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DEMOCRITUS ON POLITICS AND THE CARE OF THE SOUL

μέγιστον δὲ πάντων...πρὸς τὸ διαμένειν τὰς πολιτείας...τὸ παιδεύεσθαι πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας.

Aristotle, *Politics* 1310a12–14

I. INTRODUCTION

A number of Democritean fragments may loosely be called 'political', concerned as they are with questions to do with the *πόλις* – with government, with the duties and dangers of public office, with justice, law and order. The majority of them (B 248–66)[1] have been preserved in chapters of Stobaeus' anthology entitled 'On the State' (IV 1), 'On Laws and Customs' (IV 2), 'On Government' (IV 5).

Scholars have tended to steer clear of these texts and of Democritus' *fragmenta moralia* in general, for understandable reasons. The fragments are not what one would expect from the great precursor of Epicurus. They have little to connect them at all obviously with atomism. Unoriginal, often commonplace in content, they also contain disconcerting intimations – some would say 'echoes' – of doctrines associated with later thinkers. Their form is no less of a problem. As a prose stylist, Democritus was compared in antiquity with Plato. Some of his fragments are notable specimens of early *Kunstprosa*, extended pieces of fine writing or, at any rate, of connected prose. Others are quite different. Summary generalizations on matters to do with conduct, seldom more than a line or two in length, they are recognizably *γνῶμαι* in roughly Aristotle's sense. One of our two main sources of Democritean *moralia* is in fact a collection tiresomely entitled *Δημοκρατοῦς γνῶμαι*, 'Gnomai of Democrates'. These shorter fragments have sometimes been seen and admired as specimens of 'gnomic method', as aphorisms composed under a form of 'audience control' in a largely preliterate age.[2] But they can equally be seen as snippets from the same kind of Democritean writing as the longer passages, severely abbreviated in the course of transmission.

Much of the trouble with the Democritean fragments is, in fact, due to their transmission. Passages of Parmenides, Melissus or Anaxagoras have survived primarily because philosophical writers, from Aristotle onwards, thought them worth quoting. But Aristotle never mentions Democritus' ethical writings. Extracts from them have survived almost entirely through anthologies designed for other purposes than the transmission of philosophical doctrine. The best of these, the source of our fullest fragments, is that compiled in the fifth century A.D. by Stobaeus, who clearly drew his Democritean material not from actual works by Democritus but from earlier anthologies of the same broad kind as his own.[3] In the disposition of its very

[1] These and other fragments are cited by their numbers in the Diels–Kranz Collection (*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels, W. Kranz,[10] [Berlin], 1961).

[2] e.g. by E. A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (London, 1957), p. 126.

[3] It has been suggested, by P. von der Mühll ('Epikurs *Κυρίαι δόξαι* und Demokrit', *Festgäbe für Kaegi* [1919], 172–8) and R. Philippson ('Demokrits Sittensprüche' [*Hermes* 59 (1924), 369–419]), that Democritus or some immediate follower had compiled an epitome of his ethical works, on the lines of Epicurus' *Κυρίαι δόξαι* or Epictetus' *Encheiridion*. Of such an epitome, if there ever was one, there is not a trace in Stobaeus or anywhere else. The *Ὑποθῆκαι* mentioned by Dionysios of Alexandria (B 119) may well, as von der Mühll and Philippson suggest, have been an anthology. But we know nothing of its arrangement, contents or compiler.

varied materials,[4] his collection follows the pattern of earlier florilegia, which can be traced back to the third century B.C.[5] Their prime purpose had been to supply the budding writer or speech-maker with easily accessible quotations for his own compositions, and they provided material for a variety of literary exercises – above all for the θέσις, the practice of arguing in general terms the pros and cons of some broad question, such as 'should one get married?'.[6] Democritus had strong views on many such questions; it was for these that he found his way into the anthologies which, needless to say, conveyed nothing about the context of his remarks or the general doctrine which underlay them.

The transmission of the shorter 'gnomic' fragments, which can be found in Stobaeus as well as in the 'Democrates' Collection,[7] is even less satisfactory. They represent a different sort of anthology. Collections of short sentences, designed for moral edification, became increasingly common in Late Antiquity. (The 'Democrates' Collection is one example of the genre; the one-line *Μενάνδρου γνῶμαι* are another, in verse.) Their aim was not to provide writers with quotations; it was simply to edify. For that purpose, form counted for little: content was all. Minor considerations – like textual accuracy, coherent arrangement of subject-matter, ascription of texts to the right author or to any author at all – could go by the board.[8] We also find here a *metaphrastic* tendency of the sort that was to bedevil the transmission of much Christian *Erbauungsliteratur* – I mean, the tendency to rephrase material in the compiler's own words.[9] Texts of Democritus or Menander, as a result, would steadily be abbreviated (a striking feature of quite a few shorter fragments is how they read like reformulations of longer passages which still survive),[10] generalized, trivialized and distorted.[11] Needless to say, it is on isolated fragments of this kind that the more sensational interpretations of Democritean ethics tend to be based.[12]

For our purposes, this particular difficulty is, mercifully, of minor importance. The 'political fragments' are nearly all of them relatively long pieces preserved in Stobaeus. If their text in one or two places is vile, their transmission has been relatively good. The trouble lies elsewhere. When it comes to organizing, discussing or authenticating the *moralia* of Democritus we have a number of external bases on which to do so – doxographical evidence, points of contact with writings of

[4] See particularly O. Hense, 'Ioannes Stobaios', *RE* 9.2549–86 at 2557–63.

[5] J. Barns, 'A New Gnomologium: with Some Remarks on Gnomic Anthologies', *CQ* 44 (1950), 126–37, 45 (1951), 1–19.

[6] This exercise, incidentally, was on the curriculum not only of the rhetoricians but also of some philosophical schools, notably the Peripatos (D.L. 5.3, Strabo 13.1.54). See H. v. Arnim, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa* (Berlin, 1898), pp. 81–3. In the rhetorical handbooks, *εἰ γαμητέον* is the stock example of the θέσις or *quaestio infinita* (Quint. 3.5.8, Hermogenes 11, Theon 12, etc.). See Barns, art. cit. (n. 5), 13.

[7] There is in fact considerable overlap of material. F. Lortzing ('Ueber die ethischen Fragmente Demokrits', *Progr. Sophien-Gymnasium* 8 [Berlin, 1873], p. 10) neatly demonstrated that Stobaeus must have used either 'Democrates' or its *Vorlage* as one of his sources for Democritean material.

[8] Barns, art. cit. (n. 5), 16. One other class of anthology could also be mentioned here – the collections of copy-book sentences for use as writing or dictation exercises in elementary schools (see Barns, art. cit. (n. 5), 18f.). The simplicity, not to say puerility, of much material in the 'Democrates' Collection might well suggest some such purpose.

[9] cf. W. E. Blake, *AJP* 86 (1965), 317f.

[10] DK draw attention to one such apparent reformulation when they compare B 235 from Stobaeus (III 6.65) with B 71 (Democrates 36).

[11] A prime example is Democrates 80, where a phrase from an important Democritean fragment (B 181) reappears in a sentence of highly unDemocritean content.

[12] See, further, §2 *fin.* on the possible interpretations of B 62 and B 43.

philosophers known to have been influenced by Democritus (which means primarily Epicurus), and connections with Democritus' work in other areas, above all with his natural science.[13] Thus we have doxographical information that he saw εὐθυμίη or 'good spirits' as the 'end' in life, which gives us some clue about what to do with the fragments that speak of εὐθυμίη; there are obvious links, reassuring and helpful, between what Democritus and what Epicurus have to say about chance or about the pleasures of simple living; and the connections between Democritean ethics and physics have been keenly investigated.[14] For the political fragments, these guidelines are far less helpful. We have no doxographical evidence; connections with Epicurean doctrines about society are rather more tenuous; and there is little help to be got from Democritus' natural science or anthropological theory, though attempts have been made to find a naturalistic basis for his social ethic[15] or to found his political fragments on theories about the origins of society.[16]

Such reconstructions are inevitably circuitous, requiring long preliminary discussions of atomistic physics, Democritus' theory of knowledge, or his views on cultural prehistory.[17] In what follows, I shall try to avoid these, so far as possible. Instead, I shall start from the assumption, unprovable but not improbable, that Democritus, when he wrote on politics and public life, was writing from personal experience. He would not have been the only Presocratic philosopher to participate in public life. Melissus, to cite the most distinguished example, not only commanded a fleet but (unlike any other philosopher known to me) actually *won* a sea battle.[18] Democritus, admittedly, comes out of the biographical tradition as a somewhat unworldly sage with a taste for travel. One (late) source, however, does relate that, on returning from his travels, he 'held office in Abdera honoured for his wisdom'.[19] There is also some numismatic evidence. A group of silver coins minted in Abdera bear the legend *ΕΠΙ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΙΤΩ*, 'under Democritus', 'in Democritus' term of office'. The most recent study of the Abderite coinage dates this group, on numismatic grounds, to about 414 B.C.[20] Democritus the philosopher would have

[13] See H. von Arnim, *GGA* 11 (1894), 883.

[14] Most importantly by G. Vlastos, 'Ethics and Physics in Democritus', *Philosophical Review* 54 (1945), 578–92, 55 (1946), 53–64. A recent and ambitious exercise on the same lines can be found in C. Farrar, *The Origins of Democratic Thinking* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 172–264.

[15] By, for instance, S. Luria, 'Zur Frage der materialistischen Begründung der Ethik bei Demokrit', *D. Ak. Wiss. z. Berlin Alt. Wiss.* 44 (Berlin, 1964).

[16] By Havelock, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 115–54, and A. T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (Ann Arbor, 1967). See also R. Müller, 'Die Stellung Demokrits in der antiken Sozialphilosophie', *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Democritus*, ed. L. Benakis (Xanthi, 1984), i.423–34.

[17] Rather more than half of Farrar's chapter on Democritus (see above), for instance, is devoted to this sort of question.

[18] Plutarch, *V. Per.* 26 = DK 30 A 3. In the fourth century, Archytas of Tarentum was seven times 'general of the citizens' and never once defeated (D.L. 8.79, 82). [19] Suda. DK 68 A 2.

[20] J. M. F. May, *The Coinage of Abdera* (London, 1966), places this group (LXXXVII) of coins towards the end of his Period V (*c.* 439/7–411/10 B.C.). Previous numismatists (e.g. H. v. Fritze, *Nomisma* 3 [1909], 23f.) dated them to about 443. This dating led to denials (e.g. by H. v. Fritze) that the coins had anything to do with Democritus the philosopher. It was also used by L. Stella, 'Intorno alla cronologia di Democrito', *RFIC* 21 (1942), 36, as evidence that he must have been a generation older than the Apollodoran chronology indicates, while C. Seltman (*Greek Coins* [London, 1933], p. 143), asserted that the coin was 'issued at a time when he might have been a priest of Apollo between the ages of twenty and thirty.' ('The annual priest would... be... perhaps a young man whose youthfulness should correspond to that of the deity himself. It is tempting to suppose...'). For P. J. Bicknell (*Apeiron* 4.1 [1970], 1–3), 'the magistracy will have been a token of their (*sc.* his fellow-citizens') appreciation.'

been in his mid forties or fifties at the time (it depends on whether you follow the Apollodoran or the Thrasyllan chronology). We have no proof whatever that he was the magistrate named on the coins, nor have we much idea what the magistracy would have involved. But the coincidence of names is at least intriguing.[21]

II. PUBLIC PESTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

If you ask why Democritus should have felt the need to go into politics, an answer is perhaps to be found in the carefully balanced sentences of B 252*.[22]

To affairs of state one should, above all else, attach the greatest importance, that it be well ordered, neither engaging in contentions beyond what is reasonable nor appropriating personal power beyond the common good. For the state well ordered is the greatest source of success, and all depends on this. If this is saved, all is saved; if this is destroyed, all things are destroyed.

Private well-being depends entirely on the continued well-being of the state – the theme was a commonplace, oft repeated and doubtless worth repeating.[23] Thucydides employs it in Pericles' final speech, which consoles the Athenians for their war-time privations with the argument that these can all be put right so long as the state remains prosperous. For Democritus, it justifies the claim that politics are too important to be neglected,[24] or to be pursued in a self-seeking manner – like that of Pericles' successors whose private recriminations led to national defeat.[25] When he writes of unreasonable contentions and anti-social aggrandizement, Democritus is dealing with 'real-life' politics, with the jockeying of rival politicians for position. And when he warns against individuals' 'appropriating power beyond the common good', he is touching on a classic cause of political instability. At Athens and Argos during the fifth century the danger was countered by the device of 'ostracizing' any individual who threatened to become too powerful.[26] Democritus here offers no such mechanism. He merely preaches against undue ambition. And that perhaps is significant. In this as in most of his political fragments, he is less concerned with problems of politics than with personal morality in public life. But the principle which he puts forward – we may call it 'the primacy of the common good'[27] – is fundamental; it underlies not only his overtly 'political' pronouncements – on public office, on justice and laws – but also his prescriptions, or some of them, for private conduct. His 'public spirit' is by no means totalitarian. When he speaks of 'contentions contrary to what is reasonable', he implies that some contentiousness may indeed be 'reasonable', in the same way that a certain amount of personal aggrandizement may perfectly well accord with 'the common good'. But 'the

[21] The name Democritus was not, of course, unique. It was borne by, amongst others, a Naxian trierarch at Salamis (Hdt. 8.46.3), a Chian man of letters mentioned by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1409b26. Cf. D.L. 9.49) and at least three Athenians (see Pape–Benseler, s.v. *Δημόκριτος*).

[22] Fragments marked * will be printed with text and commentary in an appendix to this article, forthcoming in *CQ*.

[23] Particularly to individuals counting, as many could, on a network of foreign connections or *ξένοι* to fall back on in the event of national disaster. See G. Herman, *Ritualized Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987).

[24] As does Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.7.9: *καὶ μὴ ἀμέλει τῶν τῆς πόλεως ...· τούτων γὰρ καλῶς ἐχόντων ... καὶ οἱ σοὶ φίλοι καὶ αὐτὸς σὺ οὐκ ἐλάχιστα ὠφελήσῃ.*

[25] Thuc. 2.65.11.

[26] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1302b15–21. Cf. 1308b16–19. In fourth-century Athens, various other devices, such as the *γραφὴ παρανόμων*, served the same purpose.

[27] It was on this principle, on whether they were designed to serve the 'common good' rather than some sectional interest, that Aristotle was to distinguish 'correct' constitutions from their 'deviations' (1279a17–20).

common good' is the vital consideration. To any who threaten it, Democritus is unforgiving.

A single-minded concern for the common good is perhaps what underlies and unites four rather gruesome texts from Democritus in Stobaeus' chapter 'On Laws and Customs' (IV 2.15–18 = B 257–60). Archaic in style, legal in language, all of them are about killing. B 257* asserts:

> Concerning the slaughter or non-slaughter of certain animals, the rule is as follows: he who kills those which do or are disposed to do harm goes scot-free, and to do so shall be for well-being rather than otherwise.

B 258* goes further. Not merely is it permissible to kill such pests; it is positively necessary.

> It is needful to kill those creatures which do damage contrary to right, all of them at all costs. And he who does this shall have a greater share of good cheer, of rights, of security and of property in every order.

The pesticide is a benefactor to be rewarded with a variety of privileges by a grateful community. B 259* directs its attention to the problem of human pests, whose slaughter is restricted by religious considerations.

> As has been written about enemies in the form of foxes and reptiles, so too it seems to me needful to act in the case of men: in accordance with ancestral laws to kill the enemy in every social order in which law does not debar it. (In fact, it is prevented by sanctuaries in each country, and by treaties and oaths.)

And the following fragment, B 260*, cites two kinds of human enemy.

> Any one killing any brigand or pirate should go scot-free, whether he does so by his own hand, by orders, or by vote,

that is, whether he does so as a private individual, as a magistrate, or as a member of a jury. Such outlaws are unlikely to be protected by treaties or oaths.

These fragments are amongst the most bewildering in the whole *corpus Democriteum*. Their very outlandishness may have been what appealed to the anthologist. The utterances in them about killing noxious animals almost lend credence to the story that Democritus was educated by Persian Magi (D.L. 9.34), who indeed practised the slaughter of 'ants and snakes and other flying or creeping things', as an act of religious merit (Hdt. 1.140.3). A closer parallel lies in native Greek traditions of a primeval struggle – of exploits by Heracles, Theseus, Meleager and other heroes – against wild beasts.[28] The struggle is recalled at the start of the myth in Plato's *Protagoras*; Isocrates speaks of it; and it later found its way into Epicurean prehistory: according to Hermarchus, men discovered at an early stage that killing wild animals and not killing one another would make for security, for freedom from fear.[29] Put very crudely, the story to be gleaned from these and other sources is that, having originally subsisted in scattered groups at the mercy of wild animals, men were forced for their own safety to live together in cities, which they

[28] At least six of Heracles' twelve labours are against wild beasts. Theseus is a still more Democritean hero, slaying as he does not only the Minotaur, the Crommyonian sow (Plutarch, *V. Th.* 9) and the bull of Marathon (14), but also such brigands as Sinis the Pine-bender (8), Sciron (10) and Procrustes (11). Plagues of wild animals, no less than floods, pestilence or famine, were a recognized catastrophe, capable of annihilating whole peoples. See Dicaearchus, fr. 24 W (= Cic. *Off.* 2.16): 'est Dicaearchi liber de interitu hominum,... qui collectis ceteris causis eluvionis, pestilentiae, vastitatis, beluarum etiam repentinae multitudinis, quarum impetu docet quaedam hominum genera esse consumpta...'

[29] Plato, *Prt.* 322b; Isoc. 12.163; Hermarchus ap. Porphyry, *Abst.* I. 10.1ff. (= LS 22 N).

could only do by cultivating justice and the cooperative virtues. Their earliest experience thus brought home to men the two 'parts' or concerns of the 'political art' – warfare against animals and other enemies outside the πόλις, justice and harmony within.[30] Democritus probably espoused some such prehistory himself; it may well be that he 'saw the origins of society's attitude toward criminals[31] in man's early struggle for survival against other species';[32] killing brigands is on a par with killing foxes and other pests. But that does not make fragments 257, 258 and 259 a mere exercise in social aetiology. B 259 is not explaining an attitude on the part of society towards criminals, it is *prescribing* one: 'as has been written about enemies in the form of foxes and reptiles, so too *in my opinion it is needful*...'. Again, when B 260 speaks of giving orders or voting, it assumes the institutions of a contemporary Greek state. Its language has a notably legal ring to it. The word ἀθῶιος 'unmulcted' was a technical term of law,[33] while the nouns κιξάλλης and λῃστής 'brigand and pirate' occur in an early fifth-century inscription from Teos,[34] the mother state of Abdera. These are the famous 'Teian Imprecations', pronouncements of solemn curses against poisoners, against various malefactors including magistrates guilty of highway robbery or of harbouring highwaymen, of brigandage or of harbouring brigands. Our Democritean fragments belong to a world where brigandage and piracy are a practical problem. (They were to remain so for most of antiquity.)[35] Where Epicurean theory sees the origin of various customs in a common desire for security, these Democritean pronouncements on killing outlaws and destroying animals which do or may do damage are concerned with *protecting* the common security. There is no trace in them of the enlightened penology expounded in Plato's *Protagoras* (324ab), of the idea that punishment may somehow be for the correction of the wrong-doer – let alone of questions (which did arise elsewhere) about 'animal rights', about whether animals can be subjects as well as objects of justice.[36] Their perspective is exclusively that of 'the common good'.

When Democritus speaks of killing animals 'which do or are disposed to do wrong', ἀδικέοντα καὶ θέλοντα ἀδικεῖν, and urges the same treatment for human pests, his views are those of the orator who argues: 'None of you has yet perhaps been bitten by a snake or a scorpion – I hope that you won't be. All the same, whenever you see any such creatures you kill them'.[37] The problem is simply how to forestall a possible danger. The prophylactic principle of B 257 reappears, applied to human beings, in the Democrates Collection: 'Your enemy is not he who wrongs you but he who wishes to do so' (B 89). This says roughly the same as another sentence: 'Beware the villain, lest he seize his opportunity' (B 87). And the principle reappears, somewhat extended, in a third maxim: 'A man is to be trusted or distrusted, not by his deeds alone, but also by his wishes' (B 68).[38] All of which was current wisdom, a

[30] Plato, *Prt.* 322b. See Cole, op. cit. (n. 16), p. 123. It also led, on one version (Polybius 6.6.8), to the rise of monarchy, through the award of privileges – on the lines prescribed in B 258 – to individuals for outstanding service against the most dangerous animals.

[31] Or, at any rate, external enemies. Brigands and pirates operate outside city limits, on the high seas and in the no-man's-land between city territories.

[32] Cole, op. cit. (n. 16), p. 124.

[33] See Friedländer, *Hermes* 48 (1913), 613 n. 3.

[34] Tod, 23, Meiggs–Lewis, 30.

[35] See W. Kroll, *RE* sv. 'Seeraub', Badian, *OCD* sv. 'Piracy', J. R. Paneris, *Philologus* 127 (1983), 301f., etc.

[36] See R. Hirzel, *Themis, Dike und Verwandtes* (Leipzig, 1902), pp. 212–20.

[37] [Demosthenes].25.26 (printed by Untersteiner as part of the Anonymous Περὶ Νόμων).

[38] B 89 = Democrates 55 ἐχθρὸς οὐχ ὁ ἀδικέων, ἀλλὰ ὁ βουλόμενος. B 87 = Democrates 53 τὸν φαῦλον παραφυλάττειν δεῖ, μὴ καιροῦ λάβηται. B 68 = Democrates 33 δόκιμος ἀνὴρ καὶ ἀδόκιμος οὐκ ἐξ ὧν πράσσει μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ὧν βούλεται.

justification for preemptive ruthlessness.[39] At some stage of its transmission, however, this 'counsel of prudence' received a most edifying transformation. A sentence (B 62) quoted both by 'Democrates' and by Stobaeus in a chapter 'On Righteousness' asserts: 'Being good is not to refrain from wrong-doing but from even the wish to do wrong'.[40] Stobaeus goes on to ascribe another such sentiment to Democritus:

> Friends of the gods are they alone to whom wrong-doing is hateful.[41]

A principle for dealing with mischief by others has become a maxim for one's own conduct in general.[42] Democritus comes to sound disconcertingly like Kant[43] or, at any rate, the Xenophontine Socrates.[44] This transformation looks like a travesty. At the same time, the anthologist may have touched on something genuinely Democritean. Fragment 252, with its demand that the public good should come first, was an appeal to the personal morality of politicians; and we shall see that Democritus' principal way of establishing the good order of the city is to ensure that it has citizens for whom indeed 'wrong-doing is hateful'.

III. DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC OFFICE

We have, unfortunately, little hard information about the history of Abdera during Democritus' lifetime.[45] As a member of the Delian league, it may well have had a

[39] cf. Thuc. 6.38.4: ...τοὺς δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα μηχανωμένους κολάζων μὴ μόνον αὐτοφώρους (χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἐπιτυγχάνειν), ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧν βούλονται μέν, δύνανται δ' οὐ (τὸν γὰρ ἐχθρὸν οὐχ ὧν δρᾷ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς διανοίας προαμύνασθαι χρή, εἴπερ καὶ μὴ προφυλαξάμενός τις προπείσεται. Cf. 6.18.2.

[40] B 62 = Stob. III 9 (περὶ δικαιοσύνης). 29 = Democrates 27: ἀγαθὸν οὐ τὸ μὴ ἀδικεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μηδὲ ἐθέλειν.

[41] B 217 = Stob. III.9.30 μοῦνοι θεοφιλέες, ὅσοις ἐχθρὸν τὸ ἀδικέειν. I take θεοφιλέες actively, as 'loving the gods', 'pious' (as at Isoc. 4.29), equivalent to φιλόθεοι (Ar. *Rhet.* 1391b2), rather than passively 'dear to the gods, divinely favoured', though this is certainly the commoner meaning. What seems highly rash is to draw theological conclusions from this translation, and infer that Democritus believed in 'love and friendship between man and deity', 'in the possibility of a spiritual relationship' (D. McGibbon, *Hermes* 93 [1965], 393).

[42] A similar ambiguity occurs in B 43 = Democrates 9 μεταμέλεια ἐπ' αἰσχροῖσιν ἔργμασι βίου σωτηρία: 'remorse at shameful deeds: life's salvation'. This could mean, and doubtless the anthologist took it to mean, that repentance is the start of a new and more wholesome life – 'initium est salutis notitia peccati' (Epicurus 522 U = Seneca, *Ep.* 28.9. Cf. Cebes, *Pinax* 11.1, Hierocles, *in Carm. Aur.* 14, Nilus – PG 79.1249c: ἀρχὴ σωτηρίας ἡ ἑαυτοῦ κατάγνωσις, etc.). But the penitent wrong-doer might also be 'saved' in the sense of receiving a lighter punishment or no punishment at all (cf. Isoc. 17.17f.: ...'realizing that there would be no chance of escape (οὐδεμίαν αὐτῷ σωτηρίαν) if the case came up before you...', Sophocles, *Philoct.* 1270, Euripides, *Andr.* 1003f., Thucydides 3.46.1, Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1380a13–15, etc. On this more probable interpretation, the fragment was originally not about the 'salvation' of his soul, but about the treatment which he can expect to receive from others. (Contra Farrar, op. cit. [n. 14], pp. 236f.)

[43] Fr. 62, according to Philippson (op. cit. [n. 3], p. 417), 'nimmt den kantischen Grundsatz voraus: Gut ist allein der güter Wille.' Likewise G. Ibscher, *Demócrito y sus sentencias sobre ética y educación* (Lima, 1983–4), ii.199f.

[44] Xen. *Mem.* 40.4.12: ἀλλ' ὤμην ἔγωγε, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, τὸ μὴ θέλειν ἀδικεῖν ἱκανὸν δικαιοσύνης ἐπίδειγμα εἶναι. Cf. Philemon, fr. 94K: ἀνὴρ δίκαιός ἐστιν οὐχ ὁ μὴ ἀδικῶν, | ἀλλ' ὅστις ἀδικεῖν δυνάμενος μὴ βούλεται.

[45] For what we do know, or can reasonably infer, see May, op. cit. (n. 20), pp. 147–53, 179–89, 239–43.

democratic constitution,[46] at least till 411 B.C.[47] One fragment (B 251*) is often cited as evidence that he himself 'undoubtedly preferred'[48] this form of government:

Poverty in a democracy is as preferable to so-called prosperity among dictators as freedom is to slavery.

All that this proves is that he undoubtedly preferred democracy to life under δυνάσται – it does not make him a convinced democrat. Rule by the people, according to our oldest theoretical account of democracy, was distinguished by three features, election by lot, accountability of officials, and popular control of all measures.[49] Democritus appears to have criticized at least the first of these features. B 254* asserts:

When the bad enter public office, the unworthier they are on entry, the more heedless they become, the fuller of folly and rashness.

The purpose of election by lot was to ensure that the 'bad', the κακοί, had the same access as their betters to public office.[50] And other fragments, none worth very much on its own, can be read as criticisms of this democratic objective: 'It is hard to be governed by an inferior', 'By nature government belongs to the superior'. And so forth.[51] We shall see, too, an important text (B 266) which may, though it need not, be read as a complaint about the workings of the εὔθυνα, the audit at which retiring officials had to render account of their term in office.

What B 251 does show is that Democritus had no time for δυνασταί – their modern equivalent would perhaps be a 'junta'. The term δυναστεία meant government by a handful of powerful individuals (δυνατοί) 'acting...in the style and spirit of a "tyrant"'.[52] Aristotle was to classify it as the extreme form of oligarchy, distinguished by the fact that the law is no longer sovereign; individuals rule supreme, answerable to no one, without legal constraints[53] – which means that even supposedly 'prosperous' citizens are no more secure than 'slaves', no freer to do what they will. To that state of lawlessness anything might seem preferable, even impoverishment in a democracy.[54] But not every oligarchy is a dynasty, nor is it only in democracies that laws are sovereign. The author of B 251 might have been equally happy, or happier, in a moderate oligarchy, like that of the Five Thousand at Athens under which the Athenians had 'some of the best government' that Thucydides could recall.[55] For

[46] Even if Athens did not impose democracy on every city in the league (see R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 207–19), this was the primary form of government among the Eastern Greeks (Meiggs, p. 208). Their number would include Abdera, a colony of Teos.

[47] Abdera probably seceded at the same time as Thasos from the Athenian Empire. The two cities were reconquered for Athens by Thrasybulus in 407 (Diod. Sic. 13.72.1f.). See May, op. cit. (n. 20), pp. 179–82.

[48] C. Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford, 1928), p. 211.

[49] Hdt. 3.80.6: πάλῳ μὲν ἀρχὰς ἄρχει, ὑπεύθυνον δὲ ἀρχὴν ἔχει, βουλεύματα δὲ πάντα ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἀναφέρει.

[50] At any rate to the less demanding offices. See Ps.-Xenophon, *Ath. Pol.* 1.2.

[51] B 49, B 267. Cf. B 75 and B 47 (on the slightly different subject of the pre-eminence due to the wise). See Appendix (forthcoming, cf. n. 22) on B 254.

[52] E. Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1948), p. 83 n. 1.

[53] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1292b5–10, 1293a30–4. Cf. Thuc. 3.62.3, etc. For further lexicographical material, see G. J. D. Aalders, 'The Political Faith of Democritus', *Mnemosyne* 3 (1951), 302–13, at p. 304 n. 11.

[54] So long, of course, as it is not democracy in its extreme form whereby the mob rules and the law (as in a 'dynasty') is subordinate (Ar. *Pol.* 1292a3–5, 1293a9f.).

[55] Or perhaps 'enjoyed the optimal form of constitution'. The interpretation of Thucydides 8.97.2: οὐχ ἥκιστα...εὖ πολιτεύσαντες is a notorious teaser. See Gomme–Andrewes–Dover ad loc.

good government and efficient administration rather than constitutional theory is the central concern of these fragments. Their focus is on having laws that are well enforced and, still more, on the responsibilities of those who have to enforce them.

Magistracies from which the 'bad' are better excluded are the rightful province of the 'good', the χρηστοί, the 'men of worth' – in other words, the 'better class' of people, like the Old Oligarch and his friends[56] or, one suspects, Democritus and his readers. Such people were not always willing to take on the burdens of public life; ἀπραγμοσύνη, 'abstention from public affairs' was an ideal espoused by many.[57] An important fragment (B 253)* considers the matter from different angles.

It is not in their interest for men of worth to neglect their own for other business; for their private business will go badly. But if a man neglects public business, he comes to have a bad reputation, even if he neither steals a thing nor does anything wrong; for even *without* negligence or wrong-doing there is a danger of bad reputation and indeed of punishment. One is bound to get it wrong. But it is not easy for men to admit this.

'For fence-sitting and avoidance of committal', one scholar found this fragment 'hard to beat'.[58] The passage is certainly 'aporetic'.[59] Its purpose is to leave you in a quandary, by showing you that things are rather more difficult than you supposed them to be. To go into public life or not? The dilemma is fundamentally simple. If you do, your private affairs will suffer from neglect.[60] If you do not, your reputation will suffer even though you have not done anything wrong. So you can't win, you are bound to get something wrong, even though you won't admit this. The second sentence[61] adds an unpleasant complication: 'if you neglect public affairs, your reputation will suffer, since *even if* you do not neglect them, and *even if* you avoid wrong-doing, you are still in danger of incurring a bad reputation and possibly some penalty'. The unfortunate 'man of worth' is faced with an unpleasant choice. He can stay out of public life and gain an undeservedly bad reputation. Or he can go into public life, allowing his private affairs to suffer and exposing himself furthermore, however conscientiously and honestly he conducts himself, to the danger of a bad reputation or worse. (As we shall see from B 266, a blameless magistrate may indeed find himself in trouble.) Faced with this choice, he might well decide to stop worrying about a reputation which is going to suffer anyway.[62] He might even pack his bags and go off, as Democritus himself was said to have done, on extensive foreign travels. Alternatively, he might adopt the attitude of high patriotism prescribed in B 252. Concluding that his private interests and the well-being of the city are inseparable, that to participate in public affairs is by no means to 'neglect his own for other business',[63] he might after all embark upon public life, despite the 'danger' – which

[56] Ps.-Xenophon 1.9 etc. For material on the political, social and moral connotations of terms like χρηστός and κακός, in Ps.-Xenophon (1.8f.) and Aristophanes, see G. de Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London, 1972), pp. 36f., 358f., 374f.

[57] See Gomme on Thuc. 2.40.2. See also L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 26–51.

[58] W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* ii (Cambridge, 1965), p. 491.

[59] Like B 278 which demonstrates that having children is by no means as straightforward a need as you might have thought.

[60] Unless, like Pericles, you happen to have a first-rate steward (Plut. *V. Per.* 16.5).

[61] I translate the text as in DK, with Meineke's addition of μή before ἀμελέοντι. See Appendix (forthcoming).

[62] One might recall here B 48 (Democrates 14, Stob. III.38.46): μωμεομένων φλαύρων ὁ ἀγαθὸς οὐ ποιεῖται λόγον 'to the censures of the bad the good man pays no heed.' Cf. Theogn. 795f.

[63] Compare the attitude of the sycophant in Aristoph. *Plutus* 909–19.

after all is not the same thing as an unavoidable 'necessity' – of coming to grief thereby.[64]

The Democritean official may possibly console himself with the thought that merit will eventually find recognition; a badly transmitted fragment (B 263)* appears to promise 'the greatest share of rights and excellence' to him 'who worthily fulfils the greatest offices'. In the meantime, he needs to have a powerful sense of duty, and he can expect little gratitude. One of the wittier fragments (B 265)* makes this clear.

Things done wrong are what men remember rather than things done well. And quite right too. For just as he who returns a deposit deserves no praise, while he who does not deserves a bad reputation and a bad time, so too with the magistrate. He was not elected to do things badly, but to do them well.

Democritean magistrates, even the most conscientious of them, are in for a rough ride. So much emerges from B 266*, a passage in three sentences, the first ambiguous, the second hopelessly corrupt.

There is no device in the present shape of society to stop wrongdoing of magistrates, however excellent they may be. For to no other... These matters too should somehow be so ordered, that the doer of nothing wrong, however thoroughly he examine wrongdoers, should not fall into their power, but rather some statute or something else should protect the doer of what is right.

The obvious interpretation of the opening sentence is 'there is no device at present to prevent magistrates from doing wrong, however excellent they may be'. But the words could also be construed as 'there is no device to prevent wrong being done *to* the magistrates – the accusative-and-infinitive construction leaves it unclear whether they are the objects or subjects of the wrong-doing; and the text of the following sentence, which must have explained what was said in the first, is too corrupt to offer much guidance. The last sentence, however, is clearly about an injustice which a magistrate may suffer. The situation for which it demands a remedy is that of the official who may at some time find himself at the mercy of wrong-doers whom he has been investigating. This could happen under any constitution which allows individual citizens to take turns in office.[65] The wrong-doing under investigation is straightforward enough, a matter of theft perhaps (cf. B 253) or murder or treason. But why should the magistrate himself be described as a 'doer of nothing wrong' and 'doer of what is right'? Possibly because the malefactors whom he is troubling with his investigations would, on one account of justice, regard him as doing *them* wrong, if he has not himself been injured by them beforehand. The Democritean magistrate is in a dilemma similar to that of the man, cited by Antiphon in the *Aletheia*, who gives true evidence – a form of conduct conventionally seen as just – against someone who has not personally injured him, and will thus be treating that person unjustly, if justice also means not injuring someone without first having been injured oneself.[66] The dilemma enables Antiphon to play off different notions of justice against each other and to demonstrate their incoherence.[67] For Democritus in this context, there is no moral or intellectual dilemma – only a political problem. His perspective, here as in the other political fragments, is that of the community as a whole and of its well-

[64] With this interpretation compare that by C. Moulton, 'Antiphon the Sophist and Democritus', *MH* 31 (1974), 129–39, at p. 133.

[65] Thus the fragment need not be what nearly all interpreters since Jacobs (quoted by DK ad loc) have claimed it to be, a critique of some specifically democratic institution, like the εὔθυνα or 'audit', whereby the δῆμος sought to control its officials.

[66] Antiphon 87 B 44 C 1.3–19 (DK II p. 353f.).

[67] cf. D. J. Furley, 'Antiphon's Case against Justice' (in *The Sophists and their Legacy*, ed. G. B. Kerferd, *Hermes Einzelschr.* 44 [1981], 81–91), pp. 86–8.

being. From that perspective, the magistrate is beyond doubt doing 'what is right'. Democritus' aim here, anyway, is not to construct or destroy a theory of justice, but to improve 'the present shape of things' and ensure, by some piece of legal engineering, that a particular injustice is avoided. Which brings us to the ambiguous first sentence. Since the end of the fragment is clearly about protecting the righteous inquisitor from a possible injustice, it might now seem obvious to understand the opening sentence on the same lines 'There is no device to prevent wrong being done to the magistrates'. But in that case why add 'however excellent they may be'? I would prefer to take the sentence the other way: 'there is no means of ensuring that no wrong is done *by* the magistrates...'. And if you ask what wrong they do, the answer to be extracted from the fragment can only run: 'Failing, for fear of the consequences, to carry out their duty and to prosecute malefactors as they ought'.[68] To do so is to endanger 'the common good'.

IV. SINS OF OMISSION AND THEIR CONSEQUENCE FOR THE SOUL

To preserve the common good it is vital to bring the malefactor to book – Democritus' own eagerness to do so shines out in a memorable text on a rather different question: 'Is it soul or body that is to blame for human unhappiness?'

> If the body were to file a claim against the soul for the lifelong pain and ill treatment which it had suffered, and he himself had to judge the complaint, he would gladly condemn the soul,... in the same way that, if an implement or piece of equipment were in bad condition, he would mercilessly put the blame on the user.[69]

Failure to condemn where condemnation is due is itself a sin. The idea of wrong-doing by omission appears in a number of fragments, most notably in B 256*:

> Justice is doing what needs to be done, injustice not doing what needs to be done but turning aside.

As a definition of justice and injustice, the sentence is hopeless; 'what needs be', *τὰ χρὴ ἐόντα*, is just too wide a term to make an adequate *definiens*.[70] The fragment is not an attempt to define the concepts of justice and injustice for purposes of argument or inference – in that respect, it stands in contrast to definitions of justice by, say, Antiphon or Epicurus.[71] It is simply and summarily a classification – brief, broad and persuasive – of two attitudes, two kinds of conduct, right and wrong. Its closest connections in content are with two texts from a later chapter in Stobaeus (IV 5.43f. = B 261 and B 262). According to B 261*,

[68] *ἀδικία*, as an indictable offence by an official, could mean little more than mal-administration or culpable inadvertence. See Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 54.2 and MacDowell on Aristoph. *V.* 896.

[69] B 159* = Plutarch, *fr. de lib. et aegr.* 2. The final words of the fragment may possibly be Plutarch's. See Appendix (forthcoming).

[70] Though anyone reading on to the fragments which follow in Stobaeus (B 257–260; see §2) with their prescriptions for the slaughter of animal and human enemies, would soon discover one thing which 'needs doing'!

[71] The Antiphon papyrus opens by saying: 'So justice is to refrain from transgressing the laws and customs of the city in which one is a citizen'; from which it goes on to argue that one would do best to respect those laws when people are watching, and to follow the demands of nature when they are not (DK 87 B 44 A col. 1f.). Epicurus' definition of 'natural justice' as 'a guarantee of utility with a view to not harming one another and not being harmed' (*RS* 31) provides a basis for further doctrines about the objective status and scope of justice (*RS* 32, 33, 36), about the validity of laws (*RS* 37), and so forth.

It is needful to requite those who suffer wrong to the best of one's ability and not to let it pass. To do so is right and good. Not to do so is wrong and bad.

B 262* makes a similar assertion.

And those whose deeds deserve exile or imprisonment or who deserve penalty are to be condemned and not set free. Whosoever contrary to law sets them free, determining the issue for gain or pleasure, does wrong and this must necessarily be on his heart.

Both these texts not only specify something which 'needs to be done' – avenging the injured, punishing the guilty; they point to the injustice of failing to do so. The notion of wrong-doing by omission reappears, possibly via the work of Panaetius, in Cicero's *de officiis*: 'He who does not prevent or oppose wrong, if he can, is as guilty of wrong as if he deserted his parents, his friends or his country'. Later on, it provided Lactantius with a justification for the wrath of God.[72] It may already have been an established commonplace of forensic oratory in the time of Democritus.[73] What B 256 does is to reformulate the notion as a principle of the utmost generality.

The context of B 261 and 262, however, is fairly specific. It is recognizably that of the law-courts. B 261, moreover, strikes a democratic attitude, when it speaks of requiting those who have been wronged. Respect for laws, 'particularly those established for the assistance of the injured', was a much trumpeted Athenian principle.[74] One of the three most 'democratic' or 'populist' features of Solon's legislation had been the provision that any volunteer, and not merely a kinsman, could claim redress on behalf of a person who had been wronged.[75] Another was the right of appeal to large popular juries.[76] And it is the members of such a jury who are primarily addressed in B 262. The guilty are to be punished; failure to enforce the full rigour of the law is itself a form of injustice,[77] and it will lie on the conscience of those who fail in that duty. The word ἐγκάρδιον in B 262, possibly a coinage by Democritus himself, is a variant of ἐνθύμιον, 'on the spirit', a term much used in the forensic oratory of the time.[78] A crime such as murder is ἐνθύμιον, its victim is ἐνθύμιος, in that an act of impiety has been committed, bringing pollution upon the criminal and the community as a whole; unless duly expiated by his exclusion from the community through death or banishment, it is certain to call down disaster upon both. 'If we fail to avenge the victim, we shall be visited by the dread spirits of vengeance to whom the dead turn', says Antiphon.[79] Such food for thought would regularly be dispensed by prosecutors and digested by juries. In the *Wasps* of 422 B.C., Aristophanes could almost be parodying the conclusion of B 262: 'How shall I live with this on my

[72] Cic. *Off.* I 23 (cf. M. Ant. 9.5: ἀδικεῖ πολλάκις ὁ μὴ ποιῶν τι, οὐ μόνον ὁ ποιῶν τι), Lact. *Ira* 17.7: 'bonorum enim salutem custodit qui malos punit...ergo et deus cum malis obest, nocens non est; is autem nocens qui aut innocenti nocet aut nocenti parcit, ut pluribus noceat.'

[73] cf. Thuc. 2.69.1: ...οὐ γὰρ ὁ δουλωσάμενος, ἀλλ' ὁ δυνάμενος μὲν παῦσαι περιορῶν δὲ ἀληθέστερον αὐτὸ δρᾷ. This sentence is quoted in Stobaeus (IV 5.49), immediately after a group of Democritean fragments (IV 5.43–8) that begins with B 261 and 262.

[74] See Gomme ii.112f. on Thuc. 2.37.3. Help given by Athens to oppressed foreigners, usually in the mythical past, was a regular theme in panegyric and of plays like the *Suppliants* and the *Heracleidae*.

[75] Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 9.1 (the epithet used here is δημοτικώτατα 'most in the interests of the common people'). Cf. Plutarch, *V. Sol.* 18.5.

[76] Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 9.1.

[77] cf. B 38 = Democrates 4: καλὸν μὲν τὸν ἀδικέοντα κωλύειν· εἰ δὲ μή, μὴ ξυναδικέειν: 'Fine it is to prevent the wrong-doer, or failing that, not to join in the wrong' – as you would, if you condoned it.

[78] Above all in Antiphon's *Tetralogies*, demonstration pieces of forensic oratory.

[79] Antiphon 4.1.4. Cf. Plato, *Euthyphro* 4b–c.

conscience?', asks the fanatical juror Philocleon 'Acquitting a defendant! Ye gods, forgive me. I did not mean to – it was not like me to do it'.[80]

The juror who decides on acquittal 'contrary to law' 'does wrong', and this must needs be 'on his heart'. Awareness of having done wrong will weigh him down with anxiety and self-reproach. Another Democritean fragment, B 174*, appears to depict his state of mind.

> The man... borne on to just and lawful deeds rejoices waking and sleeping, is strong and free from care; but whosoever pays no heed to justice and does not do what is needful[81] – for this man, all such things are a vexation, whenever he recalls any of them, and he is afraid and reviles himself.

What has he to fear?[82] 'Divine anger' would be the answer of a Philocleon. A juror, under oath to judge according to the laws and decrees of his city,[83] would expose himself, if his verdict went against the law, to the wrath of Zeus *Horkios*. The threat of divine wrath was needed where secular sanctions were ineffective. The Teian imprecations were directed at malefactions beyond the reach of the law. The negligent juror would likewise be beyond the reach of prosecution and punishment. Now Democritus' own theology was versatile and inclusive.[84] It could accept and account for such phenomena as divination and the 'evil eye'.[85] He could see the gods as quite capable of doing men good or harm.[86] But he is most unlikely to have proclaimed a belief in divine retribution.[87] Epicurus was to be more systematic, denying that the gods have any power to intervene in human life, and stating explicitly that what the wrongdoer has to fear is 'detection by those with the power to punish such things'; such fear is inevitable, whether or not he escapes detection; it is, indeed, what makes wrong-doing an evil.[88] The Democritean fragments draw no such abstract conclusion – to spare the guilty can be 'wrong and bad' for a variety of unstated reasons; nor are they as explicit as we might wish about what the wrongdoer really has to fear. (The most that they offer is a possible reference to 'disaster' in B 215* which reformulates in highly poetical language the thought in B 174:

> Justice's glory: unabashed confidence in mind. Injustice's dread: a disastrous ending.)[89]

What matters for Democritus is simply that the delinquent is bound to be afraid of something. (Quite probably, the average Abderite juror would have believed in

[80] Ar. *V.* 999–1003.

[81] And is thus guilty of injustice as 'defined' in B 256.

[82] With what follows, cf. B. Bossu, 'La crainte dans la morale de Démocrite', *Rev. Philol.* 56 (1982), 287–300.

[83] Athenian jurors were sworn to 'judge according to the laws and decrees of Athens' (Demosthenes 20.118, 23.96, 24.150, 39.40, 57.63; Aeschines 3.6) and there must have been some similar practice at Abdera.

[84] And far from straightforward. See H. Eisenberger, 'Demokrits Vorstellung vom Sein und Wirken der Götter *RM* 113 (1970), 141–58.

[85] For divination, see A 138 = Cicero, *Div.* I.5.131. For the evil eye, see A 77 = Plutarch 734f.

[86] B 166 = Sextus, *M.* 9.19: *καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν εἶναι ἀγαθοποιὰ τὰ δὲ κακοποιά.*

[87] If he had, his Epicurean critics would surely have noted the fact. As we have them, Epicurean criticisms of Democritean theology are either that it is confused (e.g. A 74 = Cicero, *N.D.* 1.29) or that, while seeing the gods as 'images', it still credits them with impossible powers of perception, thought and communication (Diogenes Oen., new fr. 1.2.7f. = Long and Sedley ii.16 g). But this is a long way from the cardinal error (for an Epicurean) of relying on divine intervention.

[88] *RS* 34. 'In the Epicurean theory, where injustice is bad solely for its consequences, its badness consists not in the possibility of punishment but in the *certainty* of fearing punishment' (Long and Sedley, ii. p. 130).

[89] This is by no means the only translation possible of the highly ambiguous Greek. See Appendix (forthcoming).

avenging deities, in the same way that most people would have had some residual respect for the oaths and sanctuaries mentioned in B 259.) All that Democritus needs to do is to depict a state of mind, without enquiring into its real object. He could observe, and perhaps make use of, the fact that people succumb to quite groundless fears. In that vein, B 297* paints a remarkably Epicurean picture of 'guilty conscience' – *mens sibi conscia factis*[90] – expressing itself in totally misplaced anxieties, of men with 'a consciousness of ill-doing in life' lost in terror at myths 'about the time after the end'.

For the good of the community, laws need to be enforced and wrongdoers punished. Failure to punish them is itself tantamount to wrongdoing. But there is no legal mechanism, in this or in any other shape of society, to ensure that the juror casts his vote in accordance with law. If he decides not to do so, Democritus can only threaten him with a heavy heart, a painful 'consciousness of ill-doing', in the same way that a traditional prosecutor would threaten him with divine anger. The limits of effective legislation have been reached; and Democritus, with no theological sanctions at his disposal, falls back on largely psychological sanctions,[91] on the threat of emotional disquiet, to make good the inadequacies of law. In so doing, he touches on what became a standard line of argument: injustice should be avoided because it is bad for the soul. That was to be claimed, in different ways, by Plato in the *Republic* and by Epicurus. The effect of the claim is to play down the social aspect of injustice. The more it is seen in terms of the wrong-doer's soul, the less plausible it becomes to equate injustice simply with 'not doing what needs to be done'. From one point of view, an avoidable failure to prevent wrong-doing may indeed, as Cicero claims, amount to betrayal of family, friends and country. But not from all points of view. A sage detached, as Hellenistic sages tended to be, from the society around him is most unlikely to feel guilt at its misfortunes or to regard his detachment as treason. It is perhaps significant that a concept of 'passive injustice' should first reappear, three and a half centuries after Democritus, in Cicero's *de officiis*, a work written very much from the stand-point of a Roman statesman.

V. 'LAW FOR THE SOUL'

Democritus believed in Law. He was not, as some of his contemporaries were, an advocate of Nature as a superior, more authentic moral authority. Like Protagoras, the *Anonymus Iamblichi* and the writer 'On Laws', he regarded Law as a good and necessary factor in civilized human life. He was also aware of its limitations.

> The law wishes to benefit the life of men; and it can do so, when they themselves wish to receive the benefit. To those who obey, it reveals their own excellence (B 248)*.

It shows them how good they can be – but only if they are prepared to obey. If they are not, they will find ways of breaking it. Laws cannot always be enforced; and laws which are not enforced are useless. One case where legal penalties or social sanctions are ineffective was that of the juror who cannot be penalized for his verdict. Another, to which Antiphon[92] and others drew attention, occurs when a person is 'alone and without witnesses', able to do what he likes without being observed. For such cases,

[90] Lucretius 3.1018.

[91] But not entirely psychological, if B 215 is implying that there is some real disaster looming over the unjust.

[92] DK 87 B 44 A 2.3–8: *τὰ οὖν νόμιμα παραβαίνων εἰὰν λαθῇι τοὺς ὁμολογήσαντας καὶ αἰσχύνης καὶ ζημίας ἀπήλλακται*... The perfect example, in theory, of this opportunity was Gyges with the ring which made him invisible (Plato, *Rep.* 359d–60c).

the traditional solution was to invoke the all-seeing gods. But Democritus, as we have seen, could hardly have used that sanction; and it was, anyway, being suggested in his lifetime that the omniscient gods were simply a human invention designed to deter 'wrongdoing in secret'.[93] Some other solution was needed. The law can only be a benefit τοῖσι πειθομένοισι, to those prepared – even when alone – to obey it. Democritus claimed, in a striking fragment (B 181)*, that the way in practice to ensure obedience is through protreptic and persuasion, πειθώ.

The better will he prove who employs incitement to virtue and persuasion by discourse, rather than law and compulsion. For sinning in secret is the likelihood, when a man has been restrained by law from wrongdoing; but when he has been led to what he should by persuasion, there is no likelihood of his doing anything untoward, either in secret or openly. (Which is why one who acts uprightly through understanding and knowledge proves to be a man truly valorous and straight-minded as well.)

The word πειθώ here is nicely ambiguous, standing both for the 'persuasion' exercised by the teacher and for the resulting 'conviction' which leads the pupil to act, even when alone, as he should. For practical purposes, such 'conviction' is as effective as 'understanding and knowledge'. Where Plato and others would explore the differences between knowledge and right belief, our fragment treats them as equivalent. Both of them are reliable inner motives for right conduct, to be distinguished as such from external compulsion.[94]

Coercion on its own is not enough, when it comes to controlling people.[95] A sentence preserved by Stobaeus in a chapter of 'Counsels concerning Kingship' makes a similar point: 'Fear makes for flattery but holds no loyalty'. But not everyone shared the enthusiasm for gentle persuasion. If Aristotle, as I have said, never explicitly mentions Democritean ethics, a striking passage at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*[96] looks rather like – it has certainly been seen[97] as – a polemic against the claims of B 181:

Discourses on their own... while apparently they have the power to incite and urge on the generous-minded among the young,... are powerless to incite the majority of mankind to moral excellence. For their nature is to follow the authority... of fear, to hold back from vileness not because it is shameful, but because of the penalties. Living as they do by passion, they pursue the pleasures appropriate to their character.... What discourse is going to transform such people?[98]

The disagreement here between Aristotle and Democritus is less than it seems. Neither thinker would deny that discourses are sometimes effective or that compulsion and severe discipline, at least as a preliminary, are indispensable. Democritus can assert sternly:

Ease is the worst education of all for youth; for this is what gives birth to those pleasures which lead to viciousness. (B 178*)

[93] Critias, DK 88 B 25.9–24.

[94] The contrast between brute force which merely compels and gentle persuasion which ensures willing obedience was a commonplace in fifth- and fourth-century thought. Its most famous exponent was Gorgias (DK 82 B 11.13f.; Plato, *Phlb.* 58ab). See, further, R. G. A. Buxton, *Peitho... Persuasion in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 58–63. Cf. Plato, *Lg.* 722b.

[95] B 268 = Stob. IV.7 (ὑποθῆκαι περὶ βασιλείας). 13: φόβος κολακείην ἐργάζεται, εὔνοιαν δ' οὐκ ἔχει. εὔνοια here has the heightened sense of 'loyalty' as at Isoc. 2.28 (quoted by Stobaeus in the same chapter [IV 7.32], 10.37, etc.).

[96] *EN* 1179b4–16. On which, see M. F. Burnyeat ('Aristotle on Learning to Be Good' in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. O. Rorty [Berkeley, 1978], 69–72), pp. 75ff.

[97] By numerous scholars, from Philippson (op. cit. [n. 3], pp. 407f.) onwards.

[98] τοὺς δὴ τοιούτους τίς ἂν λόγος μεταρρυθμίσαι· Cf. Democritus B 33: ... καὶ γὰρ ἡ διδαχὴ μεταρρυσμοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, μεταρρυσμοῦσα δὲ φυσιοποιεῖ.

Left to their own devices, the young are never going to look beyond the obvious gratifications, which are what motivate vicious conduct. Democritus would agree with Aristotle and Plato that moral education means being trained to take pleasure in the right things. But that, to start with, means hard work. Another fragment (B 179)* warns:

> Should children slacken in any way from toil, they will learn neither letters nor music nor athletics, nor yet what most of all sustains virtue – respect. For it is very much from these that respect tends to arise.

There are four stages in a child's moral education: enforced hard work; mastery of the elementary disciplines; the growth of respect or αἰδώς; the establishment of virtue. But what is the 'respect', the αἰδώς, which 'most of all sustains virtue'? And how does the elementary education contribute to it?

Democritus is invoking a moral force of considerable antiquity. For Homer too, αἰδώς was 'what most sustains virtue'.[99] It amounted, roughly, to a 'respect for public opinion'[100] – Aristotle was to define it as 'a fear of ill repute' and treat it as virtually identical with αἰσχύνη or 'shame'.[101] A reluctance to incur the moral indignation, the νέμεσις, of others, it serves in Homer to inhibit behaviour – sexual misdemeanours, inhospitality, cowardice on the battlefield – that is 'ignoble', 'ugly', αἰσχρόν. αἰδώς and νέμεσις are complementary.[102] To feel either is to acknowledge a shared set of moral standards, to agree that certain actions are ignoble and wrong or, at the very least, outside the pattern of social expectation.[103] The standards are those of society; αἰδώς is a force for conformity, rather than personal morality – Homeric heroes would not distinguish between the two. To feel it is to recognize one's place in the social order and the obligations that go with that place. To act by it, on the battlefield and in less fearsome predicaments, is to live up to the expectations that others have of one. By the end of the fifth century, αἰδώς had come to rank as a characteristic of well-reared youth.[104] The product of a good old-fashioned education,[105] it was an attitude which even the elementary studies were meant to instil.

A hearty respect for the moral indignation of others may well be 'what most sustains virtue'. But only when they are looking. What if they are not? Here Democritus made a noteworthy contribution to Greek ethics. Three fragments (B

[99] With what follows, cf. C. E. v. Erffa, 'Αἰδώς und verwandte Begriffe von Homer bis Demokritos', *Philologus Suppl.* 30.2 (1937), and, still more, J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 113–19.

[100] E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), p. 18.

[101] He defines αἰδώς as φόβος τις ἀδοξίας (*EN* 1128b11) and αἰσχύνη as λύπη τις ἢ ταραχὴ περὶ τὰ ἐς ἀδοξίαν φαινόμενα φέρειν τῶν κακῶν, ἢ παρόντων ἢ γεγονότων ἢ μελλόντων (*Rhet.* 1383b12–14). The difference between the two emotions is one of 'tense': αἰδώς must, while αἰσχύνη need not, look to the future, to what people are going to say. This distinction, repeated by Aristoxenus (Fr. 42c Wehrli) and the Stoa (*SVF* III.416), was somewhat artificial. The two terms were distinct in etymology (see Frisk, svv. αἰδώς, αἶσχος) and associations, but had already become largely interchangeable by the time of Thucydides (1.84.3. See v. Erffa, art. cit. (n. 99), 185–92).

[102] Evoked by νέμεσις in others, αἰδώς is an internalized anticipation of it. Conversely, a lack of αἰδώς can provoke νέμεσις. See Redfield, op. cit. (n. 99), p. 116.

[103] νέμεσις at its weakest can be a reaction simply to impropriety, as in the phrase οὐ νέμεσις 'perfectly understandable'. See Redfield, op. cit. (n. 99), p. 116.

[104] Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.22 etc. Aristotle (*EN* 1128b15–33) in fact argues that it is an emotion appropriate *only* to the young.

[105] cf. the account in Plato's *Protagoras* (325e–326b) of how these elementary disciplines are meant to instil εὐκοσμία.

264, 244 and 84) claim that one should 'have respect for', 'feel shame before', *oneself*. The longest and best of them, B 264*, commands that one should

> not one bit more respect mankind than oneself, not one bit more do evil if no one is to know, than if all mankind is, but respect oneself most of all, and let this law be established for the soul, so that one do nothing improper.

The command is doubly paradoxical: αἰδώς, as we have seen, is normally felt towards others, while the normal place for laws is the statute-book, not the soul. In fact, the concept of αἰδώς for oneself was not hard to reach. αἰδώς strictly meant fearing the νέμεσις of others. But it was possible, even in Homer, to feel νέμεσις towards oneself,[106] considering one's own actions, as it were, from the outside. From there it is a very short step to fearing one's own νέμεσις – in short, to ἑαυτὸν αἰδεῖσθαι.[107]

'Let rev'rence of thyself thy thoughts controul',[108] — oft repeated in one form or another,[109] the prescription was easy enough to understand. The problem is to put it into practice. 'Reverence towards thyself', taken seriously, is vastly more difficult than reverence towards others. It would strictly mean not entertaining a single thought which you would be unwilling to speak out loud – and that, as Marcus Aurelius observed, is something which no one could keep up for a single day (12.4). Another Democritean fragment (B 244)* ends pointedly:

> *Learn*, far more than before others, to feel shame before yourself.

Subsequent moralists gave some thought to the question of how a thorough self-respect could be inculcated. They found the answer in a piece of benign self-deception. If the presence of others is what restrains you and solitude corrupts, you should pretend that you are being watched. Think of a good man and 'keep him before your eyes, living as though he were watching, acting as though he saw'.[110] Select a moral authority – Epicurus perhaps; Zeno or Cleanthes, if you are a Stoic; Cato, Scipio, Laelius or any one in whose presence even the wicked suppress their vices – and place yourself, in imagination, under his guardianship, till you yourself become the sort of person in whose company you would not dare to sin. By then, you will have begun to acquire a certain *tui reverentia*, a *tui dignatio*, and solitude will not be a danger.[111] To do no wrong, even when you are alone, will have become a 'law for the soul'.

The salient aspect of law in this mildly paradoxical phrase is its 'power to compel'. With 'respect for yourself' established as a 'law for the soul', you can be guaranteed

[106] See *Il.* 16.544, *Od.* 2.64 (νεμεσσήθητε), *Od.* 4.158 (νεμεσσᾶται).

[107] Such reflexive formulations were not uncommon in the fifth century. Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 1080: ... σαυτὸν σέβειν.

[108] 'Pythagoras's Golden Verse' 12 (quoted below in Greek) in an eighteenth-century(?) translation, embroidered on a sampler in the author's possession by one 'Elizabeth Parkinson aged 11 Years. A.D. 1801'. It continues: 'And gard the sacred temple of thy soul.'

[109] Stobaeus ascribes versions of it to Theophrastus (III 31.10), Musonius (III 31.6) and Cato (III 31.11). Cf. [Pythagoras] *carm. aur.* 12.: πάντων δὲ μάλιστ' αἰσχύνεο σαυτόν (quoted and discussed by Galen π. ψυχῆς παθῶν. 26f.), Seneca, *ben.* 7.1.7. The young should have αἰδώς, said Demetrius of Phaleron (Fr. 117 Wehrli = D.L. 5.82), 'in the home towards their parents, in the street towards any they meet, in solitude towards themselves.' Cf. [Ausonius] *Sept. sap. sent.* 43: 'turpe quid ausurus te sine teste time' (ascribing the dictum to Anacharsis).

[110] Seneca, *Ep.* 11.8 = Epicurus, fr. 210 U. Cf. *Ep.* 25.5 = Epicurus, fr. 211 U: 'sic fac omnia tamquam spectet Epicurus.'

[111] Seneca, *Ep.* 25.5: 'omnia nobis mala solitudo persuadet, cum iam profeceris tantum ut sit tibi etiam tui reverentia, licebit dimittas paedagogum: interim aliquorum te auctoritate custodi – aut Cato ille sit aut Scipio aut Laelius aut alius cuius interventu perditi quoque homines vitia supprimerent, dum te efficis eum cum quo peccare non audeas, cum hoc effeceris et aliqua coeperit apud te tui esse dignatio...'

to do nothing improper under any circumstances. You will be your own policeman. But this does not mean that you are your own lawgiver. B 264 has sometimes been read as a declaration of moral autonomy, of a Kantian *Autonomie des Sittlichen* – a misleading interpretation, if 'autonomy' is to mean 'laying down the law for yourself'.[112] The fragment is certainly not telling you to 'follow your conscience', your capacity for judging the rightness of actions,[113] and to disregard everything else. The 'law for the soul' says simply 'do nothing bad'; its consequence will be that you 'do nothing improper'; and there is nothing said here about your determining the badness or impropriety of your actions. The standards of propriety, of good and evil, are not in question. They are those which you have picked up from childhood onwards, from your first laborious lessons in literature, music and athletics. The problem is simply to ensure their observance. In this context, 'law for the soul' is a supplement, not a substitute for laws on the statute-book. It was indeed claimed by some later philosophers that the wise man is above written laws, that he has no need of them and may rightly disregard them. Some such view was in fact ascribed, by one bad witness, to Democritus:

> The wise man should not follow the authority of laws, but live liberally.[114]

Whether or not Democritus believed this, he is most unlikely to be saying so in B 264. The Hellenistic sage can set himself above the law because of his superior grasp on reality; he knows, better than lawgivers of old or their modern exegetes, what is really good or evil; he can trump the law with his own wisdom. But it would be very odd, and quite without parallel, for Democritus to claim that you should attach supreme authority to an *emotion*, a πάθος – which is how αἰδώς was always classified.[115] In B 264 and in B 181, he is simply not concerned with the sage, any more than he is with the worthless mass of mankind who behave themselves only under duress. His interest is in an intermediary level of virtue – what Aristotle has in mind when he writes of 'civic' – 'political' – courage.[116] The truly brave man faces danger with a clear, well-reasoned understanding of why it is right and noble to do so. Similar to this true courage, but still second best, is that of citizens who face dangers out of αἰδώς, for the sake of honour and because of the disgrace which they would incur through not

[112] Notably by P. Natorp (*Die Ethika des Democritos* [Marburg, 1893], p. 102) and, at greater length, by Ibscher ii.225–30. Cf. Farrar, op. cit. (n. 14), p. 239: 'Man enforces upon himself a law which he alone has enacted... This act of self-legislation... embodies man's own purposes, his pursuit of his own good.' See also Aristotle, *EN* 1128a33.

[113] 'The word... now denotes the capacity for judging the rightness of actions either considered generally, or actually proposed or already performed'. *O.D.C.C.* sv. CONSCIENCE.

[114] Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 3.2.9 = DK 68 A 166: ... ἐπίνοιαν γὰρ κακὴν τοὺς νόμους ἔλεγε καὶ 'οὐ χρὴ νόμοις πειθαρχεῖν τὸν σοφόν, ἀλλ' ἐλευθερίως ζῆν'. The authenticity of the final utterance here has been defended, and its content misunderstood, by Luria (op. cit. [n. 15], pp. 20f. n. 34), who compares the wording of Epicurus, fr. 196 U: ... οὐ κατὰ νόμους ἐλευθέρας βιοτῆς, and Aalders (*Mnemosyne* 3 [1951], 307) who argues that in Democritean theory, 'written law is only a necessary evil. The wise man should not like a slave obey the latter, but live freely according to the true standards of justice and righteousness.' Talk about 'freedom' here is off the point. The adverb in Epiphanius' text is not ἐλευθέρως but ἐλευθερίως 'liberally', 'open-handedly'; ἐλευθερίως ζῆν means to 'enjoy a high standard of living' (cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.6.3, Aristotle, *Pol.* 1326b31). Epiphanius is crediting Democritus with the view that the wise man should put himself into the right income-bracket without worrying about the law.

[115] A passage which, on one interpretation, might offer a parallel is Eur. *IA* 561–6 (especially 563: ... τό τε γὰρ αἰδεῖσθαι σοφία). But the syntax here is all too ambiguous, and the gist of the passage, on any interpretation, is that wisdom, τὸ αἰδεῖσθαι and insight into τὸ δέον are all the product of good education.

[116] *EN* 1116a17–b3.

doing so. They too act for the sake of what is noble. Only, they take their conception of it from the laws and other people's expectations.[117] But their courage in its turn is superior to another sort of citizen courage, that of citizen soldiers who are compelled to be brave by their officers, who act through fear rather than through αἰδώς, to avoid pain rather than disgrace. There are, in short, two kinds of 'political' courage and perhaps of 'political' virtue in general, one internally motivated or 'self-generated', the other enforced. Democritus, like Aristotle, recognized the superiority of the former. In B 181 and B 264, he is out to promote and strengthen it.

Cicero speaks of states where the better citizens are deterred from crime by a natural *verecundia*, a certain fear of justified censure: 'the governing statesman strengthened this emotion... so that shame no less than fear should deter the citizens from crime'.[118] Democritus is at work in the manner of such a statesman.

VI. CONCORD AND THE CARE OF THE SOUL

Affairs of State and their proper conduct are the supreme consideration, said B 252. If that is maintained, all is maintained; if that is lost, all is lost – which is why personal rivalries and private aggrandizement have to be curtailed. The surest way, in fact, to disaster for everyone is through στάσις, the 'civil strife' which is liable to break out when personal rivalries get out of hand:

> Strife within the group is an evil to both parties; to victor and vanquished alike comes the same destruction. (B 249)*

Conversely,

> Through concord it is possible for states to accomplish great actions and wars, otherwise not. (B 250)*

The 'concord' which makes principally for successful *warfare* is civic rather than international,[119] 'municipal' rather than 'universal'.[120] But so is the perspective of all these fragments,[121] and military success has always ranked as the principal criterion of national effectiveness.[122] (Democritus himself wrote a couple of military manuals;[123] according to Plutarch,[124] he urged men 'to have themselves thoroughly taught in the art of war, the most important of arts, and to pursue those labours from which men derive things great and glorious'.) 'Concord' as he understood it is

[117] Burnyeat, art. cit. (n. 96), p. 89 n. 13.

[118] *Rep.* 5.6. Cf. Plutarch, *sept. sap. conv.* 154e (discussing democracy): ...*Κλεόβουλος ἔφη μάλιστα σωφρονεῖν δῆμον ὅπου τὸν ψόγον μᾶλλον οἱ πολιτευόμενοι δεδοίκασιν ἢ τὸν νόμον.*

[119] Ideas of international or, at any rate, Panhellenic concord did have some currency towards the end of Democritus' lifetime. Gorgias made a speech in 392 at Olympia on the subject (Plut. *mor.* 144bc = DK 82 B 8a).

[120] M. Oakeshott's phrase, 'Political Education', in P. Laslett, *Politics, Philosophy and Society* (Oxford, 1956), p. 17.

[121] With the possible exception of the dubiously authentic B 247.

[122] cf. Hdt. 5.78 on the merits of *ἰσηγορίη*: *εἰ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι τυραννευόμενοι μὲν οὐδαμῶν τῶν σφέας περιοικεόντων ἦσαν τὰ πολέμια ἀμείνους, ἀπαλλαχθέντες δὲ τυράννων μακρῷ πρῶτοι ἐγένοντο.* Democritus' cool, and correct, observation that civil harmony is a necessary condition for the successful conduct of wars is a good deal less startling than Plato's recommendation that arithmetic be studied 'both for the sake of war and to attain ease in turning the soul itself... to truth and reality' (*Rep.* 525c). Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1330a16–18 (on a proposed distribution of land-ownership): *τὸ γὰρ ἴσον οὕτως ἔχει καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ πρὸς τοὺς ἀστυγείτονας πολέμους ὁμονοητικώτερον.*

[123] 13.3 and 4 in Thrasyllus' catalogue, D.L. 9.48.

[124] Plutarch, *mor.* 1126a = B 157*.

roughly what Aristotle describes under that name, a consensus among citizens of a state about their common interests and the measures to be taken for it – that public office be elective, that Pittacus be put in charge, that there be an alliance with Sparta.[125] Such consensus is tantamount to 'friendship', to φιλία in the practical, if not the emotional, sense of the word;[126] and it was understandably an aim of legislators to ensure 'the greatest happiness and mutual friendship' among their citizens.[127] Lack of concord could readily lead to strife and catastrophe, especially in times of war between superpowers. Rivals of Pittacus, opposed to alliance with Sparta, would have all too much inducement to take up arms and call in the Athenians. All too often, the result would be 'the same destruction for victor and vanquished alike'.

The danger of civil strife, according to another fragment (B 245)*, is in fact what justifies the restrictive force of law:

> The laws would not prevent each one of us from living at his own discretion, were it not that one man harmed the other. For envy brings about the beginning of strife.

The sequence between the two sentences of this fragment is not altogether straightforward. Without the laws, people would harm each other, and such harm might well lead to strife. But hardly to envy, an emotion generally understood as vexation at the success of one's peers.[128] The normal reaction to injury would be anger or resentment. Envy here is, rather, the *motive* which leads men to harm one another in the first place, and makes it necessary for the laws to intervene. Their function is perhaps twofold: not only to prevent the envious from wreaking harm, it is also to *forestall* their envy, by curtailing the invidious inequalities which arise if each is allowed total freedom. In that case, ἐξουσία, the power to do as you will, means particularly *economic* power;[129] the reference is to laws like that enacted by Solon preventing individuals from owning as much land as they pleased;[130] and the fragment is touching on questions of class conflict, of the antagonisms between rich and poor which underlay most civil strife in fifth- and fourth-century Greece. Envy was traditionally an attitude associated with the poor, the lower classes – the corresponding vice of the rich being greed.[131] It is also an emotion, a state of the soul. And that could be significant. Democritus is not saying, as some contemporaries did say,[132] that social conditions – poverty or inequalities of property – are themselves what lead to civil strife. Its principal cause is a state of mind. Which might suggest, what would not at all be a strange idea for a philosopher with a concept of 'law for the soul' to hold, that the best way to deal with strife and establish friendship among the citizens of a state is to work on their hearts and feelings.[133]

The need to attain concord, or at least to avoid the horrors of civil strife, set the agenda for much political thought. Democritus' lifetime saw the appearance of the

[125] *EN* 1167a26–b4.

[126] cf. Democritus B 186: ὁμοφροσύνη φιλίαν ποιεῖ.

[127] Plato, *Lg.* 743c.

[128] cf. Hdt. 7.237.2, and Aristotle's definition of φθόνος at *Rhet.* 1386b18–20 and 1387b22ff.: λύπη τις ἐπὶ εὐπραγίᾳ φαινομένῃ ... περὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους.

[129] What Thucydides calls the ἐξουσία πλούτου (1.38.5, cf. 1.123.1).

[130] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1266b16–18.

[131] Eur. *Suppl.* 238–43.

[132] e.g. Phaleas of Chalcedon (Ar. *Pol.* 1265a37f.). Cf. Aristotle's own observation (1265b12, in a discussion of Plato's *Laws*): ἡ δὲ πενία στάσιν ἐμποιεῖ καὶ κακουργίαν.

[133] cf. Aristotle's view that the most important, and most neglected, means of ensuring the stability of a constitution lies in the proper education of its citizen-body and, still more, of its ruling class (*Pol.* 1310a12–36).

first 'utopias', plans for ideal communities, in which the greatest possible concord was to be achieved through the redistribution, or even abolition, of private property. (One can think here of schemes by Phaleas of Chalcedon[134] and whoever is parodied in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazousae*.) To judge by his surviving fragments, he is unlikely to have been any keener than Aristotle on the 'communism' of such schemes. Personal acquisitiveness, in moderation, was a characteristic which he could accept[135] and put to good Thatcherite use. He would probably have agreed with Aristotle that 'the beginning of reform is not so much to make properties equal as rather to see to it that the good will not wish – and that the bad will not be able – to get more' than what they already have.[136] He himself, as we shall see, had a lot to say about the 'desire for more'. The closest that he comes to a 'utopian' utterance is in B 255*. It reads:

Whensoever those with means have the nerve to lend to those who have none, to do them services and kindnesses – that is when you first find pity and an end to isolation, the birth of comradeship, mutual assistance and concord among the citizens, and other blessings so many that none could count them.

If the exalted tone of the fragment has won it extravagant praise,[137] its contents are hardly utopian.[138] Despite his concluding flourish,[139] Democritus is not concerned with establishing a utopia. Phaleas of Chalcedon and Plato in the *Laws* could indeed see substantial donations by the rich to the needy as the first, redistributive stage in the transformation of existing society into an egalitarian ideal.[140] Democritus is envisaging something far less radical – advances of cash (without interest?) by the rich (perhaps till the next harvest) and similar favours. What he advocates is not a drastic redistribution of property, so much as limited assistance to ease social frictions; its effect would be to leave property in private ownership while spreading the benefit of it.[141] Aristotle was to recommend the same sort of beneficence as a means to ensure the stability of existing societies, democratic and oligarchic alike, finding examples of it in Tarentum and Sparta.[142] Something like it had been practised at Athens in a private capacity, by Cimon,[143] Pisistratus[144] and doubtless

[134] See Aristotle, *Pol.* 1266a36–1267a17.

[135] According to B 279, you should divide your disposable goods among your children, while keeping an eye on them. This will make them a lot thriftier, keener to acquire and more competitive. 'For joint expenditures do not cause such vexation as personal expenditures, nor do joint acquisitions bring on such good spirits, but far less' (*ἐν γὰρ τῷ ξυνῷ τὰ τελεύμενα οὐκ ἀνιᾷ ὥσπερ ἰδίῃ οὐδ' εὐθυμεῖ τὰ ἐπικτώμενα, ἀλλὰ πολλῷ ἧσσον*). Aristotle was to elaborate the point in his criticisms of Plato's *Republic* (*Pol.* 1262b22f., 1263a40f., etc.).

[136] *Pol.* 1267b57: *τῶν οὖν τοιούτων ἀρχή, μᾶλλον τοῦ τὰς οὐσίας ὁμαλίζειν, τὸ τοὺς μὲν ἐπιεικεῖς τῇ φύσει τοιούτους παρασκευάζεσθαι ὥστε μὴ βούλεσθαι πλεονεκτεῖν, τοὺς δὲ φαύλους ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι...*

[137] e.g. by Havelock, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 143.

[138] Nor can its perspective be described as 'historical'. Democritus is not dealing with 'man's situation after a certain event of great importance' in the far distant past (*pace* Cole, op. cit. [n. 16], p. 121). As the opening word 'whensoever' indicates, he is offering a generalization about something which can regularly happen.

[139] Or are the final words simply a throwaway, 'and all the other blessings which I cannot be bothered to enumerate'?

[140] Phaleas *ap.* Aristotle, *Pol.* 1266b1–4, Plato, *Lg.* 736de.

[141] cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1263a38f. (quoted below).

[142] *Pol.* 1309a20 (oligarchies), 1320a32–b9 (mostly about democracies; note the final sentence, *χαριέντων δ' ἐστὶ καὶ νοῦν ἐχόντων γνωρίμων καὶ διαλαμβάνοντας τοὺς ἀπόρους ἀφορμὰς διδόντας τρέπειν ἐπ' ἐργασίας*), 1263a36–40 (Sparta), 1320b8–11 (Tarentum).

[143] Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 27.3. See M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 40; P. Millett, 'Patronage and its avoidance in classical Athens' (in *Patronage and Ancient Society*, ed. A. Wallace-Hadrill [London, 1989]), pp. 23–5.

[144] *καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῖς ἀπόροις προεδάνειζε χρήματα πρὸς τὰς ἐργασίας, ὥστε διατρέφεσθαι γεωργοῦντας*, taking a ten percent levy on the produce (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 16.2).

other wealthy politicians. When Democritus speaks of 'men no longer in isolation', of their 'coming to be comrades (ἑταῖροι) and assisting each other', he is using the language of party politics. He is recalling a common and not especially edifying occurrence in ordinary political life, the mobilization of clients around a patron.

What gives the fragment a high moral tone, at least to modern ears, is its mention of 'pity' as the first of the 'innumerable blessings' which come about when the rich are kind.[145] Democritus was not alone in seeing this emotion as desirable[146] – the censures of Plato and the Stoa[147] were still in the future – or even in associating it with 'concord'. The Xenophontine Socrates speaks of pity, along with their sense of mutual dependence, with cooperation and gratitude as factors in the nature of men which make for 'friendship' – in contrast to the hostile motives of strife, anger, greed and envy.[148] To judge by his perfunctory mention of 'pity' in a row of blessings that includes 'concord', Democritus has come across some such theory and is improving on it: 'Pity may make for social friendship, but, if you are to find either, you first get the rich to part with their money'. His recipe for concord is down-to-earth, even materialistic. And yet there is a certain moral fervour about B 255. It emerges, above all, from the strikingly voluntative language at the beginning: 'when the rich have the nerve (τολμέωσι)... to show kindness (χαρίζεσθαι)'.[149] Here Democritus stands in notable contrast to writers such as the *Anonymus Iamblichi* or Isocrates,[150] who also speak of the rich assisting the poor and associate this with some state of social well-being – with εὐνομία or 'orderly government' and the ἐπιμειξία or 'good integration' which results from it. In their view, the generosity of the rich – for Isocrates, it consists (rather as it does for Democritus) in loans to the poor and in the provision of capital[151] or land at a reasonable rent – depends on the prior establishment of εὐνομία, which ensures that creditors will get their money back.[152] Quite possibly,

[145] 'This is perhaps the earliest reference to a charitable spirit in social relationships' (T. A. Sinclair, *A History of Greek Political Thought* [London, 1951], p. 65). Cf. Havelock, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 144.

[146] For some useful material, see E. B. Stevens, 'Some Attic Commonplaces of Pity', *AJP* 64 (1944), 1–25. See also W. Burkert, *Zum altgriechischen Mitleidsbegriff*, Diss. Erlangen (1958).

[147] Plato, *Rep.* 606ab, *SVF* I 214, III 450, 452.

[148] *Mem.* 2.6.21f.

[149] cf. the words of Macaria at Euripides, *Hrcld.* 548 who has volunteered herself for sacrifice, rejecting the suggestion that she draw lots with her sisters for the role of victim; 'I would not leave my death to chance: χάρις γὰρ οὐ πρόσεστι'.

[150] *Anonymus Iamblichi* 7.2f., Isocrates 7.31–5. Both writers (*Anon.* 7.8f., Isoc. 6.64–7) present a contrasting picture of ἀνομία and ἀμιξία. The idea of a 'mixture' or 'blend', an interdependence, of rich and poor goes back to the fifth century. See Euripides, fr. 21 N². Thucydides (8.97.2) speaks similarly, in a political context, of a μετρία σύγκρασις of the few and the many.

[151] ἀφορμή (Isoc. 7.31). Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1320a39.

[152] Another passage which touches on this general theme is Archytas, Fr. 3 (DK 47 B 3 = Stob. IV 1.139) from a work Περὶ μαθημάτων. The text falls into two incongruous parts, one on the acquisition of knowledge ('One must acquire knowledge either by learning from another or by finding out for oneself...'), the other on the social value of λογισμός which here must mean something like authoritative 'accounting': στάσιν μὲν ἔπαυσεν, ὁμόνοιαν δὲ αὔξησεν λογισμὸς εὑρεθείς· πλεονεξία τε γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι τούτου γενομένου καὶ ἰσότας ἔστιν· τούτῳ γὰρ περὶ τῶν συναλλαγμάτων διαλλασσόμεθα. διὰ τοῦτον οὖν οἱ πένητες λαμβάνοντι παρὰ τῶν δυναμένων, οἱ δὲ πλούσιοι διδόντι τοῖς δεομένοις, πιστεύοντες ἀμφότεροι διὰ τούτω τὸ ἴσον ἔξειν. κτλ. The two texts could hardly have begun life right next to each other. But they are written in the same Gorgianic style, and could both have come from the preface to a mathematical work. It was standard practice to introduce a technical treatise with a few words on how its subject could be learned and also with an advertisement of its practical usefulness and moral value. In that case, the praise here of λογισμός as an instrument for ὁμόνοια and economic cooperation will not be a piece of serious political theorizing so much as an established commonplace, widely accepted by the time of Archytas.

Democritus went into the question of social or legal guarantees which would make it worth their while for the rich to assist the indigent. But there is no trace of such a discussion in his surviving fragments. B 255 may be promoting a process of social reconciliation, much as Solon had done.[153] But Democritus, unlike Solon, is not seeking to adjudicate between different elements in society. He is demanding an *initiative* on the part of the rich.[154] And some of his fragments do suggest how such an initiative might be motivated.

Like other moralists, Democritus had a certain amount to say about parsimony and the folly of stinginess,[155] though nothing as relevant as Antiphon's parable of the man who refused to lend his money, only to have it stolen.[156] More interestingly, he touched on the theme of liberality and its value for the aspiring statesman. According to B 282*,

> Use of money, with sense, is useful for being liberal and public-spirited: with folly, it becomes an expense for everyone[157]

– presumably when the improvident politician has to recoup his outlay.[158] (The whole topic had clearly come in for discussion by the end of the fifth century.)[159] More interestingly still, a sentence in the Democrates Collection (B 96*) on the related topic of χάρις, of doing favours and kindnesses, asserts:

> Truly kind is not he who looks to the return, but he who has chosen to do a good turn.

The altruism praised here is exactly what is needed on the part of the rich in B 255. And the concept of such altruism was certainly current in the fifth century. The Athenians, according to Pericles,

> make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them. When we help others, we do so not through calculation of profit but with the bold confidence of free men.[160]

The chances are that B 96 echoes some more substantial text, now lost, and that Democritus, like Epicurus after him,[161] preached the pleasure of unstinting, uncalculating generosity.

What Democritus certainly taught was something which Aristotle[162] regarded as more important than any redistribution of property – the curtailment of πλεονεξία or 'covetousness', of that 'desire for more' which was the classic vice of the rich. He offered a remedy for it, above all in a text nor normally seen as one of his political fragments. A long passage largely on the care of the soul, on how to attain subjective well-being and 'create your own happiness', B 191, advises you twice to compare

[153] Havelock, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 146.

[154] Contrast Aristotle's *Pol.* 1263a37–40: φανερὸν τοίνυν ὅτι βέλτιον εἶναι ἰδίας τὰς κτήσεις, τῇ δὲ χρήσει ποιεῖν κοινάς (which is roughly what Democritus is seeking)· ὅπως δὲ γίνονται τοιοῦτοι, τοῦ νομοθέτου τοῦτ' ἔργον ἴδιόν ἐστιν.

[155] Democritus B 227–230 all come from a chapter in Stobaeus (III 16) Περὶ φειδωλίας. The longest and most interesting of these, B 228, is probably intended, like B 280, to persuade parents to spend money on their children's education.

[156] Antiphon, DK 87 B 54.

[157] The play on words in the Greek (see Appendix, forthcoming) is hardly translatable.

[158] The sentence which follows this in Stobaeus (IV 31.121 = B 78) probably touches on the same theme.

[159] See *Anonymus Iamblichi* 3.4f. On the possible connections between this passage and Cicero, *off.* 2.52–71, see Cole, *HSCP* 65 (1961), 128–30.

[160] Thuc. 2.40.4f.: καὶ τὰ ἐς ἀρετὴν ἐνηντιώμεθα τοῖς πολλοῖς· οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὖ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους.... καὶ μόνοι οὐ τοῦ ξυμφέροντος μᾶλλον λογισμῷ ἢ τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῷ πιστῷ ἀδεῶς τινα ὠφελοῦμεν.

[161] Fr. 544 U.

[162] *Pol.* 1267b5–8.

your own lot with that of people worse off than yourself, not with that of people more prosperous. If you do so, 'yours will no longer be a case of suffering in soul through desire for more'. Unsatisfied greed is a psychological torment. It is also a danger to society. For what happens if you disregard Democritus' advice?

> He who admires those with possessions...and who dwells every hour on the memory is ever compelled to plot something new and to throw himself, through desire, into doing something irremediable and illegal.

Your greed will lead you into subversive activities[163] of a fatal kind, into crimes which Democritus is all too eager to see punished. If you follow his advice, on the other hand, not only will you be more contented – you will be far less of a public menace. The fragment ends by promising that

> you will both live in better spirits and will ward off curses not inconsiderable in life – envy, jealousy and malice.[164]

These hostile emotions are a plague to everyone. They threaten the community as a whole. Envy, as we saw, 'brings about the beginning of strife' (B 245).

B 191 is thus a contribution to the concord of society, to that 'good order' which B 252 described as more important than anything else. As we have seen, a concern for public order underlies much of what Democritus has to say about the slaughter of public enemies,[165] about 'doing what is needful' and punishing the guilty within society,[166] about the responsibilities of magistrates and the need to protect them in the discharge of their duties.[167] His fragments on such topics can read like the musings of an unpleasantly single-minded prosecutor. But he also recognized that law on its own is inadequate to 'benefit the life of men' and ensure an orderly community. Hence his attempts to supplement it by education, persuasion and suggestion. Hence his ideas of inculcating a 'law for the soul' which will lead men to act of their own accord as they should. Hence, in part at least, his interest in motivations for generosity and in training the soul to orderly moderation. Here, however, his thought took a decidedly apolitical turn. The moral of Fragment 191 is that by lowering your standards of reference, by comparing yourself with people worse off rather than with people better off than yourself, you can curtail your desires to a point where they are easily satisfied. As another fragment puts it, 'if you do not desire a lot, the little will seem a lot to you'.[168] In this way, you will achieve a contentment which the world

[163] The implications of *ἐπικαινουργεῖν* in B 191 are the same as those of *νεωτερίζειν*.

[164] *...εὐθυμότερόν τε διάξεις καὶ οὐκ ὀλίγας κῆρας ἐν τῶι βίωι διώσεαι, φθόνον καὶ ζῆλον καὶ δυσμενίην*. Whose? 'Envy, jealousy and malice' could (1) be emotions aroused in others – the great and successful (which is what you might mistakenly aspire to be) are notoriously prone to the envy and hostility of their fellow men (Pindar *N.* 8.22 etc. See above on B 245). Or equally (2), they could be emotions which you yourself feel, perhaps as a consequence of unsatisfied 'desire for more'. Cf. B 88: *ὁ φθονέων ἑωυτὸν ὡς ἐχθρὸν λυπέει* (also a commonplace. Cf. Isoc. 9.6; Stob. III 38.1, 11, 18, 29; Antiphon, fr. 82 and Caizzi ad loc.) and Plutarch 468b. Either interpretation is possible. But I suspect that (1) was the commoner in antiquity. Epicurus was possibly echoing these words of Democritus when he asserted: *βλάβας ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἢ διὰ μῖσος ἢ διὰ φθόνον ἢ διὰ καταφρόνησιν γίνεσθαι· ὧν ὁ σοφὸς λογισμῷ περιγίνεσθαι*. Cf. the sentence ascribed to Democritus at *DEI* (= 'Gnomologium Byzantinum *ἐκ τῶν Δημοκρίτου, Ἰσοκράτους, Ἐπικτήτου* e variis codicum exemplis restitutum', ap. K. Wachsmuth, *Studien zu den griechischen Florilegien* [Berlin, 1882], pp. 162–216), 200: *τὰ μέγιστα τῶν κακῶν οἱ πένητες ἐκπεφεύγασιν, ἐπιβουλὴν φθόνον καὶ μῖσος, οἷς οἱ πλούσιοι καθ' ἡμέραν συνοικοῦσιν*.

[165] See, above, §2.

[166] See, above, §4.

[167] B 266. See, above, §3.

[168] B 284. Cf. B 283, 219.

cannot give. The theme was to be repeated by one Hellenistic moralist after another. Epicurus, for instance, writing to a friend in high office, can say:

If you wish to make Pythocles wealthy, do not add to his money – subtract from his desires.[169]

The same goes for honours, pleasures or anything else that Pythocles might want[170] – *cupiditatibus detrahendum*, curtail his appetite! At the end of the process, he may find himself short of motivation for any worldly activity, not least for public life. He will certainly not be susceptible, as the Democritean 'man of worth' might be, to threats of fines or a bad reputation. If B 252 recalls the Thucydidean Pericles, the logical conclusion of B 191 is the nonchalant detachment of the philosopher Stilpo at the sack of his native Megara: 'omnia bona mea mecum habeo'.[171] Democritus did not go so far. But he took an important step in that direction.

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[169] Epicurus, fr. 135 U: 'si vis', inquit, 'Pythoclea divitem facere, non pecuniae adiciendum sed cupiditati detrahendum est' (= Seneca, *Ep.* 21.7), εἰ βούλει πλούσιόν τινα ποιῆσαι, μὴ χρημάτων προστίθει, τῆς δὲ ἐπιθυμίας ἀφαίρει (= Stob. III 17.23). The words come from a letter to Idomeneus 'regiae tunc potentiae ministrum et magna tractantem' (Sen. *Ep.* 21.3).

[170] As Seneca, *Ep.* 21.8, proceeds to point out.

[171] Seneca, *Ep.* 9.18.