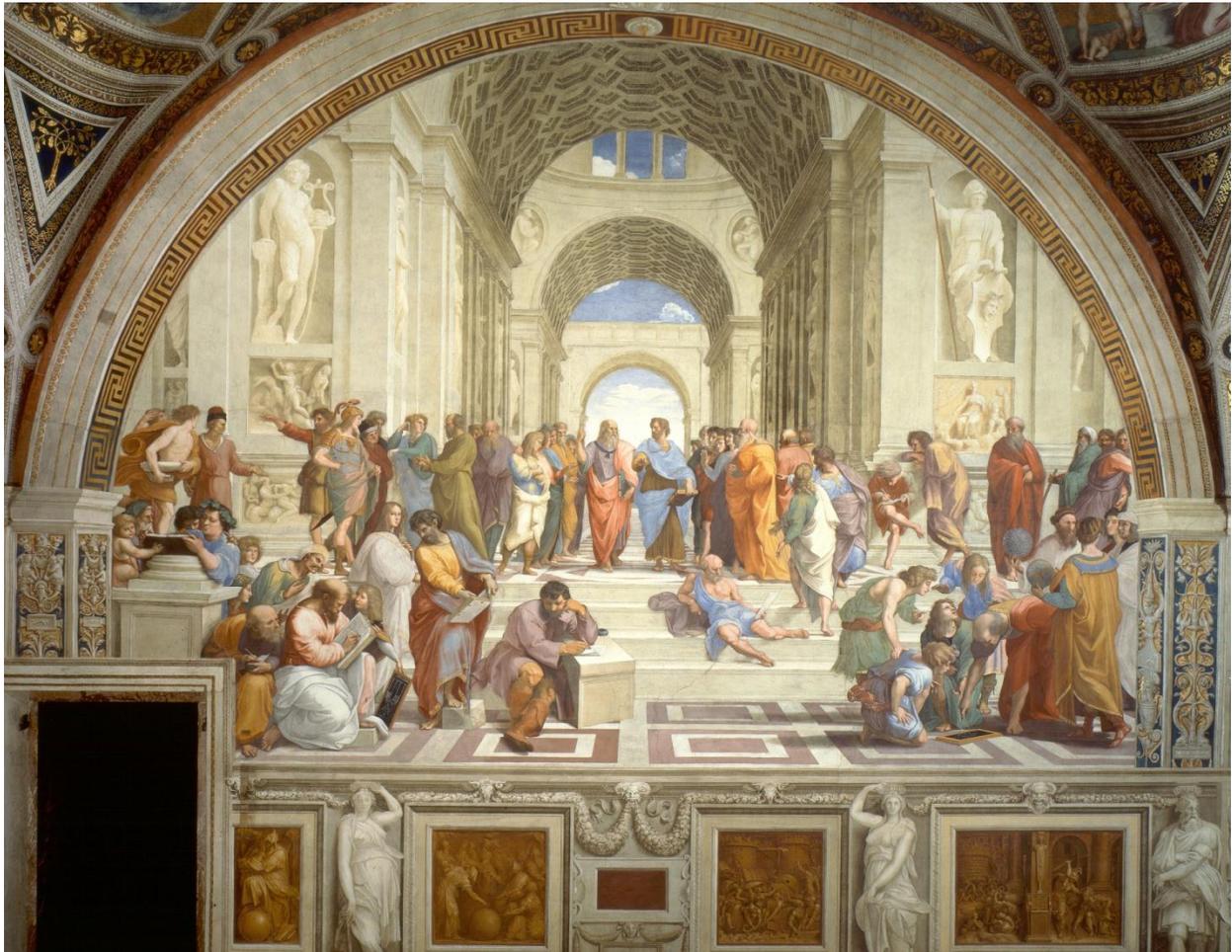


Plato's Academy:
Organizational Development
of an Ideal Form

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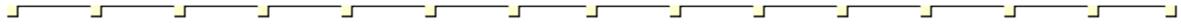
“But it is right, my friends, to bear in mind that if the soul is immortal, we need to care for it, not only for the sake of this period to which belongs what we call life, but also for the sake of all time: and now it will be clear that if we are going to neglect it, we shall be running a great risk...[S]ince soul is seen to be immortal, there will be no escape nor any salvation except through becoming as good and as wise as possible. The only thing the soul takes with it to the other world is its education and culture...”

--- the counsel of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*



“The School of Athens” by Raphael, a fresco located in the Stanze, Vatican City. Plato, left center, points upward to the Ideal Forms while his student Aristotle, right center, motions toward the stabilizing ground.
(Source: Wikipedia: “plato’s academy”)

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“Let no one without geometry enter here” – Sign over the entrance gate to the Academy

Introduction

I undertook this study because throughout my academic career I've envisioned the culminating goal of my efforts to be setting up a 'school.' In fact, I've always approached the numerous self-designed studies that I've generated over the years as if they will become the foundation of the curriculum for that school. In that sense, I've always believed that I am somehow trailblazing or setting a precedent for an educational program whose time is still to come.

And in those moments when I begin contemplating on the best or most appropriate name for the school – for example, when creating Bylaws for the educational non-profit that will be the legal container – I always hear the word 'Academy;' the school shall be an Academy of some kind.

And then I notice when looking around my hometown that there already exist numerous other Academies: for example a Kung Fu Academy and an Academy of Art – and then there's always the Naval Academy – yet what do all these Academies have in common? Why are all these organizations adopting the appellation 'Academy?'

And since I've always known that it was Plato who set up the first Academy, I wondered: if my school is going to be authentic, standing with integrity, going a little deeper than these other examples, should I not ought to have some resonance with the original, the predecessor, the trend-setter? In other words, by some stretch of the imagination, could what I've been envisioning for an Academy be considered to be a succession of the lineage that goes all the way back to Plato's Academy?

It may seem at first astounding – for I call the substance of my field 'village design' whereas Plato's concern was giving birth to pure philosophy – yet the more I researched the more I discovered parallels in our purpose: I have come to conclude that Plato's Academy can, in fact, be a model of "organizational development" for the Academy I have in mind. And yes, I would feel most esteemed if our Academy was considered a succession in the lineage – an *evolution* to be more precise – to the current status of consciousness development.

At this point, a small qualifier may be helpful, for I am not thinking of "organizational development" in the typical sense, as, for example, the prosaic steps to be taken when a corporation wants to improve its efficiency and profitability. That kind of development can only ever be temporal, limited in imagination by extant conditions and structural exigencies – whether legal, economic, financial, political, etc. – as they exist in

any current historical period, as well as in the specific ontogenic history of the organization itself.

While setting up an authentic Academy in the 21st century certainly will need to reference mundane matters – as, for example, I have done by carefully crafting a set of Bylaws and strategically convening a Board – there is also a sense of “organizational development” that can reference larger, more-inclusive and therefore more numinous potentials. In that spirit, and in particular, I’m thinking here about the possibility of the “organizational development” of Mind. The Academy, then, is much more than an institutional configuration – whether ‘post-modern,’ or ‘process-oriented,’ or ‘distributive-network’ or whatever – and even far more than the epistemological foundation of the curriculum at any given time: the Academy is an opportunity to develop organizational structures of mind which can actively and knowingly participate in the evolution – expansion – of the greater Mind of which they are a part. I will attempt to show that this is exactly what Plato intended with his Academy, and, by mimicking his precedent, what can be done with the Academy we are designing.

In order to get there, let’s first lay down the context, for Plato’s Academy appeared in a period of fervent consciousness evolution. If the pretense for setting up a Platonic-like Academy in our own day is to be justified, then, we could hope for a similar period.

What was Going On in Athens in the Fifth Century?!

In his compendium *Cities in Civilization*, in a chapter entitled, revealingly, “The Fountainhead,” Sir Peter Hall introduces the context:

The crucial point about Athens is that it was first. And first in no small sense: first in so many of the things that have mattered, ever since, to western civilization and its meaning. Athens in the fifth century BC gave us democracy, in a form as pure as we are likely to see; in some respects, a good deal purer than has been achieved anywhere else afterwards. It gave us philosophy, including political philosophy, in a form so rounded, so complete, that hardly anyone added anything of moment to it for well over a millennium. It gave us the world’s first systematic written history. It systematized medical and scientific knowledge, and for the first time began to base them on generalizations from empirical observation. It gave us first lyric poetry and then comedy and tragedy, all again so completely at an extraordinary pitch of sophistication and maturity, such that they might have been germinating under the Greek sun for hundreds of years. It left us the first naturalistic art; for the first time, human beings caught and registered for ever the breath of a wind, the quality of a smile. It single-handedly invented the principles and the norms of architecture, which all its western practitioners have learned and followed (even when they were consciously rejecting them) for the next twenty-five centuries (2001, p. 24).

How exciting it must have been to be alive in those days, in that place, a place where “there gradually emerged a people, not very numerous, not very powerful, not very well organized, who had a totally new conception of what human life was for, and showed for the first time what the human mind was for” (ibid, p. 25, quoting Zwieg, 1943, p. 5). Mumford goes so far as to describe the Athenian phenomenon as, “a far richer efflorescence of human genius than history anywhere else records, except perhaps in renaissance Florence” (1961, p. 167).¹ Grant’s assessment of classical Athens is more singularly laudable: “Never in the history of the world has there been such a multiplication of varied talents and achievements within so limited a period (1988, p. xi).

The historian Bowra, writing for Toynbee, is as commending as the others:

¹ This essentially spiritual connection between Classical Athens and Renaissance Florence will be made more explicit later in this essay.

For in this small city-state, with a relatively insignificant population by more recent standards (about 200,000), occurred an unprecedented outburst of artistic creativity, an appreciation of the dignity of man, and a democratic use of power, which have made Athens an ideal for subsequent civilizations (1977, p. 32). The wonder is that in so short a time so much was done and done so well...Athens did not waste its energies in futile experiments but seems to have known from the start in what direction to move and what steps to take. The result is that its history has an air of inevitable, predestined development (ibid, p. 41).

This description of the Athenian phenomenon evokes the mythological image of the city's "grey-eyed"² patroness and protectress – Athena – goddess of wisdom, who emerged from the head of Zeus fully formed. How apt a metaphor for the sudden appearance of the rational, searching, questioning intellect in the minds of men on the streets of Athens;³ for, as Bruno Snell emphatically states: "the rise of thinking among the Greeks was nothing less than a revolution. They did not, by means of mental equipment already at their disposal, merely map out new subjects for discussion, such as the sciences and philosophy. *They discovered the human mind*" (1953, p. v, emphasis added).

Yet, what could explain this "efflorescence of human genius," this "unprecedented outburst" of achievement, this very "discovery of the mind" – and why would all this seem to take on the air of being "inevitable, predestined?" It's like what Richard Tarnas says: "It was some twenty-five centuries ago that the Hellenic world brought forth that extraordinary flowering of culture that marked the dawn of Western civilization. Endowed with seemingly primeval clarity and creativity, the ancient Greeks provided the Western mind with what has proved to be a perennial source of insight, inspiration, and renewal" (1991, p.2).

The "dawn," the "source:" these kind of descriptors summon an impression that Tielhard de Chardin (2008) would call an "alpha point;" and how interesting that in our days there is a prevailing collective sympathy – sometimes displayed explicitly – that we are coming to the end of a long phase of history, an all subsuming "omega point." From this

² This is Homer's often used characterization of Athena, as in this passage from the *Iliad*: "The charioteers were dumbfounded as they saw the unwearied dangerous fire that played above the head of great-hearted Peleion blazing, and kindled by the goddess grey-eyed Athena" (Lattimore translation, 1951, Book Eighteen, lines 225-27). Hera, by the way, is called "ox-eyed."

³ In this essay I will follow Tarnas' lead, in his great book *The Passion of the Western Mind*, by declining the use of gender neutral explanations, as is politically correct these days; for the Greek world was, however unpleasantly patriarchal it may seem, dominated by men, and the people doing the thinking, searching, and questioning – dialoguing, in fact – in the streets, in the gymnasia, and in the *agora* of Athens were men. "In Athens, the wives of citizens enjoyed no more political or legal rights than did their slaves. Women had lost the important role they formerly played in Minoan society, and which, as it seems, they had at least partially preserved during the Homeric period. Yet though a married Athenian woman might be confined to her house, here at least she enjoyed absolute authority" (Flaceliere, 1959, p. 55).

perspective, there must be great value in understanding the seed moment that apparently is culminating in events all around us. “[W]e must recover our roots – not out of uncritical reverence for the views and values of ages past, but rather to discover and integrate the historical origins of our own era” (Tarnas, Preface); “the world’s instabilities make it so important to examine our origins” (Grant, p. xi). “Our roots, it has been constantly and correctly declared, are to be found, to a large degree, among these classical Greeks...To a marked extent, what we are doing and thinking today was anticipated by those Greeks” (ibid, p. xii).

And Plato, having set up his Academy in the midst of this “Fountainhead,” must surely have condensed, reified, documented and forwarded some of its essence; for, as Alfred North Whitehead once remarked, “The European philosophical tradition consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (1929, Part II, Chapter I, p. 39 – as quoted in Sinclair, 2008, p. 33).

Why Did “The Discovery of the Mind” Occur in Athens?⁴

To answer this question, it's important to begin by knowing that “Greek tradition kept alive an awareness of the ‘heroic age’...Greek historians did not draw a clear line between this mythical past and the attested events of history” (Oliva, 1981, p. 7). The ultimate provenance of this quasi-mythical/quasi-historical past was the fabulous Minoan civilization of Crete, “exist[ing] at the same time as those of Egypt and Babylonia” (Hall, p. 47), reaching its apex about 1560 B.C. (Oliva, p. 20). Riane Eisler (1988) has shown that the Minoan was a matriarchal, goddess-worshipping culture, “especially prosperous, peaceful, and happy,” according to Martin (1996, p. 26), as is evident by the fact that “Minoan settlements saw no need to fortify themselves against each other” (ibid). Perhaps this was due partly because, “[t]he palace society of Minoan Crete...appears to have operated primarily on a redistributive economic system” (ibid, p. 25). In any case, “[a]n awareness of the power and glory of Minoan Crete was fertile soil for the flowering of later Greek myths” (Oliva, p. 24).

Another important influence came from the Greek mainland itself, from the powerful Mycenaean civilization. “Myers assumes that the Mycenaean cities of the mainland were Minoan colonies founded after about 1800 B.C.” (Nilsson, 1968, p. 57). This is perfectly believable since “[a]t this time Crete was becoming more important in the Aegean, and marked signs of Minoan influence can be seen [also] on Cythera, on Thera, Melos and Ceos, Aegina, Rhodes, and at Miletus⁵ in Asia Minor” (Oliva, p. 19). So, most importantly, the Minoan culture was surely the source of Aegean civilization at large, with the Mycenaean being derivative. We may imagine, then, early Mycenaean cities, being colonies, embodying the characteristics of their Motherland Minoa.

Now, it's very interesting to note here that “[Ridgeway] takes the Mycenaean civilization to belong to a pre-[Greek] population called by the Greeks Pelasgians. These people were dark-haired and dark-skinned” (Nilsson, p. 24); “the carriers of the Minoan civilization belonged to this pre-Greek race” (ibid, p. 64); [t]hus we conclude that in the early Helladic age [early Bronze Age] Greece was inhabited by a non-Greek population” (ibid, p. 68). The Minoans, it's crucial to remember, did not speak Greek.

⁴ While “the discovery of the mind” was actually a pan-Greek phenomenon, with important developments occurring not only in Greece proper but also among her many colonies, nevertheless Athens remained always the cultural and intellectual center, a pilgrimage point for later philosophers, and the location of the Academy and related schools.

⁵ Miletus will have an important part to play later in this story.

Then, in a fascinating turn of history – the very substance of Eisler’s important work *The Chalice and the Blade* – we learn that “[Indo-Europeans] invaded Europe in waves and imposed their patriarchal, hierarchical, and martial values on the peoples they found there” (Martin, p. 19). Apparently there were at least three of these Indo-European tribes to have penetrated down into Greece: the Ionians, the Achaeans, and the Dorians (Nilsson, Chapter 2: “The History of the Mycenaean Age”). In contrast to the Minoan founders, these were *Greek-speaking* people. “The language of the Greeks, the fundamental component of their identity, indisputably came from Indo-European origins” (Martin, p. 20).

Martin chooses to use the phyla “Indo-European” not only for the root of language but also for the racial stock; Nilsson, more pointedly, calls the invading Greeks “Aryans,” and provides a fair summary of these developments:

It seems very reasonable to suppose that the Minoans went over to the mainland, subjugated it, held sway over the native population from strongholds which they built and introduced the Minoan civilization...The Greeks had already begun to immigrate in [this early] Mycenaean Age, but...were part of the subjugated population and only later, reinforced by new waves of immigrants, got the upper hand...Greek tribes, barbarous but open-minded, and very subject to the lure of superior civilization, as Aryan peoples have always shown themselves, warlike and fond of booty, [finally] occupied Greece” (p. 71).

This may be a fair summary, yet there is one qualification that doesn’t quite fit: the notion that the invading Greeks were “part of the subjugated population” – for it is Eisler’s entire thesis that indigenous populations of Europe, including the Minoans, were generally and universally egalitarian, peaceful, and matriarchal. According to this thesis, it seems more likely that the incoming “barbarous” Greeks – whom Martin goes so far as to term “violent” (p. 17) – could not be, and had no intention of being, assimilated into the refined Minoan culture of early Mycenae. Perhaps it’s easier to imagine them as segregating themselves in the forest, eating wild game, conducting raids, until such time that their increasing numbers finally could overpower the civilized Minoans. And why would the Minoans have need to “subjugate” the indigenous populations of the mainland when both groups are perceived to have been peaceful and matriarchal, relying on “redistributive economic systems?”

The name of the Greek tribe which finally transplanted the Minoans – and, we may assume, forcefully inherited the fruits of their civilization – was called “Achaean;” “[t]his is the most frequently found designation for the Greek warriors in the poems of Homer” (Oliva, p. 30). “[Sir Arthur Evans] is of the opinion that the dominant factor in Greece was non-Greek down to the twelfth century B.C....[t]he age in which the Homeric poems took

their characteristic shape” (Nilsson, p. 28). This, of course, is the beginning of the “Heroic Age” mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, an age half real and half mythical. “[T]he Late Mycenaean period, the period from c. 1400 to c. 1200 B.C....[w]e may justly call...the Heroic Age of Greece or the period of Achaean prevalence” (ibid, p. 111). Nilsson goes on to describe this period as “an age of wars and strife, of extensive wanderings and oversea expeditions” (p. 118). This would be entirely characteristic of the Aryan warlike stock from which the “fair-haired” Achaeans derived; it seems they inherited a graceful civilization – full of art and manners and refined culture – yet were unable to, we might say, grow beyond the ‘male dominating warrior theme’ that was their ancestral heritage.

The story of the *Iliad*, “which without any doubt refers to [this Greek] Mycenaean Age” (Nilsson, p. 158), is an extraordinarily graphic testament to the mindset of this Achaean warrior caste. And what of the overall context to the *Iliad*?

The Greeks of the post-Homeric period, the ‘classical’ Greeks and their successors, that is, those Greeks who were literate and have left articulate records of their beliefs, considered that one of the episodes in the early history of their own race was the Trojan War (Lattimore, 1951, p. 12).

Yet we discover, “The *Iliad* is not the story of Troy. Neither the beginning nor the end of the war is narrated in the *Iliad*...It is the story of Achilles; or more precisely, it is, as has been frequently seen, the tragedy of Achilles” (ibid, p. 17) – and this is exactly what makes the *Iliad* a milestone in the evolution of consciousness on the planet. More on that soon, for that is a direct lead to the Academy. For now, it will be useful to illustrate more about the warrior mind-cast of the Achaeans, Aryan inheritors of Minoan Mycenae.

Gory battle scenes abound in the epic *Iliad*. Here’s but one example, a particularly nasty set of sequences from Book V:

Idomeneus killed Phaistos the son of Maionian Boros, who had come out of Tarne with the deep soil. Idomeneus the spear-renowned stabbed this man just as he was mounting behind his horses, with the long spear driven in the right shoulder. He dropped from the chariot and the hateful darkness took hold of him.

The henchman of Idomeneus stripped the armor from Phaistos, while Menelaos son of Atreus killed with the sharp spear Strophios’ son...Menelaos the spear-famed...stabbed him as he fled away before him, in the back with a spear thrust between the shoulders and driven through to the chest beyond it. He dropped forward on his face and his armor clattered upon him.

Meriones in turn killed Phereklos, son of Harmonides...This man Meriones pursued and overtaking him struck in the right buttock, and the spearhead drove straight on and passing under the bone went into the bladder. He dropped, screaming, to his knees, and death was a mist about him.

Meges in turn killed Pedaios, the son of Antenor...Now the son of Phyleus, the spear-famed, closing upon him struck him with the sharp spear behind the head at the tendon, and straight on through the teeth and under the tongue cut the bronze blade, and he dropped in the dust gripping in his teeth the cold bronze.

Eurypylos, Euaimon's son, killed brilliant Hypsenor, son of high-hearted Dolopion...This man Eurypylos...running in chase as he fled before him struck in the shoulder with a blow swept from the sword and cut the arm's weight from him, so that the arm dropped bleeding to the ground, and the red death and destiny the powerful took hold of both eyes.

So they went at their work all about the strong encounter (Lattimore, Lines 43-84, pp. 129-30).

"All about the strong encounter" indeed – for we find that the entire sequence of events related in the *Iliad* is just a few weeks time taken out of a *ten year siege* (Lattimore, p. 17)!

The story is oft told: Paris, son of the king of Troy, went on a diplomatic mission to Argos, the center of Mycenae in the Peloponnese. There he was hosted by Menelaos, one of the strongest of Achaean kings. Paris ends up seducing and abducting Menelaos' wife Helen, apparently with her full consent, and takes her back to Troy as his wife. Because of a previous oath, all the princes of Mycenae (i.e. the future Greece) are obliged to avenge Helen's honor. Thereupon, they "raised a force of a thousand or more ships, manned by fighters, with a view to forcing the return of Helen. The force was led by Agamemnon, elder brother of Menelaos, the King of Mycenae" (ibid, p. 12).

Fantastic, isn't it? What kind of code of conduct would keep the men of a thousand ships staged at the foot of Troy for ten long years? While the pace of the grim events detailed above were the result of "an extraordinary counter-attack by the Trojans which could be made only in the absence of Achilles" (ibid, p. 17), still, these men were at dismal war for the duration of the siege. Through it all, Agamemnon, though he makes some real blunders, remains the 'alpha male,' the aggressive, dominant, male figure-head firmly in charge. Though he does hold counsel from time to time, his decisions and directives are not questioned, merely carried out. In fact, it is an argument between Agamemnon and Achilles, the content of the very first pages of the very first chapter, which sets the whole emotional tone of the story – and it is just this fact of having an emotional tone to begin with, instead of merely perfunctorily recanting events, that sets this epic apart as a marker in the evolution of consciousness. Instead of challenging Agamemnon, even though he be stronger and righter, Achilles, at the advice of Athena, withdraws and sulks, removing himself and his men from the conflict until the epic's dramatic climax.

A 'rational' thinking person has seriously to question this sort of blind obedience to authority that must be intrinsic to the Aryan warrior creed⁶. What was happening back home in Mycenae during those ten vacant years while all the princes and fighting men were away? And what sort of culture and education could these fighting men possibly have created for themselves while living in camps along the shores of the Hellespont for ten grueling years?

The famous tragic poet Euripides, writing in the 'evolved consciousness' of the literate fifth century, when men were free to actively think for themselves, addresses these kinds of issues in many of his plays. The profound effect the events of the Heroic Age had, or must have had, on the collective Greek consciousness is revealed by checking the timeline: Euripides, writing in the late fifth century (420's), is using characters and plots formalized by Homeric epics that "came into being – that is to say, in the form in which they have come down to us – in the middle of the second half of the eighth century [720's]" (Oliva, p. 59), these in turn depicting events that according to Herodotus are said to have occurred approximately 1250 B.C. (Lattimore, p. 18). That means that Euripides was regularly composing tales – and people were flocking to the theatre to see them performed – about situations that had transpired *over eight hundred years previously*. No wonder Oliva explains "Greek tradition kept alive an awareness of the 'heroic age'...Greek historians did not draw a clear line between this mythical past and the attested events of history" (p. 7). No, they did not "draw a clear line" because they were invoking archetypes from the collective unconscious of the race, these archetypes kept alive through mythologizing, whether of heroes or of gods or of the relations between them.

Now, whereas "[Homer] stands in the morning twilight of Greek history and looks back to a preceding age, which according to him was an age of much more brilliant glory and valiant men than the age in which he himself lived" (Nilsson, p. 1), Euripides is standing in the full light of day of Classical Greece, following "the discovery of the mind," when the rational inquiring intellect had been unleashed to explore the world, make classifications, and form judgments. From this perspective, using this developmental stage of mind, the picture Euripides paints of the 'Heroic Age' is not at all flattering; in fact, it's quite miserable.

⁶ This may help to explain it: "The conception that the gods dwelt on Olympos as the subordinate of Zeus is pre-Homeric, and we do not find its model in the political conditions of the Historic Age. Consequently it goes back to the Mycenaean Age, and there we find the missing model. This is the rule of the Great King...The Great King of Mycenaean times had the same full power as Zeus" (Nilsson, p. 269) "[T]he kingship of Zeus on Olympos is modeled after the pattern of the Mycenaean great kingship" (ibid).

Take for example his play *Electra*, “almost certainly produced in 413 B.C.” (Vermeule, 1959, p. 204). Electra was the daughter of Agamemnon. In the play we learn that, upon returning from Troy, Agamemnon was murdered in his bath by his wife Clytemnestra and her consort Aegisthus. Electra and her brother Orestes were subsequently exiled. As the play unfolds, we find Electra, daughter of the once Great King of Mycenae, married to a simple farmer and living in rags. Orestes has grown old enough to surreptitiously return to the kingdom with an eye on regaining the throne of his father. Orestes and Electra are reunited and decide to avenge their father’s death by murdering their mother and her consort, which they succeed in doing.

My goodness, with family relations like that, as the saying goes, “who needs enemies?” The mighty warrior king, so invincible on the battlefield, was defeated by his own rotten family relations. The literary critic Vermeule asks, “The question is whether Euripides enjoyed the psychological exploration of suffering for its own sake, or had a moral purpose” (p. 208). I would say, *of course* he had a moral purpose: he was debunking the myth propagated by Homer that the superhuman heroes of the late Mycenaean Age, a so-called “god-like race of hero-men who are called half-gods” (Hesiod, quoted in Jaynes, 1976, p. 281), whom everyone knew to be foreigners from the north, led lives of brilliant wonder. I think Euripides was peeling back the cover of superficial glamour to reveal the horrible social consequences of life within a warrior caste system.

In another classic tragedy, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, “an obvious bridge between classical tragedy and postclassical drama” (Walker, p. 108), we once again find the embattled Agamemnon. The setting is Aulis, the staging point for all the ships of Hellas before their departure for Troy. The massive assembled army has not seen any favorable sailing winds for quite some time and so has been standing idle. The gathered princes are starting to grumble, wondering if their chosen leader Agamemnon has the right kind of ‘verve’ to win the cooperation of the winds. Agamemnon decides to consult a seer: “the plot is woven around an angry goddess [Artemis] who won’t let the winds blow the Achaean ships to the sack of Troy unless a king’s daughter is slain in human sacrifice” (ibid, p. 110). The daughter chosen is Agamemnon’s Iphigenia!

Euripides does a great job exploring the inner turmoil of the figure Agamemnon as he comes to terms with this tragic fate. Euripides shows that in the code of the warrior caste, the caste that ruled Later Mycenae, obligation and duty to one’s position and maintenance of the hierarchical pecking order ultimately outweighs even concern for the safety of one’s own offspring. Agamemnon sends a letter to queen Clytemnestra summoning his daughter to Aulis on the pretense that she is to wed Achilles. Of course it’s all a deceptive plot: when Iphigenia arrives she is prepared to be sacrificed: Agamemnon her father is going to slit her throat on the altar. When the young princess finds out, she is absolutely devastated. At first through pouring tears she pleads with her

father for her life. Agamemnon remains unmoved for he must play the role of the dominant king-in-charge. Finally Iphigenia's tears subside: she has come to terms with her destiny: she reasons she is to be sacrificed for the good of all Hellas, so she walks off to the altar with a feeling of purpose.

This is heart-wrenching tragedy, the development of a form of written expression that peaked in Classical Athens toward the end of the fifth century. More than that, it is the reflection of a mind that is able to turn in upon itself and critically analyze motivations from a deeply psychological perspective. "The tragedians attempted to grasp man as an individual, with all his contradictions and all the conflicts of his nature" (Snell, 1953, p. 210). This sort of sophisticated psychological analysis simply was not possible for Homer nor for the Achaean heroes of which he writes; thus "we may regard the *Iliad* as standing at the great turning of the times" (Jaynes, p. 83); for in the intervening period – roughly 850 B.C. to 650 B.C. – occurred "the discovery of the mind." But what does that really mean? For if we are to understand the Academy in terms of the "organizational development" of 'mind,' we need to know how 'mind' became a distinct formulation, whose presence was perceived and felt internally by increasingly thinking human beings.

"The more carefully we distinguish between the meanings of Homer's words and those of the classical period, the clearer grows our vision of the gulf which lies between the two epochs, and of the intellectual achievements of the Greeks" (Snell, p. 1). For example, "[w]hat is lacking in Homer is a single word for soul, one that would signify the seat of thoughts, emotions, and will: in short, personality. *Psyche*, as is well known, becomes such a term by the time of Plato." (Sullivan, 1988, p. 2). "Again Homer has no one word to characterize the mind or the soul...*psyche*, the word for soul in later Greek, has no original connexion with the thinking and feeling soul. For Homer, *psyche* is the force which keeps the human being alive" (Snell, p. 8). "The word *psyche* is akin to... 'to breathe,' and denotes the breath of life which of course departs through the mouth... This vital breath is, as it were, a semi-concrete organ which exists in man as long as he lives" (ibid, p. 9). Interestingly, this scholar cross-references 'mind' with 'soul,' a characterization that would become pronounced later with the philosophers, with their exaltation of *psyche* as the seat of 'reason.'

"The other two words for the 'mind' are *thymos* and *noos*. *Thymos* in Homer is the generation of motion or agitation, while *noos* is the cause of ideas and images. All mental phenomena are in one way or another distributed so as to fall in the sphere of either of the two organs" (ibid). "If...*thymos* is the mental organ which causes (e)motion, while *noos* is the recipient of images, then *noos* may be said generally to be in charge of intellectual matters, and *thymos* of things emotional" (ibid, p. 12). Snell, in his fascinating book in which this analysis is developed, the very personification of our inquiry here – *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought* – supports his

assertions by citing specific passages in the *Iliad* in which the Homeric vocabulary occurs. “According to this view, Homeric man is described as having no awareness of a psychic whole but only of parts which themselves reflect his complete psychic nature imperfectly and incompletely. His psychic nature, therefore, is fragmented” (Sullivan, p. 2). “[W]hat we interpret as the soul, Homeric man splits up into three components each of which he defines by the analogy of physical organs” (Snell, p. 15).

Snell’s philological analysis is really quite sophisticated and convincing; the adumbration here will not do it justice. Let us pause for a moment anyway, and reflect on the implications of this not possessing a coherent, integrated ‘mind’ – for this is something quite peculiar to the present day interpreter who obviously takes ‘mind’ for granted. Jaynes leads by stating, “There is in general no consciousness in the *Iliad*” (p. 69). “The characters of the *Iliad* do not sit down and think out what to do. They have no conscious minds as we have, and certainly no introspections” (ibid, p. 72). “Iliadic man did not have subjectivity as do we; he had no awareness of his awareness of the world, no internal mind-space to introspect upon” (ibid, p. 75). “As a result there is in Homer no genuine reflexion, no dialogue of the soul with itself” (ibid, p. 19). “If there is no subjective consciousness, no mind, no soul, or will, in Iliadic men, what then initiates behavior” (Jaynes, p. 71)?

Jaynes answers his own question by suggesting, “the gods take the place of consciousness” (p. 72). Snell corroborates, “For Homer the mental processes have no such capacity for self-induced expansion. Any augmentation of bodily or spiritual powers is effected from without, above all by the deity” (p. 19). “We believe that a man advances from an earlier situation by an act of his own will, through his own power. If Homer, on the other hand, wants to explain the source of an increase in strength, he has no course but to say that the responsibility lies with a god” (ibid, p. 20).

An example from the *Iliad* will help to demonstrate how this ‘god consciousness’ is activated, usually in times of stress. In Book I, the previously mentioned argument between Achilles and Agamemnon is about to boil over. Achilles is on the verge of drawing his sword and storming Agamemnon⁷ when Athena suddenly appears:

Athena descended from the sky. For Hera the goddess of the white arms sent her, who loved both men equally in her heart and cared for them. The goddess standing behind Peleus’ son caught him by the fair hair, appearing to him only, for no man of the others saw her. Achilles in amazement turned about, and straightaway knew Pallas Athena and the terrible eyes shining. He uttered winged words and addressed her: ‘Why have you come now, o child of Zeus of the Aegis,

⁷ Demonstrating Snell’s thesis that aspects of the mind were believed to correspond with physical organs, we read that as Achilles was “pondering whether to draw from beside his thigh the sharp sword,” he also has the option, “or else to check the spleen within and keep down his anger” (Lattimore, p. 64, Lines 189-192).

once more? Is it that you may see the outrageousness of the son of Atreus Agamemnon? Yet will I tell you this thing, and I think it shall be accomplished. By such acts of arrogance he may even lose his own life.'

Then in answer the goddess grey-eyed Athena spoke to him: 'I have come down to stay your anger – but will you obey me? – from the sky; and the goddess of the white arms Hera sent me, who loves both of you equally in her heart and cares for you. Come then, do not take your sword in your hand, keep clear of fighting, though indeed with words you may abuse him, and it will be that way. And this also will I tell you and it will be a thing accomplished. Some day three times over such shining gifts shall be given you by reason of this outrage. Hold your hand then, and obey us.'

Then in answer again spoke Achilles of the swift feet: 'Goddess, it is necessary that I obey the word of you two, angry though I am in my heart. So it will be better. If any man obeys the gods, they listen to him also' (Lattimore, pp. 64-5, Lines 194-218).

Here we witness a vivid example of how, for a modern person, deliberation on a difficult choice of action would be accomplished by 'mind' – the (ideally) reasoning agglomerate of conscience, will, seat of personality, etc.; yet our Achaean hero here does not have such internal dialogue. Instead of an internally activated 'voice of reason,' the choice is made by the visitation of a goddess "descending from the sky."

Julian Jaynes, in his sometimes curious, nevertheless consistently intriguing, book – *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* – exclaims, "The gods are what we now call hallucinations" (p. 74), and later asserts, "The Trojan War was directed by hallucinations" (p. 75).

What an interesting way of looking at it. Maybe another quick passage will help to illuminate one of these hallucinations in process. For this I can turn at random to almost any page in the *Iliad*, for communication from and intervention by the gods is so common. The passage I found is in Book XX: The Trojan hero Aeneas, through a rush of pride, is about to challenge Achilles, who by this time has re-entered the fray. Poseidon notices this and decides to intervene:

And Poseidon, shaker of the earth, came and stood very near him and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words: 'Aeneas, which one of the gods [i.e. internal voices] is it who urges you to such madness that you fight in the face of Peleus' son, against his high courage though he is both stronger than you and dearer to the immortals? Give back rather, whenever you find yourself thrown against him, lest beyond your fate you go down into the house of the death god. But once Achilles has fulfilled his death and his destiny, then take courage, and go on, and fight with their foremost, since there shall be no other Achaean able to kill you (Lattimore, p. 413, Lines 330-39).

Is there really a god of the sea, Poseidon, who comes to stand beside the Trojan hero and give him this judicious advice? Or has he hallucinated the whole thing? If it was an hallucination, it would have to be collective; for, surviving, Aeneas would be able to go back to the camp that night and upon relaying his story, surely one of his comrades will jump up and say, “Yes! Poseidon spoke to me too!”

Jaynes, having been educated as a clinical psychiatrist, arrives at a neurological explanation for all this: “The gods were *organizations* of the central nervous system and can be regarded as personae in the sense of poignant consistencies through time, amalgams of parental or admonitory images” (p. 75, emphasis added). “In distinction to our own subjective conscious minds, we can call the mentality of the Mycenaeans a *bicameral mind*. Volition, planning, initiative is organized with no consciousness whatever and then ‘told’ to the individual in his familiar language, sometimes with the visual aura of a familiar friend or authority figure or ‘god,’ or sometimes as a voice alone. The individual obeyed these hallucinated voices because he could not ‘see’ what to do by himself” (ibid, p. 76).

Bicameral means “two houses or chambers;” therefore the characters of the *Iliad* were operating with what we could call rudimentary *whole brain* awareness. Jaynes goes on to define the hallucinated voices of gods as a function of an active *right* hemisphere. In this context, the “origin of consciousness” to which the title of his book alludes is, I think, better understood as the origin of *self-consciousness*, and this self-consciousness – “the unified mind-space with its analog ‘I’” (ibid, p. 271) – appeared concurrently with “the breakdown of the bicameral mind,” that is, with an atrophying usage of the right hemisphere of the brain. The emergence of *self-consciousness*, then, was concomitant with a shifting emphasis to *left-brain* functioning, and this was a precursor to “the discovery of the mind.”⁸ This entire transition is fairly simple to trace by taking note of the shifting content of the literary traditions during this germinal historical period of Greek culture.

First, let’s establish that “the *Iliad* was our window upon the immediate bicameral past” (ibid, p. 257); and that the *Iliad* is attributed to one Homer: “According to his view – and there could be no other for him – a man’s action or perception is determined by the divine forces operative in the world” (Snell, p. 43). Now it’s important to realize that the *Iliad* arose as an “oral poetical tradition,” and that “[Homer] was primarily, at least, an *aoidos*, a singer; the age of real literacy was still to come” (Kirk, 1976, p. 1). “An oral

⁸ Jaynes devotes a whole chapter to defining what he means by ‘consciousness,’ so the path of his argument is very carefully laid. With a concept as profound and ephemeral as ‘consciousness,’ however, there will always be room for multiple interpretations. I come from the school that regards consciousness as pre-existing and all-permeating *throughout* the universe, not dependent on or waiting for such a time as the species *Homo sapiens* comes to self-awareness; therefore I need to adapt Jaynes’ useful thesis somewhat to my own purposes.

poetical tradition is maintained by professional singers whose usual stock-in-trade is likely to have consisted of narrative songs lasting an hour or so...A singer can be described as...“a worker for the community”” (Kirk, 1985, p. 12).⁹

We can imagine how very different life would be during an age of “oral poetical tradition.” Traveling bards – *aidoi* – would move from town to town plucking on their lyres while recounting fabulous tales of a lost Golden Age. These tales were, in effect, also an historical tradition, for they were recounting “the national past” (Kirk, 1976, p. 3). The audience for these tales must have sat mesmerized, perhaps circled around a fire, for the tales were composed with a literary quality that aided memory: a rhythmic, toning, punctuated delivery, with the repetition of key themes and “the metrical lengthening of vowels” (Kirk, 1985, p. 6), etc. They were also instructional: “The language of the poems...is an artificial amalgam of words, constructions and dialect forms from different regions and different stages in the development of Greek from the late Bronze Age until around 700 B.C.” (ibid).

Highly significant for the intended purpose of this paper is that the act of *experiencing* the “oral poetical tradition” can be characterized by two important words: *auditory* and *participatory*. Unlike a *written* literary tradition, which is experienced with the faculty of sight (I see!) and can be conducted in isolation, the oral tradition was a ritualistic group process that relied on and activated different parts of the brain. “The coming of [self-]consciousness can in a certain vague sense be construed as a shift from an auditory mind to a visual mind...hearing was the very essence of the bicameral mind” (Jaynes, p. 269).

Before expanding on the implications of these extraordinary findings – that is, that the experience of what we so loosely call ‘mind’ and ‘self-consciousness’ is directly related to written literary tradition – and their obvious relevance to an Academy of the present day, I still want to attempt to show why “the discovery of the mind” occurred in Athens, of all places. In order to do that, we need to backtrack a little bit and review some more history of the land once called *Hellas*, now called Greece.

Recall, if you will, the pitiful portrayal of Agamemnon in Euripides’ plays – a man embattled within and without, having the misfortune to have been born into a prominent family in a warrior caste system. Then imagine similar dysfunctional – even tragic – family and social relationships dispersed throughout Later Mycenae. Is this not the recipe for disaster?

⁹ It doesn’t add much to the argument I am constructing but it’s interesting to note that, “The monumental Iliad is of a totally different order of magnitude from those ‘normal’ songs...It was still designed for a listening audience, since the spread of literacy cannot possibly have been such, by say 700 B.C., as to allow for a proliferation of copies and readers (Kirk, 1985, p. 12). It might have taken *days* to recite the whole Iliad. What kind of organizational development of ‘mind’ could store that much data in memory?”

Towards the end of the thirteenth century BC the Mycenaean civilization suffered a blow from which it never recovered. Earlier scholars tended to link the end of this civilization with the 'Dorian invasion', that is to say, with the arrival on the Greek mainland of the last wave of Greek-speaking invaders. More recent archaeological research, however, has shown the Dorian settlement of the Peloponnese to be of more recent date; it can thus hardly have anything to do with the catastrophe that befell the Late Helladic centres, upset their economic stability and broke the political power of the Mycenaean rulers.

It was not only the region of the Aegean, however, that was stricken; at about the same period there were signs of decline in other parts of the ancient world. At the end of the thirteenth century the Hittite empire collapsed, and the lands of Syria and Palestine were hard hit, too (Oliva, p. 33).

As a rough generalization, it seems accurate to say that the period from roughly 1200 to 1000 B.C. saw numerous catastrophes for Mediterranean civilizations. The consequences for the Mycenaeans were disastrous (Martin, p. 31).

Jaynes is convinced that the crises were caused by "an eruption or series of eruptions of the volcano on the island of Thera, also called Santorini" (p. 212). Carpenter's hypothesis is "that the Mycenaean civilization came to an end, as did the Hittite empire, because of climatic changes which brought drought to Asia Minor, Syria and the Balkan peninsula" (in Oliva, p. 34). Oliva claims, "The most probable explanation remains that which assumes that attack from without destroyed the Mycenaean civilization" (p. 34).

I tend to align with Martin's explanation:

The causes of the disruption are poorly documented, but the most likely reasons are internal strife between local centers of power and over exploitation of natural resources in over specialized and centralized economies (p. 31)...[A]bove all the Mycenaeans had to defend themselves against other Mycenaeans or rebellious mercenaries...Never united in one state, the fractious "princes" of Mycenaean Greece by the late thirteenth century B.C. were fighting each other at least as much as they did foreigners...Internal conflict among the rulers of Mycenaean Greece, not foreign invasion, offers the most plausible explanation of the destruction of the palaces of the mainland in the period after about 1200 B.C. (p. 34)

Of course I tend to align with this line of thought because I've already shown how the tragic poets of the later classical era were still using material from this period as studies in psychological turmoil. A warrior caste system is at its best when it is on the move, raiding and conquering, laying siege and plundering booty. What are you going to do when it's time to come home? Settle down into a gentle, relaxed family-community routine? Not likely! These Achaeans couldn't stop fighting: They ended up destroying their civilization

– which wasn't really theirs to begin with, for they came from the forest. It would be more correct to say they ended up destroying the civilization they inherited from the Minoans.

The period that ensued is called universally the “Dark Ages” of Greece:

The result of the collapse of the Mycenaean culture was a dark age, lasting for some 300 years. Discontinuity with the past was virtually complete...The whole military and political organization of the palace economy disappeared...This was accompanied by emigration to outlying areas...and widespread depopulation of the mainland (Murray, 1993, p. 8).

To comprehend the extent of the devastation, Oliva (our principal historian throughout!) elucidates many details of the conditions during these dark ages, such as a pronounced plummet in population levels: “In the south-west of the Peloponnese...in Messenia and Triphylia, about 150 settlements are attested during the thirteenth century, while no more than fourteen are known from the twelfth century...[T]he number of settlements in Laconia was reduced to a quarter and in the Argolid and the Corinthian region to less than a third” (p. 36). “[T]he surviving population led a miserable existence among the ruins of their former power and glory” (ibid). “Besides destruction, decline and general degradation we can also see another tendency. The population began to move from the worst-hit areas to other regions” (ibid).

Apparently, “small-scale movements of people, not grand invasions, characterized this era” (Martin, p. 34). Migration in general was off of the mainland and toward the Aegean and Asia Minor; for example, “[t]he largest group of Greeks to settle the west coast of Asia Minor were the Ionians” (Oliva, p. 41). This is quite significant because Homer was Ionian, so the myths and legends of the Heroic Age were transplanted there.¹⁰ Amidst the general movement, it seems that small protected pockets remained, for example in the hills of Arcadia where a Mycenaean dialect was spoken well into the classical era; and contrary to the general trend, “Athens and its immediate vicinity (Salamis and eastern Attica) were fairly densely settled by the end of the twelfth and the first half of the eleventh century” (ibid, p. 40). We even hear amazing stories like the ‘peoples of the sea,’ rag-tag bands who would land on a shore – with their wives, children, wagons and household goods – and attempt to settle there. One such combined group tried to push their way up the Nile delta before being repulsed and eliminated by Ramses III.

¹⁰ “The Ionians formed the largest and the most important group of Greek communities on the west coast of Asia Minor, and also settled most of the islands in the Aegean. They were related to the inhabitants of the eastern part of central Greece, the island of Euboea and Attica. At the beginning of the sixth century Solon, the Athenian law-giver, still referred to his native town as ‘the most ancient land of the Ionians.’ The phylae (tribes) provide important evidence of the fact that the Athenians were related to the Ionians of the islands and of Asia Minor” (Oliva, p. 42). This is good background information for what comes later in this paper.

These were indeed dire times; yet three-hundred years is a long duration, and in that sense, the Dark Ages can be regarded as a period of incubation. “There is no doubt that in these centuries Greeks laid the foundation for the values, traditions, and new forms of social and political organization that would characterize them in later ages” (Martin, p. 37). While Nilsson reminds us, “the period after the breakdown of the Mycenaean civilization is the poorest and darkest epoch in all Greek history” (p. 246), he also reiterates:

During this time the foundations of the future history of Greece were laid. The indigenous population and the immigrant Greeks became fused so as to form the historical Greek people, the social conditions and the conditions of property were developed and fixed, and finally that form of state came into being in which the political life of the Greeks was vested...we call it by the Greek word *polis*. For the *polis*, with all ideas and institutions attached to it, is the result of a historical development. The foundations were laid when with the breakdown of the great kingship the vassals became independent kings, their interests became limited to their immediate surroundings, and consequently the cities cared for themselves only” (ibid).

I like this explanation, except for the part about “the vassals became independent kings.” We must remember that before the Achaeans and other Greek-speaking “barbarians” arrived – with their identifying worldview of a “Great King,” personified in their mythology with the figurehead of Zeus¹¹ – the population of the mainland was believed to be generally peaceful, prosperous, egalitarian, and matriarchal. This was the sophisticated Minoan civilization, based on a redistributive economic system, that didn’t *need* the ‘male figurehead in-charge’ routine; so why would the vassals want to become “independent kings” when their recent experience with battle-scarred, patriarchal Achaeans had brought so much ruin? I tend to think the people, as a whole, not only *wanted* a return to the egalitarian past, but desperately *needed* it in the wake of a destroyed resource base. In this kind of climate, any vassal jumping up and proclaiming to be an “independent king” would more likely than not have been battered down and told to go back to the fields.¹²

¹¹ “Many later Greek myths are connected with the centres of Mycenaean civilization (Oliva, p. 31)... Tablets from Pylos and from Knossos testify that the Mycenaean Greeks worshipped gods we are familiar with from later Greek history, including Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hermes, Artemis, Athena, Dionysus and Ares” (ibid, p. 30). Did the influence of the Minoan civilization introduce self-directed and mindful *feminine* deities into the Greek pantheon?

¹² “There must have been many potential centers where the power of the lord and the feudal aristocracy had become enfeebled, and where, it would seem, the villagers’ hatred of war, so bitterly recorded by Hesiod, would be carried over into the constitution and daily practices of the city. Certainly, the Greek village asked only to be let alone in its self-contained environment; it wanted neither to conquer nor to be conquered” (Mumford, p. 131).

In a grand irony of history, then, the necessities of the so-called Dark Ages¹³ produced both the psychological and socio-economic conditions that would eventually give rise to Greek democracy and the demand for independent freedom of thought that went with it. In this context, Nilsson reveals more than he probably realized when he says, “The idea of the polis created the *self-consciousness* of the Greeks and compelled them to concentrate themselves on themselves” (p. 246, emphasis added). “Self-consciousness” is emphasized here because we saw with Jaynes how psychological self-consciousness is the prelude to “the discovery of the mind.”

Kathleen Freeman helps to sustain this line of thought: “It is not generally realized that the [post-Mycenaean] Greek world consisted of a number of small units called city-states (*polis* is the Greek word, whence is derived “politics”), which were entirely independent of one another, with different constitutions, laws, ways of life and means of defence, and even different ways of speaking the same language and worshipping the same deities” (1950, p. 11).¹⁴ The extreme, even exaggerated, lack of national identity that was a consequence of the (and I say again) so-called Dark Ages produced *individualized* identities, first at the scale of the individualized *polis* and then later evolving to the scale of the individualized person; and yet, “In spite of the splitting up of Greece in independent *poleis* there existed a common bond which united the Greeks as opposed to other peoples, and they were thoroughly conscious of it” (Nilsson, p. 246). This bond consisted of 1) language, 2) the world of the gods, and 3) the heroic mythology.¹⁵

¹³ I say “so-called” Dark Ages because I think this characterization is a prejudice of the historians. Just like the so-called Dark Ages that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire, the sudden absence of oppressive centralized power was actually probably a boon for the pastoral people of the land.

¹⁴ “The polis was much more than a city; it embraced the surrounding agricultural land and it included access to the sea...Through this unity of city and countryside, the polis could potentially be self-sufficient; this was the ideal of both Plato and Aristotle” (Hall, p. 36). “In many parts of Greece small states were formed during the archaic period, often described as ‘city-states.’ The term is not really apposite, however, for although these states usually centred round a city, the rural hinterland was an integral part of them, and often an extensive part” (Oliva, p. 83). I wholeheartedly agree that the term ‘city-states’ is not “apposite” for the simple reason that the vast majority of these centers were not even large enough to be considered the scale of ‘towns’ as we know them – thus they were not true urban centers.

¹⁵ “[T]he Hellenic race displays to the historian the most intense passion for separatism that the world has ever seen. The hundreds of city-states had nothing in common except their descent from a common stock and their basic language, both of which meant a small common heritage of beliefs and ideas. Yet they contributed in less than a millennium more to the human treasury of civilization than all the rest of the world put together throughout all its known history” (Freeman, p. 18). In her survey of ten of these “city-states” – I think *poleis* is a much better and more accurate term – Freeman emphasizes the role of geography in contributing to this sense of “separatism,” or individualized community identity; for much of Greece is formed by long mountain valleys that extend right down to the sea. Generally poorly kept roads – often little more than trails – between the valleys discouraged freedom of movement, thus aiding further to the feelings of self-enclosure. Both Hall (1999) and Bowra (1977) describe how the rugged Greek geography contributed in time to a rugged sense of individualism. Geographical causation, however, is a side-note to the discussion in this essay.

We recognize here, then, how absolutely vital was the influence of the half-real/half-mythic tales of the Heroic Age, first recited by peripatetic *aoidoi* traveling from village to village and then later consolidated into the grand epic poems of Homer – *for they were maintaining a sense of unity on the noetic level that didn't exist at the political level*. We can appreciate further the profound influence of “Homer” – or whoever were his accomplices – consolidating during the eighth century B.C., when we realize “he humanized and anthropomorphized the myths, and this is a great achievement” (Nilsson, p. 275). “The distinguishing feature of Homeric poetry is the *humanizing* of the old and sometimes rough myths” (ibid, p. 265, emphasis added); he “infused new life and vigor into the epic poetry, putting the psychology of his heroes in the foreground and planning a comprehensive composition under this aspect” (ibid, p. 209). Nilsson closes this line of thought by stating, most profoundly, “He created a school” (ibid). Remember that the *Iliad* is not about the Trojan War, *per se*, but rather about the tragic fate of the supremely virtuous Achilles – thus it becomes intensely personal as audiences can begin to relate to the plight of their favorite hero. All this was providing fertile ground for the eventual emergence of self-consciousness – the prelude to “the discovery of the mind” – in greater *Hellas*, centered upon Athens.

“By the eighth century B.C. Greece was already through her ‘Dark Age’ and had re-emerged as a strong and individual force in the world of the eastern and central Mediterranean” (Kirk, 1976, p. 1). “Individual” force is probably not the best way to depict this re-emergence; *individualized* force would be more apt, for, as we have seen, the defining characteristic of the Greeks at this point in their history was their segregation into self-determining, self-sustaining, individualized *poleis*. Oliva, however, highlights the essential point: “Towards the end of the ninth century the Greeks began to make contact with the Near East” (p. 47). Thus, their extended period of isolation, in which a unique, self-conscious cultural syncretism had been incubated, was over:

A new and unknown world was opened to the Greeks when they reached the shores of Syria, and like the Minoan Cretans and the Mycenaean Achaeans before them, they assimilated elements of the rich cultural traditions of the Near East. The long ‘Dark Ages’ had finally come to an end, and a great upsurge of creative activity began among the people of the Greek communities. This new phase of Greek civilization is reflected not only in the monuments of material culture, but in the fact that the Greeks acquired an alphabet...According to Herodotus the Greeks called the script they adopted ‘Phoenician’ letters (ibid, p. 48).

A “new world” indeed; yet it’s also important to remember that the Minoan civilization, the very foundation of Aegean civilization at large, was contemporaneous with Egypt and Babylonia, so there must always have been some kind of flow of cultural

diffusion from East to West. For example, “Greek intellectuals of the historic period proclaimed that Greeks owed a great deal to the older civilization of Egypt, in particular in religion and art” (Martin, p. 21); and “The Greeks themselves acknowledged that their mathematics owed everything to Egypt and Babylon; Aristotle says that the mathematical arts originated there” (Hall, p. 47). We may imagine the variegated, crenellated isthmus that is greater Greece resembling an outstretched hand through which the intellectual-cultural treasures of the Orient could make initial contact with Europe.

So what about this introduction of an alphabet to the newly awakened Greeks? Kirk puts it into perspective: “The truth is that ancient Greece acquired a fully practicable writing system...unusually late in its general cultural development, in comparison with the transition from illiteracy to literacy in other observable societies” (1985, p. 14). He then references in particular the Achaeans, who “could do no better in the way of writing than imitate the most cumbersome features of the hieroglyphic and cuneiform systems in order to develop a syllabary which could never have coped with anything beyond basic documentary uses” (ibid). A startling conclusion is then reached:

In many respects this strange Greek backwardness over writing (presumably due in part to Minoan influence) and the insistence on clinging to the worst available system – and then dropping even that without immediate replacement – must have been disadvantageous. In respect of poetry, however, it had some paradoxical merits. For the oral tradition, which would have been killed off by any immediate and serious extension of literacy, continued and expanded in the Greek world... Largely, then, through the failure to develop the technique of writing, traditional poetic methods survived into an age when traditional restraints on the scope and form of oral verse had virtually disappeared (p. 15).

Wow – so once more it comes back to Homer; or more precisely to the ‘epic tradition’ – full of nascent psychologizing in emergent self-consciousness – which his namesake reified. “And yet it is a curious fact that a new kind of writing, based on the development of the alphabet, started to take hold in Greece either shortly before or even during Homer’s own lifetime. That naturally raises the question whether Homer himself used the new writing, indeed whether the whole creation of a monumental epic in some sense depended on it” (ibid, p. 10). That is a very important consideration. The conclusion reached: “the alphabet and Homer are likely to have been not so much cause and effect as parallel products of the new expansionism” (ibid, p. 16).¹⁶ This confluence of events and their effects, if it hasn’t been stated clearly already, marks the beginning of “the discovery of the mind.”

¹⁶ “Archilocus, working about 650 B.C., is the first author of whom we can be sure that he wrote his poems down, and, more important, that he composed them with the help of writing” (Kirk, 1976, p. 1).

Perhaps this is a good time to summarize all that has been just presented:

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are of outstanding importance for Greek culture. They mark the end of the long period of oral epic tradition. The *aidoi* (bards) improvising to the accompaniment of the lyre are replaced by the *raphsodes* (reciters) whose text is predetermined. The Homeric poems became the common property of the Greek nation. The young people learned their heroic past from the epics, which provided poets and artists with their source of inspiration. The heroic age as Homer described it in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* became the prime source of classical mythology. As long as classical Greek civilization endured, Homer was the most famous and most widely read author. This was especially so for the *Iliad*, the text most frequently found copied on Egyptian papyri (Oliva, p. 61-2).

That is a heavy dose. What, then, are the implications?

First, by acquiring a “practicable writing system” so late in their cultural development, thus relying for such an extended time on an oral tradition, the Greeks must have maintained far longer than others *bicameral* perception. This maintenance of bicameral perception enabled them to retain the activity of right-brain, god-induced “hallucinations,” that is, verbiage and direction from a “divine” source received through auditory channels. Thus, the half-real/half-mythic epic poetry, passed down through the centuries, embodied a *coherent whole system*, a total world view unlike any we can imagine growing up in hyper-rational culture with an atrophied right hemisphere.

Second, the introduction of a writing system must have been used first to transliterate the epic poetry of “the national past.” This was done through the eighth century by piecing together various fragments and offshoots until it took the monumental form of the Homeric “books.” This changed in a profound manner the way the half-real/half-mythic material was received – no longer improvised for an hour or so by singing bards but rather recited in an increasingly set form. As literacy and access to printed copies of the Homeric books expanded, the manner for receiving the material changed even more dramatically: from auditory group reception to visual private reception. This, of course, was the distinct transition from an oral literary tradition to a written literary tradition.

In order to understand how profound this transition was, think for a moment about your ‘internal dialogue’ – you know, that little voice inside your head that’s always placing you in projected situations and planning your performance, or recalling conversations from the past and recanting your part in them so as to discriminate and isolate your unique identity or purpose from the others. This is active self-consciousness – what Jaynes called “the unified mind-space with its analog ‘I’” (p. 271). “In [self-] consciousness, we are always seeing our vicarial selves as the main figures in the story of our lives” (ibid, p. 63). Jaynes refers to this aspect of consciousness as “narratization:”

New situations are selectively perceived as part of this ongoing story, perceptions that do not fit into it being unnoticed or at least unremembered. More important, situations are chosen which are congruent to this ongoing story, until the picture I have of myself in my life story determines how I am to act and choose in novel situations as they arise (ibid, p. 64).

Here, then, self-conscious narratization based on a consistent image of an ongoing life-story has replaced god-received voices in determining action in novel situations. Of course, Achilles did not have that capacity. From where then does this internal narratization arise? Well, to be concise, it comes from the written literary tradition!

Observe now as you are reading this paragraph. If you are like me, your eyes are scanning the words, very systematically moving in a linear fashion from left to right, perceiving recognizable patterns in the words so that you don't need to look closely at each individual letter – but that's not all: as you are reading there is an accompanying voice, a *narratizing* voice. When the reading is finished, the voice doesn't go away – it continues on in internal dialogue! The dialogue could be reflection on the material recently covered, or more likely than not could begin to entertain any of a number of previous ongoing dialogues or problems. This is the entrance of 'mind,' where mere self-consciousness expands to the point of having a history with an analog 'I,' a separate 'self' that is present and doing the acting throughout. Can you imagine that people living in an oral literary tradition do not have this narratizing voice, this internal dialogue that results in 'mind?' I would surmise that these people would be much more present in the 'now.'

Now imagine the Greeks emerging from their so-called Dark Age, where for three centuries they had been developing a sense of individualized identity, at community scale, by creating unique, self-determining *poleis* – yet still retaining whole-brain *bicameral perception*. That means that, at the personal scale, they did not yet possess a unique sense of 'self' because they did not yet have 'mind' as we know it. The consequence must have been individualized *community* identity without a separate sense of individualized *self* identity.¹⁷ How very different they must have felt as they began to re-connect with the Orient, with literate civilizations that had more of a *national* identity. The act of adopting a coherent writing system – Phoenician script in this case – provided the Greeks with a whole new way of perceiving the world. As literacy spread, so did the number of individual persons walking around with internal narratization. The initial emergence of a feel for psychologizing self-consciousness that appeared in the written Homeric legends, then, gradually gave way to full blown individualized self-hood –

¹⁷ Of course, all pre-literate tribal societies identify more with the collective than with the individual. In the case of the Greeks, however, they were maintaining – even highlighting – this collective community identity in a *post*-civilization phase; and that is highly unique.

corresponding with “the discovery of the mind.” What an amazing discovery that must have been, especially when considering that the Greeks went so long without it. It must have been fresh, novel, a method for articulating and giving voice to what up till then had been vaguely sensed impressions of a feeling-nature – a *whole brain* feeling-nature: and that’s what set the Greeks apart.

In a chapter entitled “Rise of Individual in Early Greek Lyric,” Snell does a good job of capturing the exciting newness of this period by highlighting “the emergence of the poets as individuals” (p. 44). By examining the literature of such poets as Archilochus, Sappho, Anacreon, Pindar, and Solon, he is able to capture effectively the first stirrings of recognition of a distinct sense of a dialoguing internal ‘self’ – with all the demands and consequences that go with it.

For example, a poem by Sappho, the teacher of a girls’ school on the island of Lesbos, revolves around this touching sentiment: “The fairest thing is one I love” (p. 47). “For Sappho, impassioned and sick at heart, this reality is simple and natural, a sensation of having approached to the very roots of her being: she is favoured with a glimpse into the uncharted territory of the *soul*” (p. 54, emphasis in original) “We find similar expressions in other archaic writings, but Sappho was the first to put it into words” (p. 48). Of Archilochus he explains a similar finding, “[he] shows all the symptoms of an uninhibited individualism...evidently concerned to grasp a piece of genuine reality: to find Being instead of Appearance” (p. 50). And in the interpretation of a poem by Anacreon, “Appearance or Semblance is to be unmasked, and the true mind of the boon companion must be revealed, for men wish to meet over their cups in a harmony of souls” (p. 68).¹⁸ Snell introduces the vital word “soul” because he is interpreting that the poets were attempting to give voice to an aspect of themselves that they were sensing for the very first time, an aspect felt far deeper than anything to which they had been accustomed, an aspect beyond Appearance down to the very ground of Being.¹⁹

“In the expression of their private sentiments and demands the early lyrists try to reproduce those moments in which the individual is all of a sudden snatched out of the broad stream of life, when he senses that he is cut off from the ever-green tree of universal growth. Such are the moments which furnish man with his first glimpse of the soul. This new *personal soul* is not yet by any means the foundation for all feelings and emotions; it is merely the source of the reactions which set in when the feelings are

¹⁸ Notice here in the interpretation the author’s perhaps subconscious association between “mind” and “soul.”

¹⁹ “In the religious sphere, too, those of the same disposition find their common meeting-ground. Within the sects of the Pythagoreans and the Orphics which became powerful during this same period men cling to a new hope and a new faith, based on common experience. The very fact that these sects concern themselves with the soul of man is symptomatic; their conception of the soul was a product of the new age” (Snell, p. 69). “We have shown that Homer was not yet capable of understanding the soul as basically opposed to the body” (ibid). This demonstrates well how much progress was made in the period immediately following the transcription of the legends.

blocked” (ibid, p. 65, emphasis added). Yet it was this initial sensing followed by *conception* of the personal soul – somehow connected with mind – that was the big breakthrough, for the personal soul meant autonomy, and autonomy leads to freedom:

To begin with, then, we have arrived at a rather general truth: primitive man feels that he is bound to the gods; he has not yet roused himself to an awareness of his own freedom. The Greeks were the first to break through this barrier, and thus founded our western civilization (Snell, p. 31-2).

And it *had* to be the Greeks to make this civilization-founding breakthrough, for their unique cultural development had been moving, as if teleologically, towards a deep encounter with ‘mind.’ Let’s close this chapter, then, by summarizing the important findings, thus answering the question posed as chapter title: “Why Did “The Discovery of the Mind” Occur in Athens?”

- The sophisticated Minoan civilization was the substrate for Aegean civilization at large; thus Classical Athens was a direct descendant.
- Matriarchal Minoan civilization was subdued by the invading patriarchal warrior caste Greeks, giving rise to Mycenaean culture.
- The Mycenaean period was mythologized as the golden ‘Heroic Age,’ when the warrior caste Greeks continued their martial ways operating from the civilized centers the Minoans had founded.
- Mycenaean culture came to utter ruin, presumably because the Greeks could not stop fighting; they ended up decimating each other.
- A three-hundred year period of gestation followed: We may imagine that out of necessity the individualized patriarchal overlay came to terms with the collectivized matriarchal foundation, producing a unique cultural syncretism.
- A prime feature of this syncretism was the organization of settlements into *poleis* – *individualized communities*.
- Throughout the period of gestation, traveling bards sang half-real/half-mythic tales of the lost golden age, thus creating a sense of noetic cultural unity in the absence of political unity.
- Most significantly, then, throughout this period the Greeks retained bicameral perception. This meant, among other things, that they continued to possess active right brains capable of hearing god-induced voices.
- As their extended period of isolated gestation came to a close, the Greeks were introduced to a practicable writing system from the Near East. This profoundly revolutionized their worldview.

- The writing system enabled the unifying legends of the Golden Age to be written down and distributed as books. As literacy spread, so did the activation of narratizing internal dialogue.
- With narratizing internal dialogue, the Greeks could begin to sense the initial stirrings of ‘mind.’ This introduction of an “analog ‘I’ operating within a unified mind space” must have been all the more life-changing for them since it came so late in their general cultural development.
- The poets in particular gave often impassioned voice to this new discovery of mind. By writing down what they were experiencing internally, they were in effect articulating and recording for the first time the sense impressions of the feeling nature of bicameral perception – and this surely set the Greeks apart.
- As the poets plumbed further the depths of their feelings, they eventually came to the conception of a personal soul, the ground of Being. This personal soul was the ultimate basis for all self-directed activity. By identifying with the personal soul, an individual could transcend previous limitations and strive for direct understanding of the mysteries of the cosmos.

As we learned, the collective Homer was busy during the eighth century transcribing all the legends, introducing a psychology of self-consciousness into them. The lyric poets were active in the seventh and sixth centuries giving voice to the newly discovered sense of mind.²⁰ The tragedians appeared toward the end of the sixth century, already experimenting with deep psychological analysis.²¹ The fifth century was the golden age of Athens – the age of Pericles and the Parthenon, democracy and law. At the very dawn of the fourth century, Socrates drank the hemlock and shortly afterward Plato founded the Academy thus laying the foundation of a Western philosophy that would remain relevant for the next 2400 years, until our present day.

It was all so rapid, so concentrated, so total: Within a short few hundred years the Greeks went from merely discovering literacy to founding Western civilization. From the larger perspective of planetary evolution, we could say that the Greeks had a mission to fulfill: in the language we’ve been using (though they surely wouldn’t have thought of it this way), they recognized that they had a need to balance their active mythologizing right-brain orientation, so they concentrated earnestly on developing the newly discovered left-brain rational thought, and this was the basis of their legacy to the world.

²⁰ “The fact that lyric poetry flourished in the seventh and sixth centuries BC is a striking reflection of the profound changes Greek society was undergoing at that time” (Oliva, p. 171).

²¹ “In the hands of the tragedians, the conflicts and sufferings that had been straightforwardly and unreflectively portrayed in Homer and Hesiod were now subjected to the psychological and existential probing of a later, more critical temperament. What had been long-accepted absolutes were now searched, questioned, suffered through with a new consciousness of the human predicament” (Tarnas, p. 18).

What Was the Noetic Context for the Appearance of the Academy?

With the discovery of the mind, the Greeks were ready to explore the contours of rational thought. They were able to do this more effectively and thoroughly than anyone before or perhaps since, with such a pronounced quality of zeal, for the simple reason that their culture for so long had emphasized right-brain influenced, mythologizing bicameral perception. With the sudden introduction of an alphabetic practicable writing system, where thought is exercised linearly in a rigidly systematic scanning of discrete quanta of information, the very neuronal structure of the Greek brain began to undergo transformation. Here's how Tarnas introduces this emergence of rational thought:

With its Olympian order, the mythic world of Homer and Sophocles possessed a complex intelligibility, but this persistent desire for system and clarity in the Greek vision, as well as the growing humanism visible in the tragedies, was beginning to take new forms. The great shift had already commenced in the early sixth century B.C. in the large and prosperous Ionian city of Miletus, situated in the eastern part of the Greek world on the coast of Asia Minor. Here Thales and his successors Anaximander and Anaximenes, endowed with both leisure and curiosity, initiated an approach to understanding the world that was radically novel and extraordinarily consequential. Perhaps they were impelled by their Ionian location, where they were confronted with neighboring civilizations that possessed mythologies differing both from each other and from the Greek. Perhaps, too, they were influenced by the social organization of the Greek polis, which was governed by impersonal, uniform laws rather than the arbitrary acts of a despot. Yet whatever their immediate inspiration, these prototypical scientists made the remarkable assumption that *an underlying rational unity and order existed within the flux and variety of the world*, and established for themselves the task of discovering a simple fundamental principle, or *arche*, that both governed nature and composed its basic substance. In so doing, they began to complement their traditional mythological understanding with more impersonal and conceptual explanations based on their observations of natural phenomena (p. 19, emphasis added).

This was a marvelous stage in the development of the Western mind, a stage Tarnas terms as “pivotal,” where “there was a distinct overlap of the mythic and scientific modes” (ibid). “Side by side with a rationalist approach to the question of the origin and development of the world, teachings of a mystical nature were widespread” (Oliva, p. 180). I find it unboundedly significant that at this stage these two modes were

“complementary.” Neurologically, we could say that an increasingly active and exercised left brain was co-mingling with the established relational imagery of the still predominant, though by now recessing, right brain; thus Thales could state in all earnestness: “All is water, and the world is full of gods.” (ibid).

Snell, as a philologist, offers a fascinating analysis of the details of language that were in transition during this pivotal stage, when there was a recognizable parity in left and right brain functioning. To sum up the essential scheme: “Rational thought embarks upon the delineation of a character by partitioning it into various properties and forces” (p. 203), such that the very substance of scientific analysis becomes the subdividing of wholes into their constituent parts so that these parts may be examined and described in isolation. These descriptions invariably take the form of making categorical *distinctions* among and between the various subjects of study.²² “But what we find in myth, in poetry, and in history, namely the establishing of precedents for human actions and fortunes, to give them a broader and more universal significance, is rooted in a totally different category of speech” (ibid, p. 208). “Mythical thought is closely related to the thinking in images and similes” (ibid, p. 224). “The earlier [mythologizing] mentality...unaware of...distinctions, is fully absorbed by the totality of the image, and is thus forced to describe peculiarities by means of comparison” (ibid, p. 203). Thus left-brain rationalizing is centrifugal; right-brain mythologizing is centripetal. The left brain focuses on *quantity* while the right brain is more interested in *quality*. The left brain wants to ask “how?” whereas the right brain wants to know “why?” “Mythical thought requires receptivity; logic cannot exist without activity” (ibid, p. 224).

“[T]he truth of logical thought is something that requires to be sought, to be investigated, pondered; it is the unknown element in a problem which must be solved with due methodical consideration of the law of contradiction; the result must be accepted by all. The mythical images on the other hand, reveal to us of themselves their full content and significance, and likewise the figures of the similes speak with a living tongue which needs no interpretation; the listener’s understanding is no less direct than the author’s acceptance of the gift of the Muse, or his intuition, or whatever expression we might prefer...Logic does not materialize until man has become cognizant of the energy within him, and the individuality of his mind. Logical thought is unimpaired wakefulness; mythical thinking borders upon the dream, in which images and ideas float by without being controlled by the will” (ibid).

²² “[I]n the *Sophist*, [Plato] takes the principle of definition and of logical subdivision, so easily carried out in such a field as zoology, and tries to apply it to other areas of thought, and to make it into a universal law. The result was that in the sciences the art of comparing and distinguishing, of combining and separating, came to be reduced to the scheme of *diaeresis*” (Snell, p. 223). We shall see later that this also was the technique of ‘*dialectic*,’ the principal pedagogy of the Academy.

Snell then arrives at a brilliant conclusion, a real lesson for the lopsided rational emphasis of our day:

The cleavage between mythical and logical thought is especially striking in the explanation of natural causes, and it is here also that we can trace the historical change from mythical to logical thought at its clearest. What had first been regarded as the deed of a god, or a demon, or a hero, reason presently referred to its sufficient cause. But aetiological myth is not restricted to the explanation of natural processes; beside the phenomena which conform with the causal scheme of natural science, it is especially interested in origins and in life, i.e. matters whose causes are not precisely determined. More than that, myth reaches beyond the confines of the natural world, seeing that the genesis of concepts, feelings, desires, decisions and so forth is also associated with the intervention of the gods. In this respect, therefore, mythical causality controlled a territory which was later, after the discovery of the soul, surrendered to psychological motivation. Furthermore, mythical thought does not limit its activities to the explication of causes; it also serves to make human nature better understood. Thus it is evident that mythical and logical thought are not co-extensive; many aspects of myth remain inaccessible to logic, and many truths discovered by logic were without precedent in myth. Outside of the causal explanation of nature, to speak of a polarity of myth and logic is not quite correct, for the additional reason that myth refers to the content of thought, logic to its form. Nevertheless it is better to retain the two terms, because they effectively describe two stages of human thought. They do not exclude each other completely" (ibid, pp. 223-4).

According to the purposes of this essay, the most important phrase in this explanatory paragraph is: "to speak of a polarity of myth and logic is not quite correct." At the stage of the evolution of consciousness during which the Ionian proto-scientists were busily searching for the elusive *arche*, myth and logic were acting *complementarily* – not in polarity – and this is the real lesson for our day; for it didn't take long for rational logic to over-stride and begin diminishing, discounting, and finally excluding myth. At the very inception of natural philosophy, however, there was energetic parity; logic *and* myth both were influential; the left brain and the right brain were mutually interacting. The concept of 'complementarity' then is an important criteria for designing the new Academy; for the age of sustainable village culture surely will rely on the dynamic, if at times magical, interaction of logic *and* myth.

Now back to the Milesians, as they are called: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, the proto-scientists from Miletus: "These three produced the systems of ideas about the nature of the universe which, at least since Aristotle, have been recognized as a new beginning. Anaximander and Anaximenes set out their systems in writing – two of the earliest Greek prose treatises" (Hussey, 1972, p. 15). "The problems

that most concerned the Milesians can be reduced to the question: what are the relations between the supreme power in the universe, 'the Divine,' and the observable world-order? The Milesians aimed to find an answer which would square both with the observed facts and with what they held to be necessarily true about the supreme god" (ibid, p. 17).

Two important notes should be made here: First, the intellectual problems that the Milesians posed for themselves would be pursued through the mindful act of *reasoning*. "This way of thinking, it must be repeated, was something quite new. For the first time, a conscious and deliberate attempt had been made to set up a standard of what was and was not 'reasonable' or 'fitting' in theology. Everything was to be judged in terms of this standard alone, and the authority of tradition, or of a general consensus, or of a great teacher, was to count for nothing. By the application of this method, a doctrine of great generality and coherence was produced" (ibid, p. 14). "The Greek mind now strove to discover a natural explanation for the cosmos by means of observation and reasoning, and these explanations soon began to shed their residual mythological components. Ultimate, universal questions were being asked, and answers were being sought from a new quarter – the human mind's critical analysis of material phenomena" (Tarnas, p. 19-20).

Second, the Milesians, being Ionians, were significantly influenced by the Near East – and Hussey is quite explicit about this: "At some time in the first half of the sixth century, in the Greek city of Miletus in Asia Minor, there were men who began to reason about the universe in a way which was hitherto unknown in Greece, and in all probability was influenced by ideas derived from the older civilizations of the Near East" (p. 1). Referencing Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he reports: "Thales was the 'pioneer' of natural philosophy...he was said to have held that water was the origin of all things, and that the earth was supported by water. The emergence of the whole universe from an original mass of water, and a cosmic scheme in which there are waters both below the earth and above the firmament, are ideas which appear throughout the ancient Near East, and no doubt Thales drew from that source" (ibid, p. 19). Of particularly pronounced influence was the thinking coming from Persia, who "by 540...were masters of the whole of Asia Minor, including the Greek cities of the coast" (ibid, p. 6). "Zoroaster, who seems to have lived around 600, reinterpreted the traditional Iranian religion in the light of his personal revelation to found a simple and sober monotheism. His teachings spread through the growing Persian empire...There is every likelihood therefore that Iranian religion was both familiar and appealing to many Ionians of the later sixth century. Iranian influence may well have been more decisive and important for Ionian thought than Babylonian or any other" (ibid).

Was the acceptance of monotheism a trend concomitant with the emergence of individualized self-hood? Whatever the source, conceiving of 'divinity' in terms of 'unity' is further evidence of the revolution in thought that occurred during this period.

Xenophanes of Colophon, “an Ionian born about the mid-sixth century,” had this to say (in written fragments that have been discovered): “One god there is, greatest among gods and men, in no way like mortal creatures either in bodily form or in the thought of his mind. The whole of him sees, the whole of him thinks, the whole of him hears. He stays always motionless in the same place; it is not fitting that he should move about now this way, now that. But, effortlessly, *he wields all things by the thought of his mind*” (quoted in Hussey, p. 13, emphasis added). I wanted to emphasize this last phrase because I think it demonstrates well the confidence these prototypical thinkers had maneuvering in their newly discovered mind-space, believing here that it is possible to actually influence events by mere thought. In another fragment, Xenophanes shows the first signs of challenging the established order: “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything which brings shame and reproach among men: theft, adultery and fraud” (ibid). We’ll find this same reproof later with Plato, who completely excluded the writings of the poets from the Academy.

The combined total of these emerging proto-scientific-philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. – before the appearance of the powerful triad Socrates/Plato/Aristotle – are known as the ‘Presocratics.’ Sinclair (2008, p. 27) provides a list of their impressive achievements:

- Thales – the first scientific hypothesis concerning the material basis of reality
- Anaximander – the first evolutionary hypothesis concerning human origins
- Anaximenes – the first systematic theory concerning the formation of matter
- Pythagoras – the first systematic study of mathematics
- Heraclitus – the first to give an objective scientific account of everything
- Parmenides – the first theory of valid logical deduction
- Zeno – the first logical paradoxes
- Empedocles – the first complete conservation theory of matter
- Democritus – the first atomic theory of matter

It’s hard to imagine the world we live in today, the unreservedly *Western* world we inherited from Greek roots, without the lines of thinking these men initiated; for in a sense, their hypothesizing and theorizing is still going on! While “[t]hese two advancing trends of naturalism and rationalism impelled the development of a series of increasingly sophisticated theories to explain the natural world” (Tarnas, p. 21), we also can say that some of the very same basic questions are still being explored. These thinkers, in effect, set the agenda for the next 2500 years! I still want to highlight the importance of what I believe must have been relative hemispheric parity in the brains of these thinkers at this vital stage of nascence. Could this not account for the timeless nature of their inquiry?

The Greeks assimilated not only knowledge of the nature of the physical world and its laws, but also various mythical and religious ideas from their eastern neighbors. Orphism was particularly popular in archaic Greece...One of the most marked features of Orphism was the belief that the human soul is part of the divine and therefore immortal...There are Orphic elements in the thought of some of the idealistic philosophers, particularly the followers of Pythagoras (Oliva, p. 180).

With that introduction by our favorite archaic Greek historian, we should know that the Presocratic with the most profound formative influence on Plato and the Academy was undoubtedly Pythagoras: "Plato and his school owed much to the Pythagoreans, and Socrates had among his associates men who were somehow affiliated with them" (Guthrie, 1962, p. 161):

There was one major exception to this intellectual progress among the Greeks away from the mythic and toward the naturalistic, and this was Pythagoras. The dichotomy of religion and reason seems to have not so much pressed Pythagoras antithetically away from one in favor of the other, but rather provided for him an impetus toward synthesis. Indeed, his reputation among the ancients was that of a man whose genius was as much religious as scientific. (Tarnas, p. 22).

"With Pythagoras the motive for philosophy ceases to be primarily what it had been for the Ionians, namely curiosity or technical improvement, and becomes the search for a way of life whereby a right relationship might be established between the philosopher and the universe" (Guthrie, p. 148). "Where the Ionian physicists were interested in the material substance of phenomena, the Pythagoreans focused on the forms, particularly mathematical, that governed and ordered those phenomena. And while the main current of Greek thought was breaking away from the mythological and religious ground of archaic Greek culture, Pythagoras and his followers conducted philosophy and science in a framework permeated by the beliefs of the mystery religions, especially Orphism" (Tarnas, p. 23). This was "the religious view of truth which the Pythagoreans shared with the adherents of the mystery-religions. They were indeed philosophers and made scientific discoveries, but these were regarded in much the same light as the revelations which were an essential part of initiation into the mysteries. Many of the most important discoveries were mathematical, and there was always in the Greek mind a close connexion between mathematical, astronomical and religious speculation" (Guthrie, p. 149).²³

²³ "As to the more scientific side of their teaching, we have learned from Plato that they were the acknowledged experts in astronomy, harmonics and the science of number. They regarded all these studies as closely allied,

When I first read this stuff I was indeed surprised, for my only reference to Pythagoras previously would have been his theorem of the right triangle. And when I say “surprised,” it was pleasantly so; for the approach of Pythagoras – “an impetus toward synthesis...of religion and reason” – seems to me to be the ideal, an application of what Snell meant above when he said “myth refers to the content of thought, logic to its form.” There was, then, no polarizing but an inherent *wholeness* to the approach of the Pythagoreans: “it was characteristic of [them] to combine progressive thought with an immense respect for tradition” (Guthrie, p. 147). And when we learn that “the Pythagoreans focused on the forms, particularly mathematical, that governed and ordered...phenomena,” we may easily recognize this as a direct lead to Plato, the foundation of whose philosophy rested on the hypothesis of the Ideal Forms, the perfect unadulterated reality that lies behind and above the phenomenal world. And finally, knowing that the Pythagoreans emphasized philosophy not so much as a “curiosity or technical improvement” but rather as “the search for a way of life whereby a right relationship might be established between the philosopher and the universe,” we are at once introduced to Socrates, who devoted (and sacrificed) his life to uncovering unshakeable truth that could be the basis of this search. It would seem, therefore, that the influence of Pythagoras cannot be overestimated.²⁴

In that light, consider this passage from Guthrie, the scholar from Cambridge, describing the purpose of *philosophia*²⁵ for the Pythagoreans:

It gave them an aim in life, namely to cultivate the soul, shake off the taint of the body, and rejoin the universal soul of which their individual souls were in essence parts. So long as the soul was condemned to remain in the wheel of transmigration – so long, that is to say, as it had to enter a new body... - so long was it still impure. By living the best and highest type of human life it might ultimately shake off the body altogether, escape from the wheel of rebirth, and attain the final bliss of losing itself in the universal, eternal and divine soul to which by its own nature it belonged (p. 202).

“Philosophy in this sense is the subject-matter of Plato’s *Phaedo*, where Pythagorean influence is obviously strong...‘I want to give you my reasons,’ says Socrates (63E), ‘for

because in their view the key to understanding both of the movements of the stars and of the notes in the musical scale lay in the establishment of a numerical relation” (Guthrie, p. 167)

²⁴ “Plato’s innate mysticism and his immersion in Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine made him feel that philosophy was at the same time a holy thing and an instrument of spiritual redemption...The philosopher, then, was vouchsafed more than practical wisdom and more than insight into the true nature of the universe. He was also a religious initiate who had received a kind of grace. In the world but not of it, he was following the path of mystic conversion and salvation, at the same time that he tried surely and firmly the ways of the earth” (Fuller, 1931, pp. 165-66).

²⁵ “[P]hilosophia...meant using the powers of reason and observation in order to gain understanding” (Guthrie, p. 205).

thinking that the man who has truly devoted his life to *philosophia* is of good courage when death approaches, and strong in hope that the greatest of good things will fall to his lot on the other side when he dies” (ibid, p. 204). This is, of course, part of the same discussion that was referenced in the opening quote of this essay, namely that “if the soul is immortal, we need to care for it, not only for the sake of this period to which belongs what we call life, but also for the sake of all time,” after which it closed with the admonishment toward “becoming as good and as wise as possible.” This all sounds to me more like the spiritual worldview of a Hindu yogi rather than the intellectual ‘philosophy’ of a, say, Bertrand Russell or even a Richard Rorty.

Let’s explore this extraordinary dimension of early Greek thought one more time for well-rounded cross-referencing, this time by a scholar from the Oxford persuasion:

The best attested part of Pythagoras’ teaching is that which concerned the souls of men and their destiny. The soul is a unity which is immortal; it is rational and responsible for its actions. Its fate is determined by those actions, as it lives through successive incarnations in human bodies or those of other animals or plants. By keeping itself pure, that is, free from the pollution of the bodily passions which beset it in these incarnations, it can eventually rise to its true or proper god-like state. But if it sins, it is punished and purified by prolonged suffering in more miserable incarnations. In other words, the soul is not at home in the body and must be kept apart from it as far as possible (Hussey, p. 64).

This sounds not only like pre-Platonic but also pre-*Christian* teachings; and in the interest of objective fairness, one has to wonder where the Oxford scholar came to such definite conclusions when Pythagoras never wrote anything down and his sect was sworn to vows of secrecy. Nevertheless, this much is certain: “These ideas are quite foreign to Greek tradition” (ibid). The question then arises. “From whence did they come?”

“[A] good case had been made out for deriving [beliefs in the immortality and transmigration of the soul] from the shamanism of tribes inhabiting the steppes of Asia. There are clear traces of shamanistic practices among the Thracians and Scythians, from whom they would easily be transmitted to Greece” (ibid). Professor E.R. Dodd, also from Oxford, said it earlier: “Now in Scythia, and probably also in Thrace, the Greeks had come into contact with peoples who...were influenced by this shamanistic culture (1951, p. 140).

From all this it seems reasonable to conclude that the opening of the Black Sea to Greek trade and colonization in the seventh century, which introduced the Greeks for the first time to a culture based on shamanism, at any rate enriched with some remarkable new traits the traditional Greek picture of the Man of God...These new elements were, I think, acceptable to the Greek mind because they answered to the needs of the time, as Dionysiac religion had done earlier. Religious experience of

the shamanistic type is individual, not collective; but it appealed to the growing individualism of an age for which the collective ecstasies of Dionysus were no longer wholly sufficient. And it is a reasonable further guess that these new traits had some influence on the new and revolutionary conception of the relation between body and soul which appears at the end of the archaic age” (ibid, p. 142).

And while Dodd goes so far as to call Pythagoras “a greater shaman” (p. 143), and while Guthrie claims “Pythagoreanism contains a strong element of the magical” (p. 182), I’m not wholly convinced that an inherited or discovered shamanism was the source of the doctrine of the immortality and transmigration of the soul – for the simple reason that some form of shamanism must have been already practiced by the indigenous – that is, pre-Greek and pre-Minoan – tribal peoples of the Greek mainland, as well as in Italy where Pythagoras set up his school. No, I would look further east:

Guthrie reports of Pythagoras: “We read of travels in Egypt and Babylonia, the former first mentioned by Isocrates in his *Busiris*” (p. 173)...and further “the legend that Pythagoras owed all his wisdom to Egypt” (ibid, p. 163). We’ve already acknowledged “the general Greek respect for Egyptian wisdom, especially religious wisdom” (ibid). Tarnas affirms, “Pythagoras probably traveled and studied in Egypt and Mesopotamia before migrating westward to the Greek colony of Croton in southern Italy (p. 23). Sinclair adds, “his interest in mathematics may have been stimulated by early visits to Babylonia and Egypt” (p. 22). Guthrie also cites some evidence that “[t]here was then a strong tradition, in origin going back almost certainly to Aristotle, that Pythagoras was directly instructed in religion by Zoroaster or some of the Persian magi” (p. 253). Of course there’s no way of knowing for sure; yet considering his extensive travels and taking into account his penchant for synthesization, it’s probably more accurate to say that Pythagoras formulated his canon from a *diversity* of sources, and that this was the rich body of knowledge and contemporary worldly perspective that was tapped by Socrates and then Plato. I’m still wondering about the possibility of diffusion coming all the way from India. Later I would like to draw some parallels I noticed between writings of Plato and those of yogic teachers concerning the nature of the soul and the purpose of life.²⁶ Perhaps there was far more cultural diffusion in the archaic world than we have been generally led to believe?

Perhaps the following painting will help to reveal the source of the Pythagorean teachings? If not, it will surely help to implant an image of the reverence practiced by this religious (can we not say ‘spiritual?’) community:

²⁶ “Whether the parallels with Indian thought originate from a common Indo-European heritage is a question which, if it admits of any answer at all, lies far beyond the scope of this study...The case for Persian influence must be taken more seriously” (Guthrie, p. 252).



“Pythagoreans Celebrate the Sunrise” – Painting by Fyodor Bronnikov, 1869
(Source: Wikipedia: “pythagoreanism”)

Before moving on to the next section, I'd like to leave some further impression of the kind of life the Pythagoreans lived, because this lifestyle would greatly influence Plato and, subsequently, the organizational development of the Academy. To begin with, “Philosophy for Pythagoras and his followers had to be first and foremost the basis for a way of life: more than that, for a way of external salvation” (Guthrie, p. 182). “They formed a society of their own, practicing what was to their contemporaries a distinctive and extraordinary way of life” (ibid, p. 167). “[Pythagoras] established a philosophical school and religious brotherhood centered on the cult of Apollo and the Muses, and dedicated to the pursuit of moral purification, spiritual salvation, and the intellectual penetration of nature – all of which were understood as intimately interconnected...the Pythagorean school chartered its independent philosophical course according to a belief system that decisively maintained the ancient structures of myth and the mystery religions while advancing scientific discoveries of immense consequence for later Western thought” (Tarnas, p. 23). “It is not surprising that he and his school attracted two different types, on the one hand enthusiasts for the promotion of mathematical philosophy and on the other religious devotees whose ideal was the ‘Pythagorean way of life,’ the life of a religious sect strongly resembling that of the Orphics and justifying its practices by a similar system of mystical beliefs” (Guthrie, p. 192). We also read that, “Silence and

secrecy were prominent features of their behavior” (ibid, p. 167); “not everything was to be divulged to all men” (ibid, p. 150). “[T]he Pythagoreans were life-long vegetarians except for a ritual mouthful on occasions of sacrifice [the reason being the kinship with all life]” (ibid, p. 195). And finally, “[they] were known to practice certain superstitious taboos” (ibid, p. 167). “From these beliefs it follows that the proper rule of life is asceticism. The Pythagorean societies in Great Greece [*Magna Graecia*, the colonies of Italy and Sicily] were presumably communities who tried to follow this rule” (Hussey, p. 64).

This practice of asceticism, associated with Indian yogis – as well as the entire lifestyle described above – would certainly facilitate “the idea of assimilation to the divine as the legitimate and essential aim of human life...[To this] Pythagoras gave his allegiance, and he supported it with all the force of a political and mathematical, as well as religious, genius” (Guthrie, p. 199); for “[i]t involved an actual change in the philosopher’s own nature, for it is by this active contemplation (*theoria*) that the aim of assimilation to the divine...is attained” (ibid, p. 212). How can we possibly relate to the “ivory tower” philosopher of today’s university culture that “to Pythagoras the way of salvation lay through philosophy[?!]” (ibid). There was certainly something very fresh here at the seed moment.

I gave so much space to explicating the phenomenon of Pythagoras because his societies were, in essence, the prototype for Plato’s Academy. In that sense, contrary to general belief, Plato’s Academy was not first.²⁷ Unfortunately, or as may be expected, there was “aristocracy’s suspicion of the Pythagorean coterie...whose assumption of superiority and esoteric knowledge [was] at times...hard to bear” (ibid, p. 178). The Pythagoreans were eventually persecuted; many were killed but Pythagoras managed to flee. “It emerges from this history, first, that the Pythagorean School continued to exist through the classical period of Greek thought in the sixth to the fourth centuries BC, and secondly, that from the middle of the fifth century it existed in the form of separate scattered communities in various parts of the Greek world” (ibid, p. 180). Plato, traveling the Mediterranean after the death of his mentor Socrates in 399, apparently sought out Pythagoreans that might still be left in southern Italy. He found and communed with a fellow of high regard named Archytas. They must have had fruitful dialogue, for immediately upon his return from this trip, Plato founded his Academy in 387 B.C.

Thus we have reviewed answers to the question posed as title for this chapter: “What Was the Noetic Context for the Appearance of the Academy?” These answers may be summarized in the following passage from Hussey:

²⁷ Plato’s Academy was not even second! Isocrates founded his school of rhetoric in Athens a few years before Plato founded his school of philosophy, and they soon became, at times, antagonistic rivals.

Indeed, if any formula could ever sum up the intellectual development of a period of years, then the years from around 530 to around 450, in Greece, might be brought under the formula 'the detachment of the soul from the body.' At least it seems to be suggestive of interesting connections between many important developments of the time. It can be applied literally to the teachings of Pythagoras and of others, including those grouped under the vague heading of 'Orphics.' ... More widely, there is the emergence, both in Heraclitus and in the West, of a concept of 'reason' or 'reasoned argument' as the proper way to truth, with a corresponding depreciation or even denial of the evidence of the senses; here again, the reasoning part of man is in effect partly detached from the bodily sensations which surround it" (p. 76).

Surely this revolutionary new view or conception of 'human being in the world' could not have arisen without the "discovery of the mind" that was reviewed in the previous chapter.

I would like to close now with a more general summary, this one from our distinguished historian Pavel Oliva:

The archaic period thus saw the foundation laid for philosophy and many branches of science and humanities. Greek thinkers drew on the experience accumulated for many centuries by the scholars of Babylonia and Egypt before them, but they were not so much concerned with the practical application of the knowledge thus acquired as with its significance for the solution of general questions concerning the nature of the world. The great difference in their approach was due to the fact that the Greek philosophers, mathematicians and historians were citizens of a city-state (polis) and were able to develop their individual personalities without constraint; in their environment it was possible to pose questions freely which would overturn the traditionally held views of nature and human society. There were similar tendencies in poetry and art, as well as in the sciences" (p. 183).

To repeat: "The Greek polis which – according to Aristotle's definition – was 'a community of the free,' enabled its citizens to develop their talents freely" (ibid). What sort of educational culture would arise in a 'community of the free?' That question will be addressed in the next section, for it is the prelude to Plato's Academy.

What is 'Paideia'?

So far in this composition I have attempted to emphasize two main tracks of thought: 1) it was a unique set of historical conditions that led the people called 'Greeks' to the discovery of the Mind, and from there to the sensing of a personal Soul; and 2) the institution of the *polis* – a self-determining community of individuals – was uniquely fertile context for exploring the full expression of Mind and the full potential of Soul. Once again, among the hundreds of *poleis* that occupied the pan-Hellenic world, it was Athens that stood out and achieved heights of brilliance worthy of being identified as the “fountainhead” of Western civilization.

The historian Thucydides knew that all Greeks had, in former times, inhabited [quaint] little villages. The unification of several neighboring villages might provide the nucleus for a town. This is what happened in the open seaward plain contained by the mountains of Parnes, Pentelicus, and Hymettus, ultimately producing an urban agglomeration with the Acropolis as its centre. According to legend it was Theseus who united all the townships of Attica by the process known as *synoikismos*, so that their inhabitants became, without distinction, Athenian citizens. But the central agglomeration was itself made up of several villages – a fact that explains why its name always remained plural: *Athenai* literally means ‘the Athenses’ (Flaceliere, pp. 3-4).²⁸

This distinguishable fact of settlement patterning – the agglomeration of distinctly-felt *villages* into what became a sophisticated metropolitan whole – does much to support the assertion I made in the Introduction to this composition, namely that my vision as a ‘village designer’ for setting up an Academy is complementary to Plato’s purpose in setting up the first Academy.

“[T]he original *polis*, as Aristotle describes it, was based not on trade but on a self-sufficient and self-governing group of villages, in a narrow and closed region lying around an urban centre, bordered by mountains and sea and the territories of neighbouring *poleis*” (Hall, p. 35). “The *polis* was much more than a city; it embraced the surrounding agricultural land and it included access to the sea” (ibid, p. 36)²⁹ “[I]n Aristotle’s time

²⁸ “Sparta itself was not a walled city, persisting for long as a conglomeration of four village settlements” (Oliva, p. 83).

²⁹ This image is very similar to that portrayed by Alberto Magnaghi, of the “Territorialist School” at the University of Florence, in his 2005 work *The Urban Village: A Charter for Democracy and Local Self-Sustainable Development*. Both conceptions include a central urban area, segregated into human scale villages, *plus* the surrounding

there was probably no town in the Graeco-Roman world with more than about 150,000 people, and probably not more than half a dozen exceeding 40,000-50,000. The Athens of Pericles, with about 40,000 citizens and perhaps 275,000 people in all, was huge...So, if we ask a question that seems obvious to us – why did Athens not take over Greece and become capital of a unified state? – the reason was that Athenians, like other Greeks, preferred the *polis*: as Kitto put it, ‘if the Greek was not within a day’s walk of his political centre, then his life was something less than the life of a real man’ (ibid, pp. 35-6).

I find this extraordinary, not only that there was what must have been near unanimous preference for the face-to-face accountability – and *responsibility* – of what Sale (1980) calls “human scale” but also that subversive forces were not able to overturn this collective preference and seize power for themselves. Hall hits it squarely when he says, “Everyone has heard that the Greeks invented democracy. But their *demos* can never be separated from their *polis*, their unit of democracy. For the Greeks, *political* is what happened in the *polis*” (p. 35). What does this augur for a nation of 300 million people attempting to practice “democracy” primarily via mass media, with an average residential stay per person of, what is it, three years?

Flaceliere provides some intimation as to what true democracy looks like from the outside observer: “in the democratic, egalitarian Athens of the [fifth] century, private luxury was always regarded as scandalous” (p. 10)...“and it seems a plain inference that those who wanted to play an active part in the city’s political life avoided too ostentatious a display of luxury, such as might excite envious feelings among their fellows” (p. 11). This very same attitude of self-chosen parity is found universally in village culture, as I described in a recent chapter entitled “What is a Village?” (Mare, 2007). I think it is safe to conclude that people become accountable to one another when they must meet on a daily basis in direct conversation over matters of mutual importance. It must also be true that the brilliance that was Athens in the fifth century B.C. had something to do with socio-cultural dynamics at the human scale of the *polis*.³⁰

“The entire life of the *polis*, and the relation between the parts, were much easier to grasp, because of the small scale of things” (Kitto, quoted in Hall, p. 36) “But the *polis* was never simply an economic unit. It had a double nature; it was a territory but, much more significant, it was a group of citizens. As Thucydides put it: ‘it is the men that are the Polis’” (Hall, p. 36). Here’s another way of looking at it: “A city, in ancient Greece, can be identified with the men who occupy it rather than the territory over which it

agricultural land, as the necessary ‘unit’ of long-term sustainability. Magnaghi, having the rich tradition of Tuscany to draw from, defines the surrounding agricultural land as a “cultural landscape.”

³⁰ “Athens was a direct democracy, where every citizen could, by way of the assembly (*ecclesia*), have some share in the government of the State...Obviously such a form of government is only practicable in states of extremely limited size; the only place today where we can get some idea of what the *ecclesia* in [Athens] must have been like is the Local Assembly of a Swiss canton” (Flaceliere, p. 31).

extends...What determines the *polis* is its population. Official documents never refer to 'Athens,' but always to the 'Athenians,' or 'the people,' or 'the city of the Athenians.' The classical *polis* has been well defined as 'a community of citizens, wholly independent, with sovereign power over the individual citizens who compose it, bound by cults and regulated by laws' (Flaceliere, p. 29).³¹ Could all this be considered an 'anthropocentric' perspective? Or maybe it's more accurate to describe it as 'citizen-centric?' 'Community-centric?' Whatever the case, this is an excellent preface to the Greek concept of *paideia*, for *paideia* also is practiced and fulfilled at the scale of the *polis*.

In order to grasp fully this concept, we need to refer to the German scholar Werner Jaeger and his intensely instructive three volume series *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. In the opening page to Volume I, first released in 1933, Jaeger attempts an initial definition:

Paideia, the title of this work, is not merely a symbolic name, but the only exact designation of the actual historical subject presented in it. Indeed it is a difficult thing to define: like other broad comprehensive concepts (*philosophy*, for instance, or *culture*) it refuses to be confined within an abstract formula. Its full content and meaning become clear to us only when we read its history and follow its attempts to realize itself. By using a Greek word for a Greek thing, I intend to imply that it is seen with the eyes, not of modern men, but of the Greeks. It is impossible to avoid bringing in modern expressions like *civilization*, *culture*, *tradition*, *literature*, or *education*. But none of them really covers what the Greeks meant by *paideia*. Each of them is confined to one aspect of it: they cannot take in the same field as the Greek concept unless we employ them altogether.

In order to produce his series, Jaeger said he read all the extant Greek literature of the period (i.e. the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries B.C.) in the native tongue. Thus he must have seen the word *paideia* often. Instead of translating the word at various times into 'education' or 'culture,' as other scholars had, Jaeger made the use of this word the focused subject of his study. He believed that *paideia* embodied the very essence of the Greek project. Here's how he opens his Preface to Volume I:

I present to the public a work of historical research dealing with a subject hitherto unexplored. It treats *paideia*, the shaping of the Greek character, as a basis for a new study of Hellenism as a whole. Although many scholars have undertaken to describe the development of the state, the society, the literature, and religion, and the philosophy of the Greeks, no one seems to have attempted to explain *the interaction between the historical process by which their character was formed and*

³¹ "Cults" here is an anthropological term referring principally to the "mystery religions" introduced in the preceding chapter.

the intellectual process by which they constructed their ideal of human personality. I did not, however, take up this subject merely because I happened to observe that it had not yet been approached, but because I believed that a solution to this important historical and intellectual problem would bring a deeper understanding of the unique educational genius which is the secret of the undying influence of Greece on all subsequent ages (p. ix, emphasis added).

There is something vitally important in these words, I believe, not only for anyone wishing to set up an 'Academy' but for all academics at large; for by beginning to understand what the Greeks meant when they used the word *paideia* – in all its multidimensional complexity – we come that much closer to comprehending the essence of the Western tradition in all its psychological and spiritual profundity. If we really are at the closing of an Age, than we could say comprehensively and in all veracity that this has been the Age of Paideia – at least that was its impetus. The meaning or purpose of the Age, then, had something to do with the “educational genius” of the people who discovered the mind and the personal soul, thus setting the precedent and outlining the agenda for all subsequent generations.

In order to adequately grasp the meaning and influence of *paideia* on the Greek mind, Jaeger had to approach the interpretation of this Age-defining concept from numerous angles. Here's the beginning of his “Introduction: The Place of the Greeks in the History of Education:”

Education is the process by which a community preserves and transmits its physical and intellectual character. For the individual passes away, but the type remains...By deliberate training even the physical nature of the human race can alter, and can acquire a higher range of abilities. But the human mind has infinitely richer potentialities of development...From these facts certain general conclusions follow. To begin with, education is not a practice which concerns the individual alone: it is essentially a function of the community. The character of the community is expressed in the individuals who compose it (pp. xii-xiv).

How much more meaningful must have been the application of these ideas to the citizens of a *polis*, where ultra-strong community identity was forged through the daily practice of direct democracy, and through the enthusiastic pursuit of culture: art, architecture, poetry, letters, music, relationships, etc. at a *human scale* – at a *preferred human scale*. Jaeger goes so far as to say, “The Greek mind owes its superior strength to the fact that it was deeply rooted in the life of the community” (p. xxv). I think our current conception – indeed, the lived experience – of “community” in the post-modern West must pale by comparison. How many today would confirm that “education is...a function of the community?” Don't most people today get educated in the hopes of

securing a “good job” so they can receive a pay scale that will enable them to live *independently* of community? There was a very different context at the dawn of Western civilization:

The revolutionary, epoch-making position held by the Greeks in the history of education cannot be explained in a few sentences. The purpose of this [series] is to give an account of their culture, their *paideia*, and to describe its peculiar character and its historical development. It was not the sum of several abstract ideas; it was Greek history itself, in all its concrete reality. But the facts of Greek history would long ago have sunk into oblivion if the Greeks had not moulded them into a permanent form – the expression of their highest will, of their resistance to change and destiny. At the earliest stage of their development they had no clear conception of the nature of this act of will. But as they moved into ever clearer vision, along their historical path, the ever present aim of their life came to be more and more vividly defined. *It was the creation of a higher type of man.* They believed that education embodied the purpose of all human effort. It was, they held, the ultimate justification for the existence of both the individual and the community. At the summit of their development, that was how they interpreted their nature and their task...And it was ultimately in the form of *paideia*, ‘culture,’ that the Greeks bequeathed the whole achievement of the Hellenic mind to [future generations]” (ibid, pp. xvi-xvii, emphasis added).

Please allow me to repeat this emphasis in the more politically correct manner of the 21st century: “the ever present aim” of the life of the Classical Greeks *was the creation of a higher type of human being.* For them, then, education was the practice of or preparation for realizing, reifying *a consciously pursued ideal*; for, “the world that begins with the Greeks...[is a] world in which a cultural ideal was first established as a formative principle” (p. xviii). Jaeger goes on to explain how “culture” in our day has degraded in meaning – witness, for example, how adolescent idolatry can be framed as “pop-culture.” For the Greeks, however, when the spirit of discovery was still ardently alive, culture was the act of “creating the forms which eternalized its ardour and its genius” (ibid). *Paideia*, then, is both ‘culture’ *and* ‘education’ – or perhaps more correctly, the interface where these two ideals meet and feed into each other. It must be at this interface where the higher type of human being is created.

We’ve already reviewed how “the beginning of Greek history appears to be the beginning of a new conception of the value of the individual” (p. xix).³² Indeed, “at the

³² “And it is difficult to refrain from identifying that new conception with the belief – which Christianity did most to spread – that each soul is in itself an end of infinite value, and with the ideal proclaimed during and after the Renaissance, that every individual is a law to himself” (Jaeger, Volume I, p. xix). This is the very thread of *humanism*, a sub-theme to this essay, though deserving a separate treatment of its own someday in the justification for setting up an Academy in the 21st century.

summit of their philosophical development the Greeks formulated and tried to solve the problem of the individual's place in the community" (ibid); yet, once again, this was not an amorphous, sloganized "community" like in today's usage: this was the well-defined, easily identifiable, purposeful socio-political organization of the *polis*. Therefore, "the world-wide historical importance of the Greeks *as educators* [must be] derived from their new awareness of the position of the individual in the community" (ibid, pp. xviii – xix, emphasis added). And this is exactly what is missing in the purpose of academic education today; for whereas the Greeks approached education is an opportunity to mold an ideal form of human being to fulfill a role in the community – a recognizable, intimately-felt community of peers – the modern education is tilted more toward preparing people to become a "commodity" in an anonymous "marketplace." The Greeks recognized that the *polis* (from now on a synonym for 'community') is only as ideal as the idealization of the potential of the individuals who comprise it; modern society recognizes only the right of the individual to achieve maximum gain – often at the *expense* of the community. Something precious surely has been lost in the ensuing 2500 years, and this is a valuable lesson for would-be Academies of the 21st century. For that reason, "men who realize the deeper values of the human spirit must turn more and more to the original forms in which it was first embodied, at the dawn of historical memory and creative genius" (p. xviii).

Another angle that Jaeger pursued could be called the Greek apprehension of the "natural," in both the scientific and classical aspects. "The variety, spontaneity, versatility, and freedom of individual character, which seem to have been the necessary conditions that allowed the Greek people to develop so rapidly in so many different ways...were not deliberately cultivated subjective qualities in the modern sense. They were natural, inborn. And when the Greeks who possessed them consciously realized their own individuality, they did so indirectly – by discovering objective standards and laws which, as soon as recognized, gave them a new certainty of thought and action...They had an innate sense of the natural" (p. xx).

The concept of 'nature,' which [the Greeks] were the first to work out, was without doubt produced by their peculiar mentality. Long before they conceived it, they had looked at the world with the steady gaze that did not see any part of it as separate and cut off from the rest, but always as an element in a living whole, from which it derived its position and its meaning. We call this *the organic point of view*, because it sees individual things as elements in a living whole. This sense of the natural, mature, original, and organic structure of life is closely connected with the Greek instinct to discover and formulate the laws governing reality (ibid).

This innate capacity for perceiving phenomena in terms of “organic wholes” was, in my equation, the underlying essence of *paideia*, influencing “every sphere of Greek life, in their thought, their speech, their action, and all their art” (ibid) – and of course, their ideas about education. “The unique position of Hellenism in the history of education depends on the same peculiar characteristic, the supreme instinct to regard every part as subordinate and relative to an ideal whole” (ibid, p. xxii). These days, one has to enter a special program (like my Master’s degree program in Whole Systems Design) in order to integrate an “organic point of view” and de-program from the mechanistic, reductionistic thinking that pervades typical academics. The Academy I am envisioning for ‘village designers’ surely will experience an organic form of organizational development, therefore aligning with noble precepts of Greek *paideia*.

My purpose in introducing *paideia* at this time was to offer a glimpse of the educational culture into which Plato inserted his Academy. Perhaps we now have seen enough to forward an initial summary:

In approaching the problem of education, the Greeks relied wholly on [the] clear realization of the natural principles governing human life, and the immanent laws by which man exercises his physical and intellectual powers. To use that knowledge as a formative force in education, and by it to shape the living man as the potter moulds clay and the sculptor carves stone into preconceived form – that was a bold creative idea which could have been developed only by that nation of artists and philosophers. The greatest work of art they had to create was Man. They were the first to recognize that education means deliberately moulding human character in accordance with an ideal...Only this type of education deserves the name of culture” (ibid).

I read this not so much as an interesting historical interpretation of a long-lost culture but rather as a prescription for educational models of the future, beginning, of course, with the first Academy devoted to village design. I will very soon make this connection quite explicit. For now, let’s close with another priceless quote from the Introduction to Jaeger’s first Volume, an Introduction so rich with material that it was all I needed to provide substance to this section of the essay:

By discovering man, The Greeks did not discover the subjective self, but realized the universal laws of human nature. The intellectual principle of the Greeks is not individualism but ‘*humanism*’...It meant the process of educating man into his true form, the real and genuine human nature. That is the true Greek *paideia*...It starts from the ideal, not from the individual (pp. xxiii – xxiv, emphasis added).

What Was the Socratic Interpretation of Paideia?

Everyone knows that Plato was enamored to *philosophia*, in its pure original definition as “love of wisdom,” by the inimitable Socrates – whom Jaeger enthusiastically acclaims as “the central point in the making of the Greek soul” and the “greatest teacher in European history” (Volume II, p. 27)[!] Yet, in perfect Socratic irony, Socrates never asserted to be a ‘teacher’ at all – as did the ethically-suspect, roving Sophists of his time – but instead insistently proclaimed his own *ignorance* – and he meant it:

At an early date in the young philosopher’s life, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi had declared that no man was wiser than Socrates. Seeking, as he later put it with characteristic irony, to disprove the oracle, Socrates assiduously examined the beliefs and thinking of all who considered themselves wise – concluding that he was indeed wiser than all others, for he alone recognized his own ignorance. But while the Sophists had held genuine knowledge to be unattainable, Socrates held rather that genuine knowledge had not yet been achieved. His repeated demonstrations of human ignorance, both his own and that of others, were intended to elicit not intellectual despair but rather intellectual humility. The discovery of ignorance was for Socrates the beginning rather than the end of the philosophical task, for only through that discovery could one begin to overcome those received assumptions that obscured the true nature of what it was to be a human being (Tarnas, p. 33).

“It is an amazing paradox that this supremely great teacher avoided calling his own work paideia, although everyone regarded him as its most perfect embodiment” (Jaeger, *ibid*, p. 59). This is because Socrates, in eminent emulation of the times, held an *ideal* of human behavior, of human potential, to which one can only ever strive, never fully attain. Here’s an example of a stating of this ideal, and the ignorance which is its inherent counterpart, in an excerpt from the *Gorgias*, where Socrates has entered into dialogue with a prominent statesman named Callicles:

Any agreement of us both must in very fact bear the stamp of a final truth. And, Callicles, the investigation for which you rebuked me is the noblest of all possible inquiries: what a man’s character ought to be, what he should study and up to what point, whether he is old or young. As for me, be sure of this: if there is any error in my own way of life, it is not an intentional one, but comes solely from my ignorance. Please, therefore, do not stop the lessons you have begun to give me, but show me clearly what it is that I ought to pursue, and how I may come to

possess it; and if ever you catch me agreeing with you now on any subject, and later neglecting to act on it, then consider me a complete dunce and don't waste time teaching me any more lessons, for I won't be worth it (Hembold, p. 295).³³

This, then, is the essence of the Socratic paideia: "Socrates was not a 'teacher,' [in the typical sense,] but he was constantly 'in quest' of a true teacher without ever finding one" (Jaeger, *ibid*, p. 59). For this "representative man" (*ibid*, p. 13), *philosophia* was not a goal but a process, a way of *being* rather than a state of *becoming*, and the true philosopher was one who has set out earnestly on this 'quest.' "[P]hilosophy for Socrates was concerned less with knowing the right answers than with the strenuous attempt to discover those answers [and the core principles from which they are derived]. Philosophy was a process, a discipline, a lifelong quest. To practice philosophy in the Socratic manner was continually to subject one's thoughts to the criticism of reason in earnest dialogue with others" (Tarnas, p. 35).

"What [Socrates] did was to create a new attitude towards life, which formed the climax of a long and painful ascent towards human freedom, and which can never be transcended by any other. The gospel he preached was the self-mastery and self-sufficiency of the moral character" (Jaeger, p. 25) – where "the ideal of self-mastery claims that moral action originates in the soul of the individual" (*ibid*, p. 53). We've already seen how the sensing of a personal soul was an emergent phenomenon that was given emotional expression by the poets. Socrates went further by declaring that the basis of human conduct, how one lives one's life, ought to be in reference to this soul.

In Socrates' view, any attempt to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the innermost reality of a human being, his soul or psyche. Perhaps on the basis of his own highly developed sense of individual selfhood and self-control, Socrates brought to the Greek mind a new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual waking consciousness and of the moral and intellectual character. He affirmed the Delphic motto "Know Thyself," for he believed that it was only through self-knowledge, through an understanding of one's own psyche and its proper condition, that one could find genuine happiness. All human beings seek happiness by their very nature, and happiness, Socrates taught, is achieved through living the kind of life that best serves the nature of the soul. Happiness is the consequence not of physical or external circumstances, of wealth or power or reputation, but of living a life that is good for the soul (Tarnas, p. 33).

³³ "The idea most closely tied to the historical Socrates is the Socratic paradox that no one does wrong willingly: to act at all is to do what one thinks good, or thinks will have a better effect than any known alternative. If one nonetheless does ill, it must be through ignorance. It follows that 'wrongdoers' need only be taught their error, and that no one should be spared that teaching" (Kenney, 2001, p. 20).

When I first came across this kind of language, I thought, “how odd: this sounds more like ‘spirituality’ than ‘philosophy;’” for I have read similar sentiments in the writings of yogis from India, where care of and identification with the soul is of the utmost importance. “[T]he infinite value of the individual soul [also is] one of the pillars of the religion of Jesus. But before that it had been a pillar of Socrates’ ‘philosophy’ and Socrates’ educational thought. Socrates preaches and proselytizes. He comes to ‘save the soul’” (Jaeger, p. 41). Again says Jaeger, “from the very beginning, his interest was directed to problems of morality and religion” (p. 31). Yet it seems to me that ‘religion’ is not the best word to define the focus of Socrates’ attention, for his purpose was direct individual salvation “through tireless striving to perfect our own nature” (ibid, p. 13), not the establishment of a set of creeds for others to believe in nor a set of practices for them to follow. The difference, I think, becomes quite clear when we hear from Socrates’ own mouth the purpose of his activity, while defending himself at his trial:

I shall never give up philosophizing and urging you and making my point clear to everyone I meet, saying what I always say: “My good sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the city which is greatest and most noted for its wisdom and power; are you not then ashamed to be worrying about your money and how to increase it, and about your reputation, and about your honour, instead of worrying about the knowledge of good and truth and how to improve your soul?” And if anyone contradicts me and says that he does worry about his soul, I shall not let him off at once and go away, but question him and examine him and refute him; and, if I think that he does not possess virtue, but simply says he does, I shall reproach him for underestimating what is most valuable, and prizing what is unimportant. I shall do this to everyone I meet, young and old, stranger and citizen – but particularly to you citizens of Athens, because you are nearer me in blood. For this, you must realize, is God’s command to me; and I think that no greater good has ever happened to you than this my service to God. For all that I do is go round and persuade young and old among you not to give so much of your attention to your bodies and your money as to the perfection of your souls (from the *Apology*, quoted in Jaeger, p. 38).³⁴

³⁴ I continue to wonder why the translators from Greek choose to insert ‘God’ in place of whatever Greek word stood in the original, for I have not yet seen any evidence that there was a practicing monotheism – with Socrates or anyone else. Indeed, at his trial one of the charges was that he did not honor the official *gods* of the city, to which he replies: “Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! For I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist – this you do not lay to my charge, – but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes – the charge is that they are different gods” (Jowett, p. 12). Even Jaeger says, “Socrates is pious *and* brave, just *and* temperate, all in one person. He does not neglect his ritual duties to the gods: and that is why he can show the man who is pious in that external way alone that there is a higher kind of piety than his” (Volume II, p. 67). Perhaps the image of ‘God’ is Plato’s insertion, for later we hear him saying things like “the Good is Unity” (Sayre, 1983, p. 168). In a similar

Philosophy sure has changed over the millennia! Can you imagine an ivory tower intellectual at some modern university going out into the streets exhorting people to “perfect their souls?” Yet this is exactly what Socrates did, all day every day. Apparently he was not too physically attractive, sporting a rather large nose and a balding head with protruding eyebrows. He always walked around barefoot wearing the same tunic, fastened with pins, wrapped around his fit body.³⁵ And in this state he would meander in the agora or in the gymnasia looking for people to engage in dialogue. There usually would be a small crowd of ‘disciples’ following him, waiting to drink up a word of wisdom, and Plato as a young man was one of these. This does not sound to me like philosophy *or* religion; yet this is how philosophy – *philosophia* – began, as a genuine determined effort to find a deeper state of being, a firm grounding of truth upon which to base actions, judge character, and provide meaning to life. How are we to interpret all these subtle interconnections and their varying grades of emphasis, stretching as they do over time and language?

Here’s one explanation: “All the remarkable traits in Socrates’ teaching which seem to have the charm of Christian feeling are actually Hellenic in origin. They stem from Greek philosophy...The Greek spirit reached its highest religious development, not in the cults of the gods around which the history of Greek religion is usually written, *but chiefly in philosophy*, assisted by the Greek gift for constructing systematic theories of the universe. Philosophy is indeed a relatively late stage of consciousness, and it is preceded by the myth. But no one who has grasped the structural connexions of human thought can believe that Socrates was any exception to the law of organic development that governed the history of Greek philosophy” (Jaeger, pp. 42-43, emphasis added).³⁶

In discussing Socrates’ influence on later generations, Jaeger asserts: “Socrates was often compared to Christ” (ibid, p. 14). In that regard, “Socrates became the leader of all modern enlightenment and modern philosophy, the apostle of moral liberty, bound by no dogma, fettered by no tradition, standing free on his own feet, listening only to the inner voice of conscience – preaching the new religion of this world, and a heaven to be found

vein, Grant reveals that “[Socrates] claimed, on occasion, to be guided by a divine sign or voice (*daimonion*)” (1989, p. 48). Could this infer that Socrates possessed an active bicameral mind, and so heard the voice of ‘God?’

³⁵ “His discovery of the soul does not mean its separation from the body, as is so often mistakenly averred, but its domination over the body. However, one cannot take care of one’s soul properly unless one’s body itself is healthy...Socrates himself neither neglected his own body nor praised those who neglected theirs. He taught his friends to keep their bodies fit by hardening them, and held elaborate discussions with them about proper diet. He opposed overeating because it hindered the care of the soul. His own life was run on a regimen of Spartan simplicity” (Jaeger, p. 47).

³⁶ A remarkable conclusion can be reached by understanding these ‘connexions:’ “The wise man, in his independence of the external world, re-creates, on the spiritual plane, a quality of the mythic heroes of old” (Jaeger, Volume II,, p. 56). One purpose in this paper has been to insistently restore the ‘mythic’ as a natural functioning of the human psyche, rooted in nervous system anatomy.

in this life by our own spiritual strength, not through grace but through tireless striving to perfect our own nature” (ibid, p. 13). With that kind of *resume*, Socrates *could* be considered a predecessor to Christ.

This last point needs further amplification. In his last book of an illustrious scholarly career – *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* – Werner Jaeger makes explicit the Hellenic influence on budding Christianity. “[A]mong the factors that determined the final form of the Christian tradition Greek civilization exercised a profound influence on the Christian mind” (Jaeger, 1961, p. 4). The diffusion of Christianity beyond Palestine “was preceded by three centuries of world-wide expansion of Greek civilization during the Hellenistic period...[W]ithout this postclassical evolution of Greek culture the rise of a Christian world-religion would have been impossible. Of course, this process of the Christianization of the Greek-speaking world...was by no means one-sided, for at the same time it meant the Hellenization of the Christian religion” (ibid, p. 5).

While it may seem at first a digression, I find this continuum of what may fairly be called the evolution of Socratic philosophizing to be a fascinating insight into the Western tradition. And, when we consider that the passing of Socrates was followed immediately by the establishment of numerous philosophic schools – including, of course, Plato’s own Academy – we are given a glimpse of the profound influence that Socrates’ way of thinking and living had on his and future generations. Simply by walking about barefoot through the streets of Athens exhorting men to “care for their souls,” and by demonstrating to them a method of intellectual discourse whereby they could dispel delusion, Socrates prepared the way for messianic religion.

It is now possible to encapsulate an answer to the question posed as chapter title, “What Was the Socratic Interpretation of Paideia?”

[I]t is Socrates’ idea of the *aim of life* which marks the decisive point in the history of paideia. It threw a new light on the purpose and duty of all education. Education is not the cultivation of certain abilities; it is not the communication of certain branches of knowledge – at least all that is significant only as a means and a stage in the process of education. The real essence of education is that it enables men to reach the true aim of their lives. It is thus identical with the Socratic effort to attain *phronesis*, knowledge of the good. This effort cannot be restricted to the few years of what is called higher education. Either it takes a whole lifetime to reach its aim, or its aim can never be reached. Therefore the concept of paideia is essentially altered; and education, in the Socratic sense, becomes the effort to form one’s life along lines which are philosophically understood, and to direct it so as to fulfill the intellectual and moral definition of man. In this sense, man was born for paideia. It is his only real possession” (ibid, Volume II, pp. 69-70).

What Was the Organizational Development of the Academy?

The outcome of Socrates' trial was a death sentence. After sentencing, while waiting in prison, he easily could have escaped with the help of his friends and gone into exile but he declined to do so on the grounds that it would be "unjust" – and besides, as he told his friends gathered on his death eve, "a man who has really spent his life in philosophy is naturally glad when he is on the point of dying, and hopeful that in the next world, when he is dead, he will enjoy great blessings" (Bluck, p. 72). And so Socrates willingly drank the hemlock and died a martyr for moral justice. Plato was probably there, age 28.

"After the death of Socrates Plato found it advisable to leave town for a while till things should blow over. His first move was short – Megara only a few miles away. There he visited his fellow pupil Euclid, who seems to have kept open house for a number of refugees from the Socratic circle" (Fuller, 1931, p. 156). "One can easily imagine the liveliness of the philosophical discussions which would be carried on there, perhaps already on the relation between unity and goodness and the existence or non-existence of their opposites" (Guthrie, 1974, p. 14).

The next twelve years of Plato's life is somewhat a mystery, though there seems to be consensus that these were his years of "traveling" – "Egypt, Cyrene, Magna Graecia, and Sicily" (Zeller, 1962, p. 14). "Besides the general enlargement of his views and knowledge of human nature, his chief gain [from these travels] seems to have consisted in a closer acquaintance with the Pythagorean school (whose principle book he appears to have purchased), and in a deeper study of mathematics" (ibid, p. 20) – "so that we can scarcely be wrong in connecting with this journey his predilection for the science, and his remarkable knowledge of it" (ibid, p. 21).³⁷ According to Fuller, Plato "became especially intimate with Archytas, who...was now not only the most celebrated representative of the order but one of the universal geniuses of his time" (p. 158). If this is true, Plato had up-to-date knowledge of Pythagorean secrets – to augment his prior immersion in Socratic dialogue – when, in 387 B.C., at the age of 40, he returned to Athens to set up his 'school.'

The Academy (Academia) was originally a public garden or grove in the suburbs of Athens about six stadia from the city, named after Academus or Hecademus, who left it to the city for gymnastics. It was surrounded with a wall by Hipparchus,

³⁷ "We shall see later on what significance Plato attached to mathematical relations, and how much he valued a scientific knowledge of them. They are to him the peculiar connecting link between Idea and Phenomenon; and thus the knowledge of them is the intermediate step, leading from sensuous envisagement to rational contemplation of the idea" (Zeller, 1962, p. 20).

adorned with statues, temples, and sepulchers of illustrious men; planted with olive and plane trees, and watered by the [river] Cephisus. The olive trees, according to Athenian fables, were reared from layers taken from the sacred olive in the Erechtheum [on the Acropolis], and afforded the oil given as a prize to victors at the Panathenean festival...Few retreats could be more favorable to philosophy and the Muses. Within this enclosure Plato possessed, as part of his patrimony, a small garden, in which he opened a school for the reception of those inclined to attend his instruction. Hence arose the Academic sect, and hence the term Academy has descended to our times (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).³⁸

“Since the words “academy” and “academics” come from the name of the area where Plato taught, it is worth spending a moment to describe the park which was used for gymnastics from the sixth century BC. Academus or Hecademus, a mythical hero who had a cult following, left a garden and grove, which was about a mile north-west of the city centre of the city of Athens, to the citizens to use for gymnastics...Festivals were held there, as were athletic events in which runners would race between the altars...It must have been a beautiful park when Plato, who had a house nearby and a garden within the area, began to teach there around 387 BC...[T]he Academy was first and foremost a public park dominated by its gymnasium” (University of St. Andrews, 2004). “Here, where [Plato] had not only his own garden but the shady and quiet walks of the park conveniently at hand for strolling and discoursing, he established himself and set about gathering in his scholars” (Fuller, p. 162).

Yes, this must have been a splendid location to set up the ‘school’ “that was destined to be the intellectual center of Greece for nine hundred years” (Durant, 1966, p. 511). The Academy was the setting in which contemporary ideas, theories, and concepts would be discussed leading to the establishment of “philosophical idealism, logic, and the discovery of the abstract universal” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 25) – legacies from both Pythagoras and Socrates – that would become the foundation of Western thinking for the next 2500 years. The ‘public’ precinct of the Academy would have afforded plenty of lively and spontaneous social interaction while the ‘private garden’ would have enabled withdrawal into a quieter, secluded, confidential sector. As a designer, I have to imagine what the threshold between these two spheres of activity must have looked like – for surely certain plantings, stone walls, the addition of a gateway or arch, an offset entrance, etc. would have encouraged the desired differentiation. Were Plato and his crew thinking about these kinds of environmental embellishments? – for surely, states of consciousness

³⁸ “The name “Academy” is, in all the modern European languages, a living word designating an actuality in the various cultures of which those languages are the vocal expressions. Its general meaning is in all deceptively similar: a formal organization of men for the purpose of promoting by their joint efforts learning in the sciences or skill in the arts” (Cherniss, 1962, p. 61). Couldn’t they promote both?

conducive to philosophizing can be supported and nourished by thoughtful design of the built environment.



“The Grove of Academia:” Conducive to philosophizing? – Painting by Joshua Cristall (Source: atlantis-today.com)

I think also that having a ‘gymnasium’ as the focal point must have added a very healthful dimension to the Academic atmosphere, since the gymnasia were the places where the Greeks would go to exercise, do calisthenics, participate in games and contests, and generally work to keep themselves fit. Since the citizens of Athens had many gymnasia to choose from, I have to wonder if the presence of Plato’s ‘school’ so close to *this* gymnasium would have lent it a character inclined to attract citizens of a more philosophical – though not quite yet ‘converted’ – persuasion, which also would have contributed to the extended dialogue. By the same token, students of Plato’s Academy must have adopted (or taken over!) this gymnasium as their extended ‘classroom’ space, whereby unknowing visitors would have unexpectedly found themselves surrounded by lively and intense philosophical discourse. Another lesson here for the design of Academies in the 21st century is to situate them close to population centers, preferably adjacent to an existing public institution, certainly *not* out in the wilderness where an insular mentality can develop.

While some people like to define the Academy as the first “university,” from all I have gathered “[t]he Academy of Plato does not correspond entirely to any modern

institution, certainly not a university of modern foundation. The nearest parallels are probably our ancient universities, or rather their colleges, with the characteristics they have inherited from the medieval world, particularly their religious connexions and the ideal of the common life, especially a common table” (Guthrie, 1974, p. 19) – “modern universities cannot look to Plato for a precedent” (Cherniss, p. 62). “[I]n Italy, doubtless, [Plato] had been struck with the life and discipline of the Pythagorean monasteries. So it was, perhaps, that he conceived the idea of something not unlike an English college, where his pupils should come not merely for instruction but to live together under a common rule” (Fuller, p. 162). Plato conceived “that friendly life-in-common to which he himself had been accustomed in the Socratic circle and the Pythagorean Society. With a philosopher so little able to separate philosophic from moral endeavor, it might be expected that community of knowledge would naturally grow into community of life.” (Zeller, p. 28).

“The sanctity of the place was great, and other cults, including that of Athena herself, were carried on there. To form a society owning its own land and premises, as Plato did, it appears to have been a legal requirement that it be registered as a *thiasos*, that is, a cult-association dedicated to the service of some divinity” (Guthrie, p. 20).³⁹ “Plato proceeded to incorporate it...as a religious association dedicated to the Muses, the patronesses of philosophy.⁴⁰ A college chapel was built and daily services were held in their honor, with solemn commemorative feasts once a month. There seems also to have been a “commons” where the students and sometimes the masters took their meals together” (Fuller, p. 162). “The common meals were famous for their combination of healthy and moderate eating with talk that was worth remembering and recording” (Guthrie, pp. 20-21). Cherniss (p. 62) claims that these meals were *symposia*, intellectual oratory contests or games accompanied, or encouraged, by free-flowing wine – as detailed in the Platonic dialogue *Symposium*; while Guthrie (p. 21) mentions “the necessity for Symposia to be conducted according to rules applied by a master of ceremonies who must remain completely sober.” “Aristotle composed special table laws for these meetings, including the rotation of the title Archon” (Zeller, p. 556).

By these accounts we can conclude that the world’s first Academy was not really a ‘school’ in the modern sense but more like a community of compatriots united by a common goal: the pursuit of philosophy. The salubrious influence of being located within the park of a “gymnasium” was complemented by a distinctly “religious” atmosphere –

³⁹ Cherniss reaches the same conclusion from a different direction: “From the tradition that Plato erected in his garden a shrine to the Muses it has been concluded that the Academy was legally incorporated as a *thiasos* or religious fraternity” (p. 62). The implications are the same.

⁴⁰ “The word *mousike* among the Greeks meant originally any devotion to any Muse. Plato’s Academy was called a *Museion* or Museum – i.e., a place dedicated to the Muses and the many cultural pursuits which they patronized” (Durant, p. 226).

and I suggest again that the word “spiritual” may be more apt, for there is no evidence whatsoever that the academics were interested in promulgating or enforcing ‘doctrines’ or ‘creeds’ but rather an air of inquisitive and open-ended inquiry permeated the place. Referencing once again the “organizational development” purpose of this essay, it would be an emulation of the original Academy if Academies of the 21st century incorporated both ‘athletic’ (‘gymnastic’ doesn’t quite fit) and ‘spiritual’ tracks into their organizational system, reified or given the opportunity for expression by actual physical components deftly designed into the built environment.

“The students paid no fees, but as they came for the most part from upper-class families their parents could be expected to make substantial donations to the institution; rich men from time to time bequeathed in their wills, to the members of the school, the means of living a life of philosophic leisure” (Durant, p. 51). “There can be no doubt, from what we know of Plato’s sentiments on the subject, that his instructions were altogether gratuitous; and if, on certain occasions, he accepted presents from some of his rich friends, there is no reason to conclude that such voluntary offerings were therefore customary among his disciples in the Academy” (Zeller, p. 28).

How do you think this sort of arrangement – relying on “donations” from wealthy friends and parents to fund the ongoing operations of a philosophic school – would work in today’s reality? Life was certainly simpler then, without the need for so many of the operational expenses incurred by modern institutions – including taxes, insurance, capital maintenance, salaries, overhead, electronics, promotion, etc. Even a modern day *thiasos* – a religious or educational ‘non-profit’ – cannot side-step many of these. Yet, if the institution truly is providing some meaningful service to society, a real tangible virtue, could we not trust that the funding will come from somewhere? Amongst the current glut of non-profits attempting to secure funding from what I understand is a shrinking pool, today’s Academy, I would suggest, would do well to position itself as a *millennial* event – Plato’s Academy lasted for 900 years! – the ultimate and comprehensive solution to today’s sustainability problem; and an Academy devoted to village design – not simply “a life of philosophic leisure!” – might just be able to accomplish that. Plato’s Academy, we also must remember, relied on slaves (of which Plato was said to have three); today’s Academy will need to draw up a business plan and provide multiple streams of income from the site itself, as part of the curriculum. Still, it would be excellent to receive land as a ‘gift,’ as Plato had. I will return to this funding aspect later, for in the modern reality it must be faced squarely with strategic oversight.

Let’s look closer now at the curricular and pedagogical aspects of the original Academy. First, the generally accepted overview:

The method of instruction naturally enough followed the Socratic convention, and was based on friendly association and informal talk punctuated with question and answer. This was supplemented by prepared but probably unwritten lectures and by the setting of problems in subjects like mathematics, astronomy, and logic to be solved by the students (Fuller, p. 163).⁴¹

“Plato and his aides taught by lecturing, by dialogue, and by setting problems to the students. One problem was to find the uniform and ordered movements by the assumption of which the apparent motion of the planets can be accounted for...The lectures were technical and sometimes disappointed those who had hoped for practical gain; but pupils like Aristotle, Demosthenes, Lycurgus, Hyperoides, and Xenocrates were deeply influenced by them, and in many cases published the notes they had taken.” (Durant, p. 512). “Much of the instruction would be by Plato’s favored dialectical method” (Guthrie, p. 21), “the development of thought by dialogue” (Zeller, p. 25), as is demonstrated so proficiently throughout Plato’s copious collection of writings. With this last point in mind, it is worth examining further this “dialectical method,” for that was precisely the technique mastered by Socrates in his effort to uncover ‘truth.’

As an introduction to the magnitude that was afforded this method, here is a passage from the *Phaedrus*:

Now I myself am a lover, Phaedrus, of the activities of dividing and bringing together, in order to speak and to think, and if I think there is another who is able to see the many by nature collected into the one, I follow in his footsteps as if he were a god. And whether I name rightly or wrongly those able to accomplish this, god knows, but I have called them until now dialecticians (line 266b, quoted in Burger, 1980, p. 70).

Burger, in his essential book subtitled “A Defense of a Philosophic Art of Writing,” gives quite a lengthy account of this method of dialectic, for there is core understanding to be gained here in regards to the Platonic pedagogy. To begin with, “the principles of dialectics...constitute the standard for the true art of speaking” (p. 5). Recall how Greek history was memorialized as an *oral* tradition; writing had been in use for only about a century before Plato was born, so “the art of speaking” assumes extra weight in this context. “In demonstrating that the ground of the art of speaking is the conjunction of knowledge of being with knowledge of soul, Socrates defends the art of speaking as a

⁴¹ I call this “the generally accepted overview” because Cherniss’ entire book, *The Riddle of the Early Academy*, is a refutation of the opinion that Plato ‘taught’ and gave ‘lectures.’ At first I thought this was a revelation; though now, after further consideration, I have tempered my belief. In a cultural context in which oratory was so highly prized, how can we avoid imagining this group of intellectuals *not* from time to time getting up to deliver an extended monological discourse? These may have not been identical with the ‘lectures’ given at Cherniss’ native UC Berkeley but they were, nonetheless, similar in effect.

necessary supplement to knowledge of the truth, while at the same time defending knowledge of the truth as the necessary condition for any art of speaking” (ibid, p. 76). This art of speaking is given so much emphasis because “the written work is regarded as “inferior”...to the superiority of “live” philosophical conversation” (de Vries, 1969, p. 21). This interpretation of a working pedagogy seems to be reversed in today’s educational climate, where “writing” is afforded far more weight than “speaking.” As an example, I could move through my entire doctoral program – albeit a program designed as “distributed network learning” – without ever speaking to anyone, simply writing my way through the program.

In order to witness the dialectic method in action, one merely has to read any one of the Platonic *Dialogues*. Burger analyzes the method as “demanding knowledge of the structure of the whole and parts” (p. 6). “The recognition of whole and parts, presumably identical with the activity of collection and division which Socrates called “dialectics,” is nonetheless confirmed by the “true *logos*” to be the criterion for the practice of any *techné*” (ibid, p. 85) – or “craft.” And when we recall that the entire Socratic project was advising people to care for their souls, it’s easier to understand why “insofar as knowledge of its subject matter with regard to the whole and its parts is the condition for any art, such knowledge of soul is the necessary, even if unattainable, condition for an art of persuasion [concerning the soul]” (ibid, p. 71); or to put it another way, “knowledge of “the whole” [is] the necessary condition for knowledge of the nature of the soul” (ibid, p. 84, quoting *Phaedrus*, line 270c) – “without complete knowledge of the whole, deception would seem inescapable” (ibid, p. 76). This is essentially what we would call today “systemic” thinking, an antidote to the reductionistic, atomistic mindset. It would seem that systemic thinking, even applied to ultimate concerns like “soul,” came quite easily to Socrates. Would it be too much at this point to claim that the underlying purpose of Plato’s Academy, then, was the “organizational development” of systemic Mind?

“[T]he man who reaches knowledge through dialectic tries to reach the nature of everything through thought without sense-perception, and does not stop till he thinks through to ‘the Good itself, what it really is,’ and thereby reaches the end of the thinkable...Dialectic is the science that ‘does away with’ the assumptions of other sciences, and travels upward to the first principle of all, ‘gently turning upward the soul’s eye” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 311).⁴² “When the assumption is examined, dialectic is at

⁴² Here’s a passage from the *Republic* from which Jaeger is quoting: “No one will dispute with us when we say that dialectic is a different study which attempts to apprehend methodically, with regard to each thing, what each really is. All the other crafts are concerned with the opinions of men and their passions, or with the process of generation and composition...The remainder which we said grasp at reality to some extent, namely geometry and those which follow it, we see as dreaming about reality, unable to have a waking view of it so long as they make use of hypotheses and leave them undisturbed and cannot give a reasoned account of them. What begins with an unknown has its conclusion and the steps in between put together from the unknown, so how could any agreed

work...Dialectic is the search for the highest truths – all truths – and it uses language, question and answer, statement, refutation, proof as its vehicle...In general, dialectic contributes to the drawing of necessary distinctions (such as between living and non-living), and, of course, may reveal that a customary distinction has no basis in reality. This activity involves enumeration, listing, from experience, what is and what is not included under a particular category. Another aspect of this activity is the framing of definitions” (Bremer, 2002, p. 147).

I think it will be helpful to hear Socrates defending his dialectic method, here in a passage once again from the *Phaedo*, principally in reference to knowledge of “the whole,” because we can then begin to understand ‘wholes’ as the basis for constructing a theory of Ideal Forms:

I decided that I should take refuge with *definitions*, and study the truth of things by means of them...Anyhow, this was my procedure: taking as my starting-point in every instance the definition that I judge to be most reliable, I assume to be genuine whatever seems to me to be in accordance with it – both in regard to causation and in regard to everything else. Whatever doesn’t seem to harmonize, I assume to be untrue...I am going to undertake to expound to you the kind of cause with which I am concerned, and I will return once more to those much-talked-of things and take my start from them – making it my premise that there is a Beautiful in the absolute and a Good and a Great and so on. If you grant me this and agree that they exist, I hope to expound the cause to you, and reveal that soul is immortal...It seems to me that if there is anything *else* beautiful besides the Beautiful Itself, it is so purely and simply because it partakes of that ‘Beautiful.’ The same is true, in my opinion, of every kind of thing...[T]he only thing that makes it beautiful is the presence of or its participation in – or whatever the relationship may be – that ‘Beautiful.’ I do not now insist upon any particular relationship, but only that all beautiful things are beautiful simply *because* of the Beautiful. This, I think, is the safest answer to give myself or anyone else, and I think that if I cling to this I shall not fall, and that it is safe for me or anyone else to answer that the beautiful things are beautiful simply because of the Beautiful (Bluck, p. 113-114).

How does all this pertain to a particularly Platonic pedagogy emphasizing dialogue over writing, where dialogue is understood to be not merely casually discussing the ‘weather’ but rather “the art of right thinking for the immediate use of individuals to

conclusion it comes to ever become knowledge?...Now dialectic is the only subject which travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle where it will find certainty. It gently draws the eye of the soul, which is really buried in a kind of barbaric mire, and leads it upwards, using the sciences we have described as assistants and helpers in the process of turning the soul around [to face the light]” (Grube, 1974, Lines 533b-d).

purify their crude presentations into concepts” (Zeller, p. 151)? “The principles of dialectics, which constitute the foundation for all artful speech or writing, demand knowledge of the truth of each of the beings, as an internally articulated whole and as a part of a more comprehensive whole, the same knowledge of soul with regard to the whole and its parts, and finally, knowledge of the relation between the beings and soul” (Burger, p. 108). “The resolution of the tension between the natural spontaneity of living speech and the rigid fabrication of the product of writing seems to depend on the possibility of a product of writing constructed by art with the *taxis* of an organic whole, yet able to function like an ensouled being” (ibid, p. 79).

In order to understand Burger’s metaphysical language, it’s important to know that he is commenting on the *Phaedrus*, in which Plato lays out in detail the proper place for writing in his total scheme of education. In a section of the second half of *Phaedrus*, the god Thoth reveals the gift of writing he has bestowed upon men, whereupon the recipient king disparages writing on the grounds that it will make men dumber! How can this be? you might ask as a literary dilettante. “The greatest danger inherent in the written treatise is that it may suggest the premature arrival of a definitive conclusion” (de Vries, p. 20). “The art of writing, which encourages men to neglect the use of their own memory and lets them believe that they know what they have merely read, in fact produces forgetfulness” (Burger, p. 94). “The essential danger of the written word is its power to produce the appearance of wisdom without the reality” (ibid, p. 95). “The repeatability of the product of writing looks like that immutability of the *ideai* which renders them possible objects of knowledge. But the process of coming to know, which must unfold through the motion of the soul, cannot be mere external repetition. The repeatability of the product of writing, which serves as the basis for its potential value, can deceptively replace the living process of thought which it ought to set in motion” (ibid, p. 97). From our own point of reference, we could say that over-reliance on the written word atrophies right-brain functioning, thus entrenching linear thought at the expense of intuitive pattern recognition.

The solution posited in the *Phaedrus* is to approach writing in a spirit of “*playfulness*.” “But it is precisely the acknowledgement of its necessary playfulness which allows the written work to overcome its illusory appearance as a replacement for living thought and to realize its potential as a “reminder to the knower”” (Burger, p. 104). “The Platonic art of writing thus imitates the lover of wisdom, who disparages the playfulness of writing in light of the seriousness of dialectic speech, while bestowing his praise on that product of writing composed with knowledge of the truth and “really written in the soul of the learner,” hence worthy of the name ‘philosophy’” (ibid, p. 91). “[O]n the basis of his own argument, Socrates is compelled to attribute to any writer “who writes with knowledge of the truth, and is able to support his writing with speech and to show by his

speech the small worth of his writing,” the name ‘philosopher,’ on the ground of the serious pursuit which underlies such writing” (ibid, p. 105, quoting *Phaedrus*, line 278c).

I have to admit, I very much appreciate this pedagogical approach. My first two degrees were in seminar format, so there was much more opportunity for interactive “speech” in learning than exists in the more traditional “lecture” format; yet still, that speech usually consisted of commentary or the sharing of perceptions and insights – and was, after all, minimally optional. How daring it would be to give a bold oratorical exposition to a position that I felt most dearly, as was done in *symposia*, or to engage another student in deliberate, protracted, intense dialogue to help them sharpen and refine their own position. I do believe this approach has merit: I find myself now close to completing my third degree and still have not been exposed to “the art of speaking.” I’ve had many experiences in my life where practice – not even yet proficiency – of this art would have been a real benefit – so why not include it in the pedagogy, even in a curriculum devoted to ‘village design?’⁴³ I especially appreciate this position of Socrates, the lesson of the second half of the *Phaedrus*: “Not the spoken word in opposition to the written, but the *logos* written in the soul, has the potential for participating in the perpetual motion of the dialectic art” (Burger, p. 104). Have I been writing from the ‘*logos* written in my soul’ during this essay? If this essay should have any redeeming value, perhaps I should make it more intentionally ‘playful?’

So we see that for Plato and the original Academy, it was really all about the dialectic: “the practice of dialectic was therefore at the same time education” (Zeller, p. 151). In fact, we learn that the entire curriculum, including the extended residential experience, was merely *preparation* for the dialectic. “And finally, of course, after the mind had been sufficiently exercised in precise and abstract thinking, came the crowning philosophy or *dialectic* – the understanding and application...of the universal Forms and principles which, in Plato’s opinion, constituted true Being” (Fuller, p. 169). “For this reason he would not allow his pupils to touch the dialectic at all while they are young, but would reserve it for older men of stable and orderly character who have successfully undergone the training and passed the tests of the preliminary disciplines...it is not until they have reached the age of fifty [!] that they are allowed to devote themselves to the highest philosophy” (Cherniss, p. 69). This, of course, was because young and ambitious men, not living long enough yet to refine their character in *arête*, or virtue, might foolishly be tempted to use the power of dialectic to win personal gain for themselves in the politics of the *polis*; whereas for Plato and his teacher Socrates, dialectic was the supreme art for uncovering ‘truth’ and for realizing “the final vision of the Good” (Guthrie, p. 22).

⁴³ I’ve often described the design process as an ongoing “dialogue,” not only between the designer and community of clients but between the designer and the landscape itself.

Now that we have some idea of the pedagogy that was practiced at the original Academy, let's turn our attention to the actual curriculum, the set of subjects that was intended to prepare the mind for the final ascent to the summit of the Good.⁴⁴ "[T]he preliminary curriculum of the Academy would consist only of plane and solid geometry and number theory [with] the dominance of geometry as a subject of instruction" (Cherniss, p. 67); "it soon became traditional...to use "geometry" as a synonym for the instruction in the Academy" (ibid, p. 68). Cherniss further claims that the criteria for choosing subjects would be "whatever study constrains the soul to contemplate Being is suitable and whatever causes it to turn its attention to Becoming is not" (ibid, p. 67). With language like this it's no wonder that Cherniss quotes Jaeger as stating "the Academy was a mystic cult and not a school in our sense of the word" (p. 62). "Cult" is a little too strong of a word these days, especially for people who have not been exposed to the anthropological connotations of the word. Why not call the Academy a mystic philosophical "ashram?"

Recalling Plato's absorption of Pythagorean secrets just prior to his setting up his 'school,' we can understand why Durant would declare, "Plato loved mathematics, dipped his philosophy into it deeply, dedicated the Academy to it" (p. 500). In fact, over the portal of the Academy hung a sign with the inscription: "*medeis ageometretos eisito* – "Let no one without geometry enter here"" (ibid, p. 511). "In pursuing...enquiries into numbers and their elements, [the academics] approximated very closely to the Pythagoreans, so that their metaphysics became...a large admixture of arithmetical and theological mysticism" (Zeller, p. 565). "But arithmetic for [Plato] was a half-mystical theory of number; geometry was not a measuring of the earth, it was a discipline of pure reason, a portal to the mind of God" (Durant, p. 500).

Let us pause for a moment and get a grip on what's being presented here: geometry as a "portal to the mind of God?" I never heard that back in my 9th grade Geometry class. What does it mean? We have to remember that the Greek mind was operating in brand new territory about this time. "The origin of [self-]consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind" was a result of the shift from an oral literary tradition to a written literary tradition. As people began relying more on reading and writing than on oral transmission, different regions of the brain were exercised resulting in novel neuronal configurations. With these would come new perceptions and new ways

⁴⁴ I often marvel at how much must be lost in the translation of complex ideas, not only between languages but in this case between different historical eras. Somehow, describing the final pinnacle of philosophical insight after long years of arduous study as a "vision of the Good" sounds like a bland let-down. Why not a vision of the "empyrean," or "interstellar," or, "seventh heaven" – or as the yogis say, "union with the Divine?" A "vision of the Good?" Is that all there is to it? When I describe this to my friends, they shrug it off as not being worth it. Obviously, whatever Greek word existed to be translated into "Good" had far more emotional gravity and presence than our simple and kind word 'Good.'

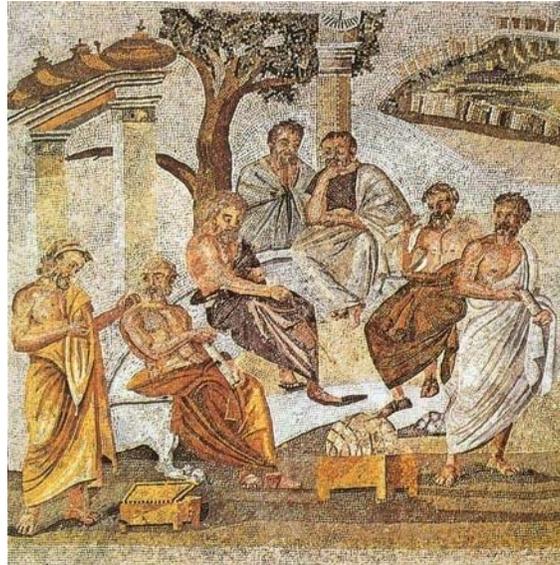
of viewing the world. Whereas with the bicameral mind, god-induced voices originating in the right hemisphere would provide instructions to the left hemisphere in unclear situations, with the emergence of left-brain rationality as a consequence of perusing linear script, it was discovered that the new sense of Self, through reasoning, could discover or figure out the instructions all by itself. This new way of perceiving must have been an amazing breakthrough, obviously an instrument of the Divine! I think it was Plato's purpose or design to influence the "organizational development" of this new mind through the curriculum and pedagogy of the Academy.

Take the main course: geometry as "a discipline of pure reason." The new mind, the new way of perceiving that was the result of novel neuronal configurations, could take a geometric shape and twist and turn it, looking at it first from this direction and then from that, all within the emerging interiorized mind-space. I think it was this capacity – what might best be called 'imagination,' with the root word 'image' – that Plato was interested in developing, that he believed would lead to the apprehension of the fundamental archetypes that he called the Ideal Forms:

It was not the practical solution of problems...not the science of mathematics for its own sake which concerned him, but mathematics as a *propaedeutic* for philosophy, for he believed that the study of this science is the best means of training the mind for the abstract thinking by which alone the truly real objects, the ideas, can be attained, recalled, and comprehended. That is why he was so much concerned with method: the virtue and purpose which he saw in mathematics would be utterly lost and perverted if it were so practiced as to lead the mind down to particulars instead of up toward the incorporeal and unchanging realities (Cherniss, p. 66).

As an example of this concern with method, "Plutarch tells of Plato's "indignation" at Eudoxus and Archytas for carrying on experiments in mechanics, "as the mere corruption and annihilation of the one good of geometry, which was thus shamefully turning its back upon the unembodied objects of pure intelligence to recur to sensation, and to ask help...from matter"" (Durant, p. 500). Apparently Eudoxus and Archytas had been given a mathematical problem to solve and their methodology for solving the problem was to cut out shapes and manipulate them by hand instead of using pure imagination. "Plato's influence on these men, then, was that of an intelligent critic of method, not that of a technical mathematician with the skill to make great discoveries of his own" (Cherniss, p. 66). "Plato's role appears to have been...that of an individual thinker whose insight and skill in the formulation of a problem enables him to offer general advice and methodical criticism to other individual thinkers who respect his wisdom and who may be dominated by his personality but who consider themselves at

least as competent as they consider him in dealing with the details of special subjects” (ibid, p. 65).



Plato's Academy: A mosaic from Pompeii in which geometers are delineating a hemisphere.
(Source: Wikipedia: "plato's academy")

To learn more about the educational content, “[i]t is reasonable to assume that the curriculum in the Academy was modeled on that which [Plato] sets out so carefully in the *Republic*” (Guthrie, p. 22), so it will be productive to check there next.

“From the very beginning, Plato’s thinking is aimed at solving the problem of the state. At first invisible, that theme emerges more and more clearly, until it is unmistakably the aim of all the dialectic enquiries of his earlier books...The *Republic* is his central work, in which all the lines drawn by his earlier writings now converge” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 198).⁴⁵ Plato’s thinking was focused on solving the problems of the, shall I say, *polis* because he was born at a time when his caregivers would have been freshly familiar with the Golden Age of Pericles. For Plato, however, this was already a thing of the past: the long war with Sparta, already underway at his birth, would bring ruin to Athens by 404 B.C., when Plato was twenty-three. Plato was deeply bitter about the

⁴⁵ I really grew sensitive to Jaeger’s repeated use of the word ‘state’ when talking about the *Republic*, because ‘state’ today is so large and faceless, lacking the human-scale character of the *polis* in which Plato lived and about which he wrote. Jaeger acknowledges the difference, yet continues to use the word ‘state:’ “When we say that the Greek’s whole life and morality was ‘political’ in the sense meant by Socrates and Aristotle, we mean something very different from the modern technical conception of politics and the state. We can realize that, if we only think of the difference between the abstract-sounding modern term ‘state’ (from the late Latin *status*) and the concrete Greek word ‘polis,’ which vividly calls up before our minds the living whole of the human community and the individual lives organically connected with it and with each other. Now, it is in this classical sense that Plato’s Socratic dialogues on piety, justice, courage, and prudence are investigations of the nature of ‘political’ virtue” (Volume II, p. 61).

dysfunctional political shenanigans that he interpreted as causal for the downfall; therefore, it was natural for him to take the lessons learned and envision the ideal polis, which he does in the *Republic* – which, by the way, is called *Polity* in the original Greek (Bremer, p. vii).⁴⁶

The immediate political and social crisis, with all the suffering it entailed, vastly increased the stress on education, strengthened its importance, enriched its meaning. Thus, the concept of *paideia* became the real expression of the rising generation's spiritual purpose. The fourth century is the classical epoch in the history of *paideia*, if we take that to mean the development of *a conscious ideal of education and culture*. There was good reason for it to fall in that critical century. It is that very awareness of its problems that distinguishes the Greek spirit most clearly from other nations. It was simply because the Greeks were fully alive to every problem, every difficulty confronting them in the general intellectual and moral collapse of the brilliant fifth century, that they were able to understand the meaning of their own education and culture so clearly as to become the teachers of all succeeding nations. Greece is the school of the western world (Jaeger, p. 5, emphasis in original).

With that in mind, knowing the deep meaning and purpose Plato ascribed to education in the reformation of the polis, we see why “*politeia* and *paideia*, which for so many men even at that time were only vaguely related, became the two foci of Plato's work” (ibid, p. 200). “If the only good rulers are philosophers, his duty in present circumstances was not to plunge into the whirlpool of politics but to do what he could to make philosophers out of himself and other potential rulers. The first task was educational, and he founded the Academy” (Guthrie, p. 19). Thus, in the dialogue which shapes the *Republic*, “[P]lato makes Socrates move the whole state with one lever, *the education which forms the soul*” (Jaeger, p. 199, emphasis added). This is why Rousseau explained that the *Republic* “was not a political system, as might be thought from its title, but the finest treatise on education ever written” (ibid, p. 200).⁴⁷ And so what do we find inside?

⁴⁶ Plato blamed Athens' fall on the institution of *democracy*. He came to regard Sparta as the ideal of political and educational organization. Therefore, the *Republic*, in which he outlines the perfected polis, assumed the form of what Popper (1966) has deprecatingly termed “the first treatise of a totalitarian state.” “It is easy to see how a noble, high-minded youth, in the midst of such experiences and influences, might be disgusted...with democracy ...and take refuge in political Utopias” (Zeller, p. 7). “Greek and Roman admirers of the Spartan *eunomia* [ideal state of law and order] describe it too as a state educational system which made specialized legislation unnecessary, because of the citizens' rigid observance of the unwritten law dominating their whole lives” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 238).

⁴⁷ “Plato's *Republic* is not so much a plan for the practical reform of the state as an artificial society in which all interests are subordinated to the education of the moral and intellectual personality, which is *paideia*. Everything in it is aimed at making men happy, not by satisfying the individual's will or judgment, but by assisting him to

First of all, “we must understand quite definitely that he constructed his new philosophical system of education on the foundations (revised, no doubt, and transformed, but unshaken) of traditional Greek *paideia*” (ibid, p. 211) – which meant in all cases ‘gymnastics’ and ‘music.’⁴⁸ “Plato declares that we must begin with the education of the soul – namely, with ‘music’” (ibid). What unfolds is quite an elaborate explication of *logos*, *harmonia*, and *rhythmos*, their interplay and their effects on the soul. The Greeks believed that “harmony and rhythm can have an *ethos*, a moral character” (ibid, p. 227); “there are political consequences to changes in music” (Bremer, p. 150) and so “a fundamental alteration in the structure of music [would be] a political revolution” (Jaeger, p. 226). As far as an educational context is concerned, “Anyone who is properly educated in music takes it into his soul while he is still young and his spiritual growth is unconscious” (ibid, p. 229). There, “after the work of the Muses has moulded them unawares into a certain intellectual pattern, philosophical teaching will later reveal to them in full consciousness the highest knowledge: and so philosophical knowledge presupposes musical education” (ibid).

Let’s take a closer look at what’s being introduced here: The purpose of putting music in education was not simply for the enjoyment of it, for there is a scientific aspect as well – and here I am speaking principally about the Pythagorean discoveries of numerical proportions to the musical scales and their reflection in a divine order. Someone educated in music – the technical structure of music – will have a natural understanding of rhythm, harmony, measure, proportion, etc. These are qualities that can be applied to other disciplines as well, and if integrated subconsciously, may very well be evident in everyday life: in movement and speech, in the layout of a room, in social mannerisms, in the temporal organization of affairs, etc. Jaeger even claims, following Socrates in the *Republic*, that music integrated into the soul influences spiritual growth unconsciously. (This must be a reference to the soundtracks that are always playing in my head, some original!) Since there are ethical consequences to the various scales – whether Dorian, Ionian, Phrygian, or whatever – then we must be careful about the *kinds* of music we introduce into our souls. From the perspective of ‘village design,’ I can see where the

maintain the health of the soul, which is justice” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 366). Interestingly, I first read the *Republic* in a self-designed study called “Utopia.”

⁴⁸ “Here we may shortly survey the part played by history in the development of Greek *paideia*. In the old-fashioned system, made up of music and gymnastic training, there was no such thing as independent historical knowledge and historical thought.. The past was known, of course, since it was part of poetic tradition; but it was known only as narratives of heroic deeds done by single nations or great heroes, and there was still no clear distinction between history and myth. These traditions were kept alive to provide heroic models to be imitated...the political study of history did not yet exist. The philosopher was educated by investigating the eternal laws of nature or of morality, but in his training there was no place for history...In Plato’s plan for a comprehensive system of scientific *paideia*, the most up-to-date branches of mathematics, medicine, and astronomy are included, but the great new science of political history is wholly neglected” (Jaeger, Volume III, p. 101). Aristotle would amen this oversight in his great *Politics*.

disciplined study of music would produce many beneficial results – for rhythm, harmony, measure, and proportion are important considerations at any scale of the design. I've become especially fond of a germane Greek word here: *eurythmy* – “harmony of proportion in architecture,” which may as well be applied to any construction of the built environment. Incidentally, Vitruvius, the Roman, writing his *Ten Books on Architecture*, continually references the Greeks and is very attentive to *eurythmy*.

Following the traditional Greek *paideia*, Plato also included ‘gymnastics’ as a cornerstone in his new educational philosophy. “It seems to me that a fit body does not by its own excellence ensure a good soul, but on the contrary it is a good soul which by its own excellence ensures that the body shall be fit as possible...Therefore, if we have devoted sufficient care to the mind, we would be right to entrust to it the detailed supervision of physical matters” (Grube, p. 73, Line 403d). Perhaps it would be apt to speak of ‘body-mind’ in this regard, an operative unity that ensures right thought *and* right action. I sensed this already when designing my first design courses: from the very start I framed “whole body awareness” as a pre-requisite for good design. I introduced yoga and meditation in the mornings and various ‘games’ at select intervals for the purpose of getting people grounded in their bodies. The justification was that all the senses must be employed when approaching a design scenario; it is not enough to approach it simply with a set of concepts and theories contained in the head. This is another good reason to align 21st century Academies with the image of an ashram. Finally, Plato closes his treatise on education outlined in the *Republic* with the following thought: “That is why God gave us gymnastics and music together, the inseparable unity of *paideia*. They are not separable as physical training and intellectual education. They are forces which mould the spirited and the rational sides of human nature” (Jaeger, p. 234).

Plato’s purpose in writing the *Republic* – “the finest treatise on education ever written” – was to detail an educational philosophy that could be applied to the training of more capable “rulers.” These he called the “Guardians” – “a ruling class of trained philosophers, their claim to rule founded on the ability of the human mind to seek out and find the good which is God” (Jaeger, p. 299); “the nature of the philosopher comes to resemble the object of his study, the divine” (ibid, p. 277). The Guardians were intended to be an ‘aristocracy’ in its original sense as “rule by the best.” The “best” here is not an arbitrary standard, such as genealogy, but simply those with the best education, such as one would receive in the Academy⁴⁹ – “no one should exercise the highest power without possessing the best education” (ibid, p. 235). The premise here is quite simple: “*The Republic* is primarily a book about the making of human character. It is not a political work in the usual sense of *politics* – only in the Socratic sense. But the great educational truth vividly expounded in *The Republic* is the close correlation of character and

⁴⁹ Aristotle was said to be a student at the Academy for twenty years!

environment, the portrait and the background. This is not merely an artistic principle: it is also a law of the moral world. The perfect man can be shaped only within the perfect [polis]; and vice versa, to construct such a [polis], we must discover how to make such men” (ibid, p. 259).⁵⁰

From now on I must replace Jaeger’s preferred word “state” with what I believe is the more appropriate term “polis” – as in the ideal human-scale community. That is the whole purpose of ‘village design:’ to envision and begin to bring into form ideal human-scale sustainable communities for the 21st century, in which the heights of human potential may be explored and maximized. This is where the original concept of ‘polis,’ the educational philosophy outlined in the *Republic*, and the appearance of the first Academy become so relevant, as models to emulate.

The appearance of such schools is a historical fact of immense importance, which even to-day essentially affects and conditions the relation between individual and society. Behind the school or the little community there always stands an intellectual personality, who is the active force, who speaks with the authority of his own deep knowledge and who gathers around him associates with the same attitude to life. When Plato works out a plan for the authoritarian [polis], we must not forget that his great principle of making philosophical truth the highest standard [as in attunement to the divine]...really originated from a huge enlargement of the individual’s claim to true freedom...This assertion of intellectual independence had one direct practical effect on the structure of Greek society: the creation of communities like schools or colleges. Such was the Academy founded in Athens by Plato himself” (ibid, pp. 273-274).

Let me emphasize a couple points here as we move towards a final conclusion:

- 1) The “authoritarian [polis]” of which Plato and Jaeger speak was modeled after Sparta, who had just defeated a much wealthier and stronger democratic Athens in protracted war. People looked to the Spartans as an example because they didn’t need legislation to produce *eunomia*, good law and order; proper conduct in support of the community was internalized through their *paideia*, their education and culture. “The perfect system of education on which the *Republic* was founded was to make the laws that overload most contemporary states quite unnecessary” (Jaeger, Volume III, p. 214). In that sense, “authoritarian” – as in ‘power over’ – is not the best term to define the ideal Socratic polis: “autopoietic” – as in internal self-organization based on a striving for the highest values in thought and conduct

⁵⁰⁵⁰ “The history of paideia, considered as the genetic morphology of the ideal relation between the individual and the polis, is the indispensable philosophical background for the understanding of Plato” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 84).

– provides a much more accurate picture. The Guardians were not intended to be “authoritarian rulers;” they were sophisticated role-models full of *arête*.

- 2) The idea that “the perfect man can be shaped only within the perfect [polis]; and vice versa, to construct such a [polis], we must discover how to make such men” provides all the justification we need for instituting Academies devoted to Village Design. Consider one more quote from Jaeger in this regard: “The philosopher [one who is striving to live by the highest principles] is indeed a miraculous birth: but if he is transplanted to unsuitable soil, such as the [cities] which now exist, he is bound to be crippled in his growth, or else to grow like them. On the other hand, if he is moved to the favourable surroundings of the ideal [polis – or how about *ecovillage*], he will reveal his divine origin” (p. 275). From that perspective, it would make sense to replace the 4th century B.C. term “Guardian” with the more applicable 21st century term “village designer” – for it is the village designer, after a long and arduous process of education, that comes to understand how to create sustainable communities in which human potential may be realized.

It is now possible to provide a summary to answer the question posed as title to this chapter, namely “What was the organizational development of the Academy?”

- The Academy was physically situated within walking distance to a population center, providing a relatively safe haven from the politics of the polis but not so isolated as to produce an insular attitude amongst the academics.
- The Academy also was situated adjacent to a gymnasium, a public recreational facility, thus affording lively social interaction and extended ground-space. This public space was complemented by a more secluded private garden, thus enabling an “intimacy gradient” (Alexander, et al. 1977).
- The Academy was legally incorporated as a *thiasos*, a “religious fraternity” dedicated to worship of the Muses, on a site that held existing sacred meaning; thus there was a sanctified atmosphere that permeated the place.
- The curriculum was founded on the traditional Greek *paideia* of music and gymnastics, not in the typical secular sense, but as a means to, first, inform and inculcate the soul in rhythm, harmony, and proportion, and second, to ensure that the body was fit enough to perform right action.
- The core subject was geometry, once again not in the prosaic sense of “a measuring of the earth,” but in the more philosophical sense of manipulating imagery and solving problems within an interiorized mind-space. The core subject was complemented with mathematics, number theory, astronomy, medicine, and logic

- yet there was not a standard curriculum that everybody strictly followed but more like varying trajectories depending on predilection.
- The pedagogy was based on dialogue; writing was de-emphasized. The academics would engage in dialogue with one another for the purpose of sharpening their thinking and clarifying their concepts. Long years of practicing dialogue were crowned with initiation into the ‘dialectic,’ considered to be the highest of philosophical arts.
 - Plato was there not so much as a ‘teacher’ but as a critic of method and a person with enough experience to be able to frame problems for others. Although Plato wrote extensively (in the dialectical pattern), none of his ideas – including his central theory of Ideal Forms – were enforced dogmatically; the other academics were free to disagree and to offer their own perspectives.
 - The Academy was not really a ‘school’ in the modern sense, where students come for classes and then return home, but more like a residential community, a brotherhood (although women also were accepted) of people of like mind who shared meals together and periodically engaged in symposia and festivals.
 - There were no fees charged: the operation and maintenance of the Academy relied on donations from wealthy patrons.

I consider this list as a set of design criteria for setting up the Academy of Village Design that I am envisioning. Of course, some minor modifications will be necessary – particularly in regard to curricular content – but the essence will be the same: effecting the evolution of consciousness at a critical stage in history through the “organizational development” of a desired structure or state of mind, one that may “actively and knowingly participate in the evolution – expansion – of the greater Mind of which it is a part.” This is indeed a millennial event. “True education means the awakening of abilities asleep in the soul...Therefore the essence of philosophical education is ‘conversion,’ which literally means ‘turning around. Conversion is a specific term of Platonic paideia, and indeed an epoch-making one. It means more specifically the wheeling round of the ‘whole soul’ towards the light of the Idea of Good, the divine origin of the universe” (Jaeger, p. 295).

Is There Ever a Conclusion?

One of the purposes of this essay was an attempt to make the case that the term “organizational development” can be applied not only to the structural configuration of ‘institutions’ but also to the structural configuration of ‘mind.’ Therefore, when thinking about institutions like ‘schools’ – in this case Plato’s Academy and a proposed Academy of Village Design – “organizational development” assumes a binary framework: It can be applied to the development of the actual structure of the school *and also* to the development of the desired structure of mind that is a product or consequence of that school. Ideally, then, the school will be designed in such a way – taking into account all its multifarious aspects – so as to facilitate this desired organizational structure of mind.

Usually when thinking about schools, curriculum – the actual subject matter or content – is considered and then pedagogy – the process by which that subject matter will be conveyed or inculcated – is applied; yet nowhere have I seen it stated or suggested that the curricular/pedagogical tandem is established for the express purpose of influencing a desired ‘structure of mind.’ This is where the thinking of Julian Jaynes – in his intriguing and apparently still controversial book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* – became a central focus of my argument.

Jaynes’ thesis can, in my own words, be summarized thus: Before the introduction of writing as a means of expressing thought, human beings had a very different functional mental configuration: an active right brain would be the source of god-induced voices that would instruct the left brain how to act in novel situations. The advent of writing – or more descriptively, a ‘written literary tradition’ – generated a narratizing internal voice that eventually led to what Jaynes calls “an analog ‘I’ operating within an interiorized mind space.” This was the birth of “consciousness,” according to Jaynes – a distinctly felt ‘self’ thinking and acting upon the world as an autonomous individual agent. The counterpoint to this thesis is that people living within an ‘oral literary tradition’ do not possess this “analog ‘I’” and are therefore not “conscious.”

I first read Jaynes’ book in a previous study, “Consciousness and Human Development,” where I learned that there are about as many meanings to the word “consciousness” as there are people attempting to make a definition. In my role as a ‘designer of sustainable communities,’ I came to feel comfortable with my own definition: consciousness is not a “thing” that people “have,” nor even a process of mental functioning, but rather *the interface between purposeful activity and the environment in which or through which that activity is conducted*. By my definition, the quality or nature

of environment has a direct influence on the quality or nature of consciousness; the quality or nature of consciousness is not a pre-given: change the environment and consciousness automatically changes. From this perspective, it is possible to actually *enhance* consciousness by the skillful, knowledgeable design of the environment.

Having had an opportunity to develop my own conception of ‘consciousness,’ adapted to supporting my particular kind of work in the world, I was able to become critical of Jaynes’ usage. What Jaynes calls ‘consciousness’ – “an analog ‘I’ operating within an interiorized mind space” – I would more specifically term *self*-consciousness. According to my understanding, based on yogic philosophy, consciousness is pre-existing as permeating *throughout* the Universe. It was an outward-moving act of pure consciousness that set in motion the generative power of the Universe. *Self*-consciousness, by contrast, is more aligned with Jaynes’ conceptualization: I would call it a personal inner identity able to reflect in upon itself, dialogue with itself, and so consistently manage an ongoing ‘life story.’ Therefore, what I found to be most useful in Jaynes’ book was not his conceptualization of consciousness but rather the intriguing notion that people living within an ‘oral literary tradition’ have not yet internalized the capacity that I call *self*-consciousness. Further, the book introduced me to the notion that an ‘oral literary tradition’ is associated with an active right brain while in a ‘written literary tradition’ the left brain predominates – the two together comprising “bicamerality.” With this kind of understanding, it became possible to begin articulating the “organizational development” of structures of mind within an educational context.

Considering how important *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976) was to my ongoing investigation, you may empathize how excited I was to discover that there is a sequel. Apparently Jaynes passed on in 1997, leaving the promise of a second book unfulfilled. In order to consolidate all the extant writings, including copious notes that were contained in an 800 volume library, a student, Marcel Kuijsten, founded the Julian Jaynes Society. *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness* (2006) is a compilation of some of Jaynes unpublished chapters, plus the contributions of many associates defending or extending his views.

When I started reading through the new book, however, I didn’t locate any new material that could assist me specifically in extending the angle I mentioned above. Instead, what I found focused more on that same old debate about what consciousness ‘is,’ further exploration into the cultural source of consciousness, plus several articles discussing new clinical research relevant to the psychiatric aspects of Jaynes’ presentation. The lack of continuum toward my favored angle can be revealed by the absence of reference to what I consider to be an essential companion volume: Bruno Snell’s *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*. Both works highlight the *Iliad* as a decisive turning point.

What I did find of immense value in *Reflections on the Dawn of Consciousness* was a concise encapsulation of the three separate components of Jaynes' theory, and I cite this section in full:

- 1) The theory of the bicameral mind; namely, that the minds of ancient people were in two parts, and these corresponded to the two halves of the brain: the "voices of the gods" resided in the right hemisphere, while the left side dealt with the workday world of human experience. The "breakdown" of this bicameral mind was precipitated, in part, by an evolution in language (including writing), and the use of metaphor (and symbolic thought) more specifically. Through this evolution of language and language use, the breakdown also led to a further symbolic process of internal narratization. Jaynes describes it as the linguistic assimilation of the voices of the gods into a single sense of self, existing through time in a "mind-space." Mind-space is defined by Jaynes as a functional space, as opposed to a physical space, where we can create a (usually visual) analog of the world. Mind-space is thus Jaynes' description of the contents of consciousness, which he regards as representational and metaphoric, and as existing through language in a functional relationship with the world. It exists in the same way as, for instance, mathematics. It represents and describes the world, allows us to symbolically manipulate it, and provides a means for rational analysis.
- 2) The bicameral mind theory is rooted in neurological differences (primarily with regard to speech) between the right and left hemispheres. In fact, one of his key insights into the origin of consciousness came in 1967, when Jaynes realized that if evolution had confined speech areas to the left side of the brain, what was the corresponding right side for, since most important brain functions are bilateral? These differences are still there, he noted, and can be witnessed today in cases of schizophrenia, through electrical stimulation to the right side of the brain, or in certain aspects of childhood, such as having imaginary friends. Following Sperry's and Gazzinga's split-brain research, which was published a short time later, Jaynes recalled, "I knew I had something big."
- 3) It is a linguistic shift rather than any biological or neurological change that resulted in consciousness as we now experience it. According to Jaynes, there is no substantial difference between our brains today and those of bicameral people 3,000 years ago. The origin of consciousness rests *not* in evolution, but as a product of *culture and language*, or a cultural evolution, more specifically, in the use of writing and language. Our mentality – whether bicameral or conscious – is thus more a function of social context, language, and forms of communication than a hard-wired neurologically-based system. Understanding consciousness, therefore, has more to do with understanding our society rather than our brain, our language practices rather than neurotransmitters, and our cultural history as opposed to our genetic endowment. Biological factors clearly do play some role: for example, we can see the evolution of communication and

language in humans, something genetically and biologically grounded, but consciousness itself is something that emerged from *the use of language* (Greer, 2006, pp. 237-239, emphases in original).

Anthropologist Brian McVeigh has a very interesting article in the new volume in which he cites evidence from more contemporary, pre-literate tribal people as lacking reference to an “inner self.” At one point, McVeigh asserts – and I find this exceedingly significant – “currently, [literate] individuals might be described as “unicameral,” i.e., with a unitary self occupying the mind” (p. 213). Why do I find this so significant? Because in both volumes the bicameral mind of ancient or pre-literate peoples is assumed to be an inferior condition whereas the attainment of [self-]consciousness is regarded as something obviously to be prized. To this I would urgently disagree: In my formulation, bicameral mind is the *preferred* condition – indeed, the *natural* condition from which human beings should operate. The discovery of and foray into self-consciousness was a very necessary step in planetary evolution, for it introduced latent potentials residing in left-brain functioning: individualized identity, rational and reasoned thinking, the emergence of an interiorized mind-space in which metaphors of the world could be manipulated, the ability to project linearly into past and future situations, etc. These days, however, I would assert that over-reliance on the left brain has become a very big problem – indeed, the source of the “sustainability” problem; for in a state of consciousness where depletion of natural, social, and cultural capital can be “rationalized” as contributing to “self-interest,” that little interiorized narratizing voice is foolishly and blindly championing the destruction of its own life-support base.

Plato set up his Academy shortly after this self-consciousness began its ascension; therefore, the organizational development of his institution was intended to support the organizational development of this new kind of mind – yet even there, Plato was able to maintain some kind of balance. These days, however, when envisioning Academies for the 21st century, particular attention will need to be focused on ensuring that the organizational development of the institution facilitates an *evolved* organizational development of mind. In the language used in this essay, that means establishing curricula and pedagogy that will instill *full-blown bicameral mind* – both hemispheres working in complementary union toward the desired goal of exploring and fulfilling true human potential. This shift would be a vivid expression of the dialectic as renewed by Hegel – thesis, antithesis, synthesis – and translated by Dane Rhudyar in his important book *The Planetarization of Consciousness*: For Rhudyar, the ‘thesis’ was tribal consciousness, the ‘antithesis’ was individualized consciousness, and the ‘synthesis’ will be the consciousness of tribes of individuals. An Academy of Village Design will be devoted to creating the full-featured *contexts* in which the new synthesis may be realized. Perhaps in the new Academy participants will once again hear god-induced voices?

This study was a long time coming. In many ways, it feels like the culmination of the university education I began in 1994; for, whereas previously I had been self-designing studies devoted to the *content* of a ‘village design’ education, this time I focused on the philosophical foundation of the school that will *house* that education. In that sense, I feel like I’m in just the right place at just the right time, in a doctoral program called Human and Organization Development. Future studies will have a very different character: not so much the broad-scale soul searching but more like specific skills that need to be learned, integrated and then move on.

There was a lot more content I would have liked to have added to this essay about Plato’s Academy, yet the exigencies of managing a doctoral program within a limited time frame compelled me to set a somewhat arbitrary conclusion. Future iterations of this essay will or may include the following material.

- 1) It’s important to explore the concept of *phronesis* and how or if this was applied at the Academy. Sharon Bracci, referencing Aristotle for the purpose of comparing ‘contextual’ knowledge with ‘universal’ knowledge, says *phronesis* is “practical wisdom, which defines ethical judgments as contextual reasoning that attend closely to particulars. In this tradition, the ethical person of practical wisdom is one who acts rightly, for the right reasons, at the right time” (2002, p. 467). “*Phronesis* has been translated as *practical intelligence*, *practical wisdom*, or *prudence*, which involves ‘knowing how to apply general principles in particular situations...It is the ability to act so that principle will take concrete form’” (Birmingham, 2004, p. 314, quoting McIntyre, 1966, p. 74) I remember in my “epistemology” study coming across Bernstein’s discussion about the distinctions between *phronesis*, *techne*, and *praxis* within the context of an ontological hermeneutics. It should be important for an “Academy” to know the differences between these various approaches to education.
- 2) I wish to give more time to expressing the notion of education at the Academy being a form of ‘yoga.’ I was often struck by the parallels that can be made between statements of Plato/Socrates and those in yogic writings I have read – for instance, the purpose of yoga is “union with the Divine,” which is also the purpose of philosophy for Socrates. Other statements like education is “a conversion of the soul” (Jaeger, Volume II, p. 301) or “truth about being exists in our soul” (ibid, p.

169) or “complete humanity is possible only through endeavor to approximate to the divine” (ibid, pp. 287-88) have a spiritual gravity that makes them akin to yogic philosophy. Did Plato have a copy of the *Vedas*? I think it’s less important trying to trace a connection with India than merely affirming that perennial knowledge has a spiritual substrate; and integral yoga will be an integral practice at the Academy of Village Design.

- 3) I would have liked to have jumped into a discussion about the Ideal Forms: “eternal, unchanging, universal absolutes, independent of the world of phenomena; in, for example, absolute beauty, absolute justice, absolute goodness, from which whatever we call beautiful, just or good derives any reality it may have” (Grube, 1961, p. 1). Even though this was an essay about Plato’s Academy not Plato’s philosophy, I wanted to follow up on an observation made in the essay about how the Ideal Forms may be regarded as ‘universal archetypes,’ and how the articulation of universal archetypes may be a very strong foundation for students of ‘village design.’ Yogic philosophy enters here also, for teachers like Yogananda speak about the existence of an “astral plane,” a more vivid and ‘perfect’ reality than our dense “material plane,” populated by energetic constellations of universal character. Once again, the parallels are obvious.
- 4) I’m truly fascinated by the dual hemisphere reality of neurological functioning and its impact by an ‘oral literary tradition’ versus a ‘written literary tradition.’ “The oralist school in contemporary America, associated especially with the names McLuhan and Ong, has drawn a distinction between a linear-literate consciousness and its oral counterpart, on the whole to the disadvantage of the former...[W]hat is likely to be the professional fate of a thesis, here offered, which would regard the achievement of a conceptual syntax, and even of abstract thought, as the fruit of a change in communication, from the ear to the eye, from listening to viewing, from remembering to reading” (Havelock, 1978, p. 2)? I want to pursue this research further by being able to reference actual studies that have produced quantitative confirmation, and by ‘seeing’ what McLuhan and Ong have to say. Needless to say, education at the Academy of Village Design will emphatically support right-brain development, including the insertion of an explicitly mythological component to the experience.
- 5) I mentioned in the opening section the essentially “spiritual” connection between 5th century B.C. Athens and Renaissance Florence but didn’t have time to explore this further. Knowing that the Renaissance was largely informed by the revival of Platonism through the establishment of a “Platonic Academy” – associated with names like Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Lorenzo Magnifico – it may be possible to relate upsurges of “humanism” with especially creative bursts of

human genius. I find this possible relationship to be particularly relevant when considering that the Age of Aquarius is indeed dawning, and the symbolism inspired is that this new Age will be an Age of Humanism. That makes positioning the Academy of Village Design as a “millennial event” all the more apposite.

- 6) Finally, I came across a very interesting little book by a fellow named John Bremer who claims to have been given a parchment by a mysterious priest on an Ionian island; and in this parchment, ostensibly, was a letter written by Plato to his nephew, never before made public. Whether this story is true or not, I cannot tell; however the veracity of the source is not nearly as interesting as what’s inside the book. In Bremer’s translation, Plato reveals that the *Republic* was written to be the “constitution” of the Academy, and every year on its birthday the *Republic* would be recited aloud. While seemingly random in structure, the *Republic* – or more accurately, the *Polity* – is actually divided into 240 equal units representing an underlying arithmetical symmetry that corresponds to the Hellenic musical scale. Plato claims that the internal ratios he used correspond to what we would call today the “golden mean,” and this produces a “generative” effect. I didn’t have space to enter all this new material; indeed, it could be a whole study of its own. Exposure to these ideas, however, has rekindled in me a yearning to delve into the “sacred geometry” literature so that I may begin practicing these “generative” ratios myself – in the design of the Academy and in the *phronesis* of village designing itself.

And so, while I have completed the “In-depth” portion of my KA-717 study, the writing of this essay has raised more questions, perhaps, than it has answered. Isn’t that always the case? How could ‘education’ be confined to a few short years of early adulthood? I say we need an Academy – or a network of Academies – where life-long learning can be a way of life, where the upper reaches of human potential may be explored, where people may come to experience nothing less than a “conversion of the soul.” This Organizational Development study has brought me that much closer to realizing this ‘ideal’ – and isn’t that what Socrates and Plato were doing? Setting a standard of human behavior – the ‘philosopher’ – as an ideal? – an ideal that can never be fully realized, only forever striven toward. There is no destination; the fulfillment is in mastering the practice itself.

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Archaeological Site of Plato’s Academy, showing the foundations of the gymnasium
 (Source: google.com: “plato’s academy”)