εἰς γῆν κατῇει) by taking πολιά φύντα to mean 'having grown grey': the words mean 'while the bodies newly sprung from the earth, which had been born with grey hairs, died and returned again to the earth.' The beings of the previous cycle were born with grey hairs, and passed through manhood into infancy before they disappeared (270 D, E): therefore as soon as beings are born with grey hairs again, our cycle will come to an end and the old cycle once more begin—and this is the explanation of the line from Hesiod. The germs of Plato's myth are therefore very old: the philosophical conception which underlies it is found in Heraclitus' ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω and in *Frag.* 78 (Bywater): ἧ φησιν Ἡράκλειτος, ταῦτ' εἶναι ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκός, καὶ τὸ ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ τὸ καθεύδον, καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν· τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκείνῃ ἐστι κακείνῃ πάλιν μεταπεσόντα ταῦτα: death is life, sleeping is waking, old is young, because they each change to the

other. Compare Aristotle *de Caelo* I 10 p. 280^a 11—15.

There are unmistakable indications that the forward revolution of the universe in the *Politicus* means nothing more or less than the creation of the world, *i.e.* its ordering out of chaos. Thus, while the δημιουργός is accompanying the universe, it is 'acquiring life anew' τὸ ζῆν πάλιν ἐπικτώμενον (270 A): when he takes it in hand he κοσμεῖ (273 E), *i.e.* κόσμον ποιεῖ: in the cycle previous to ours, it was πολλῆς μετέχον ἀταξίας πρὶν εἰς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι (273 B). The γηγενεῖς are also, as in early Greek speculation generally, a feature of the making of the world, and so is the abundance in which the children of the earth revelled. The speech of Aristophanes in the *Symposium* is manifestly a cosmogonical myth treated farcically, and it contains many points of resemblance with the story in the *Politicus*, notably the ἐγένων καὶ ἐπικτον οὐκ εἰς ἀλλήλους ἀλλ' εἰς γῆν (191 C).

The parallels between the myth of the *Politicus* and the creation of the world in the *Timaeus* are numerous, and to ignore them is to leave the very foundation of Plato's physics unexplained. When the δημιουργός had completed the creation, he ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἡθεῖ (*Tim.* 42 E): when the forward revolution was ended, οἷον πηδαλίων οἶακος ἀφέμενος εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη (*Polit.* 272 E). The moment he quits the world, the movements of the universe are reversed—the two circles, that of the Same and that of the Other, go back the way they came: see *Polit.* 272 E and 273 A. This also is in the *Timaeus* if only we rightly understand the words of 44 B: ὅταν δὲ τὸ τῆς αὔξης καὶ τροφῆς ἔλαττον ἐπὶ ρεύμα, πάλιν δὲ αἱ περίοδοι λαμβανόμεναι γαλήνης τὴν ἑαυτῶν ὁδὸν ἴωσι, *i.e.* when the stream of growth and nourishment comes in less fully, and the periods, becoming calm, go back their own way (cf. *Polit.* 273 A, the

very language of which is parallel to the *Timaeus*). The circles of the Same and the Other are in the human as well as in the World-soul, and as both were created before the ἀνακύκλησις, they must go back together. It is astonishing that this should have escaped such critics as Böckh and Martin, especially as it solves the difficulty in *Tim.* 36 C, where we are told that the δημιουργός made the circle of the Same revolve from left to right, *i.e.* (according to Plato's own definition in the *Laws* 760 D) from west to east. The making of the world took place before the ἀνακύκλησις, and if the δημιουργός had not made the heavens revolve from west to east then, it would be so revolving now, but indeed it is not—unless we are all standing on our heads. Plato is often difficult, but always fair, and it is hardly fair to call east west, west east, up down, and expect us to make him out—which is what the editors think he did. Böckh recognized the difficulty (*über das Kosmische system des Platon* p. 32), but it is no explanation to say that the *Laws* are 'popular.' Well might the *Timaeus* be unpopular, if it contained such silly puzzles; but the fact is, as I have said, that right means east, and left west in the *Timaeus* as in the rest of Plato's writings.

I have only cited these out of many instances where the *Timaeus* may be cleared up from the *Politicus*, but if I add that the myth of the *Politicus* is connected by Aristotle with Plato's Number—for the τροπή of *Pol.* v p. 1316^a 17 is the μεγίστη καὶ τελεωτάτη τροπή of the *Politicus* 270 B—and if (as I have endeavoured to prove elsewhere) the Nuptial Number is to be interpreted by means of this myth, it will be admitted that Plato meant something more than a pretty story when he wrote this ἀληθινὸς λόγος.

J. ADAM.

PHILOLOGICAL NOTES.

VIII.

(Greek Aorists and Perfects in -κα.)

THE assumption which has hitherto guided my enquiries is that a much closer connexion exists between Greek and Latin than is generally allowed and that in particular the perfect forms in the two languages were

originally identical. This assumption, if applied to the problem of the Greek aorists and perfects in -κα, yields an explanation which seems to me satisfactory and instructive.