

V.—Pythagorean Communism

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An analysis of the ancient tradition on Pythagorean communism shows that most of it depends on Timaeus, and that the material connected with his Fragment 77 can be rather fully reconstructed. Other sources provide some corroboration. According to this testimony, the communistic organization was confined to those in the upper levels of the society's hierarchy of grades. It seems to have been initiated by Pythagoras himself and may not have lasted much longer than his lifetime. The concept that "the possessions of friends are common" fits well with the philosophical ideals of the society, which emphasized harmony at all levels of existence, and also with its aristocratic political bias.

Most writers on Pythagoreanism have rejected or ignored the statements of ancient authors about the communistic organization of the early society. Their objections arise partly from a priori doubts of the involvement of a philosophical society in political matters, but also from the uncertainties of the ancient tradition. Therefore it may be useful to examine the most important of this evidence and attempt to determine its significance for our judgment of Pythagoreanism as a whole.

The most important early testimony on the question is that of Timaeus, in Fragment 77 (*FHG* 1.211). The material of this fragment is quoted or reflected by a number of authors, not all of whom are cited by Müller, and on page 36 most of the passages concerned are given in parallel columns.¹

The discussions of Photius and of the Platonic scholiast are evidently from the same source, presumably a collection of proverbs, from which Zenobius also gained his information. All of these are primarily concerned to explain the proverb *κοινὰ τὰ φίλων*, which they say was used first by the Pythagoreans. The first sentence, stating in broad and obviously inaccurate terms that Pythagoras

¹ Part of this material is printed by K. von Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics in Southern Italy* (New York, 1940) 39 (Parallel V), but with some differences as to what items are placed parallel to each other. The material is not discussed by Professor von Fritz in the text. To save space I have omitted the version of the scholion to Plato *Rep.* 4.424A (p. 222 Greene), which is almost the same as that of the Phaedrus scholion as far as *κατοικοῦντας*, and which then concludes: *ἀδιανέμητα κεκτήσθαι χρήματα, κοινῶν τε πρὸς τοῦτοις καὶ θυσιῶν μετέχειν*. A parallel in Zenobius (4.79) is obviously a brief summary of a version like that of *Schol. Pl. Phdr.* 279c.

persuaded "those who lived in Magna Graecia" to have their property in common, does not belong to Timaeus, but is a summary explanation of the proverb from the common source of Photius and the scholiast. The latter then introduces an exact quotation with the words *φησὶ γοῦν ὁ Τίμαιος ἐν τῇ θ' οὕτως*, and another quotation about the proverb, which came from considerably farther along in Timaeus' story (*μετὰ πολλά*). Part of the first direct quotation is contained word for word (with very slight variation) in Iamblichus' life of Pythagoras, which continues with a discussion of certain aspects of Pythagorean organization. This discussion is paralleled extensively by Diogenes Laertius 8.10, which in turn has some of the same material as the *Phaedrus* scholion.

If we try to reconstruct the original order and content of Timaeus' narrative, certain difficulties arise, because the different versions do not give the various items in the same order. The direct quotation in the scholion, mentioned above, only partially corresponds with Iamblichus. The scholiast says, "When the youths came to him and wished to spend their time with him, he did not allow them immediately, but said that it was necessary also for the property of those associated with him to be common." After the word "immediately," on the other hand, Iamblichus continues, "until he had made his test and judgment of them," and goes on to describe the method of testing the character of applicants for membership and the stages to be passed through before attaining the highest grade of membership. After a *δοκιμασία* and a three-year trial, came a five-year period of silence, and it is only in connection with this that he says, "In this period the belongings of each one, that is, his estates, were made common." The last phrase seems to be parallel to *τὰς οὐσίας κοινὰς εἶναι* in the scholion, and one might be tempted to think of the intervening part as an insertion. But the sequence of thought is quite natural, and in Diogenes also we find community of goods connected with the five-year silence. The solution seems to be suggested by the structure of the scholion-passage. The word *καὶ* has no sense in its context, and the words *τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων* are quite loose and inaccurate if only those who had reached a certain stage in membership shared their goods. Probably the original source of the scholion, beginning to quote accurately, impatiently skipped over the material on the society's organization, summarizing in a brief clause that which was essential

Testimonia

Schol. Pl. Phdr. 279c (p. 88)

(Gr.):

παροιμία κοινὰ τὰ φίλων, ἐπὶ τῶν εὐμεταδότων. φασὶ δὲ

Photius *s.v.* κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων:

λεχθῆναι πρῶτον τὴν παροιμίαν περὶ τὴν μεγάλην 'Ελλάδα καθ' οὗς χρόνους ὁ Πυθαγόρας ἀνέπειθεν τοὺς αὐτὴν κατοικοῦντας ἀδιανέμητα πάντα κεκτήσθαι. φησὶ γοῦν ὁ Τίμαιος ἐν τῇ ε' (*sic*) οὕτως· προσιόντων οὖν αὐτῷ τῶν νεωτέρων καὶ βουλομένων συνδιατρίβειν οὐκ εἰθὺς συνεχώρησεν, ἀλλ' ἔφη δεῖν καὶ τὰς οὐσίας κοινὰς εἶναι τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων.

εἶτα μετὰ πολλὰ φησι καὶ δι' ἐκείνους πρῶτον ῥηθῆναι κατὰ τὴν Ἱταλίαν ὅτι κοινὰ τὰ φίλων.

Diogenes Laertius 8.10:

εἶπε δὲ πρῶτος, ὥς φησι Τίμαιος, κοινὰ τὰ φίλων εἶναι καὶ φιλίαν ἰσότητα. καὶ αὐτοῦ οἱ μαθηταὶ κατετίθεντο τὰς οὐσίας εἰς ἓν.

πενταετίαν δ' ἡσύχαζον μόνον τῶν λόγων κατακοῦντες καὶ οὐδέπω Πυθαγόραν ὁρῶντες εἰς ὃ δοκιμασθεῖεν. τὸν τεῦθεν δὲ ἐγίνοντο τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ὀψέως μετεῖχον.

Iamblichus Vita Pythagorica

71f.:

προσιόντων τῶν νεωτέρων καὶ βουλομένων συνδιατρίβειν οὐκ εἰθὺς συνεχῶρει, μέχρις ἂν αὐτῶν τὴν δοκιμασίαν καὶ τὴν κρίσιν ποιήσεται. . . . (72) καὶ ὄντινα δοκιμάσειεν οὕτως, ἐφίει τριῶν ἐτῶν ὑπερορᾶσθαι, δοκιμάζων πῶς ἔχει βεβαιότητος καὶ ἀληθινῆς φιλομαθείας, καὶ εἰ πρὸς δόξαν ἱκανῶς παρεσκεύασται ὥστε καταφρονεῖν τιμῆς. μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο τοῖς προσιοῦσι προσέταττε σιωπὴν πενταετῇ, ἀποπειρώμενος πῶς ἐγκρατείας ἔχουσιν. . . . ἐν δὲ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ τὰ μὲν ἐκάστου ὑπάρχοντα, τουτέστιν αἱ οὐσίαι, ἐκοινοῦντο, διδόμενα τοῖς ἀποδεδειγμένοις εἰς τοῦτο γνωρίμοις, οἵπερ ἐκαλοῦντο πολιτικοί, καὶ οἰκονομικοὶ τινες καὶ νομοθετικοὶ ὄντες. αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰ μὲν ἀξιοὶ ἐφαίνοντο τοῦ μετασχεῖν δογμάτων, ἐκ τε βίου καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἐπιεικειας κριθέντες, μετὰ τὴν πενταετῇ σιωπὴν ἐσωτερικοὶ ἐγίνοντο καὶ ἐντὸς συνδόνος ἐπήκουον τοῦ Πυθαγόρου μετὰ τοῦ καὶ βλέπειν αὐτόν· πρὸ τούτου δὲ ἐκτὸς αὐτῆς καὶ μηδέποτε αὐτῷ ἐνορῶντες μετεῖχον τῶν λόγων διὰ ψιλῆς ἀκοῆς, ἐν πολλῶν χρόνῳ διδόντες βάσανον τῶν οἰκείων ἡθῶν.

to his purpose, and passed on to his other quotation. This sequence of ideas is confirmed by the passage from Gellius.

The other quotation of the scholion, which states that the Pythagoreans were the first in Italy to say that "the possessions of friends are common," has nothing to correspond to it in Iamblichus. It was obviously merely an obiter dictum in the original narrative of Timaeus, and it is difficult to see just where it would fit in. One would expect it to follow the statement of communistic organization; and in the Platonic scholion, if the clause beginning ἀλλ' ἔφη is a loosely-phrased parallel of the clause beginning ἐν δὴ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ in Iamblichus 72, then the expression μετὰ πολλά, introducing the quotation from Timaeus about the proverb, must indicate that it came at least after the description of the organization of the society which is reflected in the rest of Iamblichus 72. On the other hand, it cannot have been too far removed, because it is closely associated with the phrase κατετίθεντο τὰς οὐσίας εἰς ἓν in Diogenes Laertius. In this passage Diogenes has therefore doubtless disarranged the order of the material found in Timaeus. He, like the scholiast, is primarily interested here in the proverb and in explaining it; so he naturally cites it first, and then the explanation. Then he continues with some material on the five-year silence, also rather disarranged.

Thus nearly all the material in these passages can be regarded as derived directly from Timaeus, including sections 71-2 in Iamblichus, which undoubtedly came to him through the life of Pythagoras by Apollonius of Tyana. The words φησὶ . . . οὕτως show that the Platonic scholion quotes Timaeus directly. The words μετὰ πολλά indicate that he was using either the text of Timaeus or an authority who had excerpted it for the same reason, i.e., interest in the proverb. This could not be Apollonius, because he is primarily interested in the organization of the society, as Iamblichus 71-2 shows. Thus the close verbal correspondence in the passage beginning with προσιώντων provides valuable confirmation of the faithfulness of Apollonius (at least in this section) in copying out his source.

Another passage in Iamblichus (29-30), apparently based on an earlier section of Timaeus' work, merely alludes in a casual way to the communism of the society, but illustrates the organizational features already observed from Fragment 77. It may be translated as follows:

And first, preaching in the most famous city of Croton, he won many disciples, so that he is said to have had six hundred people not only moved to accept the philosophy he taught, but living what is called the common life, according to his command (ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον κοινοβίους, καθὼς προσέταξε, γενομένους). And these were the "philosophizers" (οἱ φιλοσοφούντες), but the many were auditors, whom they call *akousmatikoi*. In one public meeting, the first which he held after stepping alone upon the shore of Italy, more than two thousand were won over by his discourse.²

Timaeon data may also be at the basis of the comments on Pythagorean organization in Iamblichus 81. After having described in the preceding paragraph the difference between Πυθαγόρειοι (the more advanced initiates) and Πυθαγορισταί (adherents of lower degree, corresponding to "the many" of the paragraph just discussed), he continues:³

For the Pythagoreans (Πυθαγόρειοι) he ordered that their property should be common and that they should live together at all times, and the others (*sc.*, the Πυθαγορισταί) he bade to have their possessions private, but to gather in the same place and study together.

We have another direct reference to community-property in Iamblichus 257, which is from Apollonius and based on Timaeon material.⁴ This doubtless comes from a still later part of Timaeus' account, because its context is the story of the uprising against the society which occurred about 509 B.C. Enumerating the various peculiarities of the Pythagoreans which aroused jealousy and hatred

² On this passage see also my *Early Pythagorean Politics in Practice and Theory* (Baltimore, 1942) 29–31. The last sentence may well come from a different source. It is found again in Porph. *V.P.* 20, where it is followed by a similarly flowery and exaggerated statement that these 2000 never went back home at all after hearing Pythagoras, but after building a great auditorium lived there under his direction, ruling Magna Graecia and practicing communism. This is stated by Porphyry to come from Nicomachus. Was the number of members of the inner circle 600, as here (and also D.L. 8.15 and Suidas), or 300, as Timaeus indicates in at least two other places (*apud* Iamb. 254, Justin 20.4.14)? In the latter passages he seems to be speaking especially of those most concerned with political affairs, but this is not decisive. Probably a simple error of transcription has produced the discrepancy.

³ Bertermann (*De Iamblichi Vitae Pythagoricae fontibus*, [Königsberg, 1913] 20) ascribes this to Androcydes as the ultimate authority (simply because in another passage Androcydes seems to mention the same distinction between *mathematikoi* and *akousmatikoi*), but von Fritz (*loc. cit.*, see note 1) seems more likely to be right in including it among Timaeon passages. Here the use of the words *κοινὴν . . . τὴν οὐσίαν*, as in *Fr.* 77, is significant. However, it is not parallel to *Fr.* 77, but is based on a different section a little further on, explaining the difference between the two groups.

⁴ See K. von Fritz, *op. cit.*, 55–65, E. Minar, *op. cit.*, 54, note 14.

among the citizens, he says their relatives bore it ill that "they gave over their estates to be common property among themselves and deprived others of them (*τὰς οὐσίας ἀλλήλων μὲν παρέχειν κοινάς, πρὸς ἐκείνους δὲ ἐξηλοτριωμένους*)."

Aulus Gellius (1.9) reports a lecture of Calvisius Taurus in which the organization of the Pythagorean society was discussed. This would have been about the middle of the second century A.D. Though the paragraph shows considerable similarity to Timaeus, and one phrase is precisely parallel (see page 36, above), Taurus' lecture must have been based on a later source which remodeled Timaeus' account considerably.⁵ The last section of the chapter, which bears the appearance of one of Gellius' own additions from his reading,⁶ says:

quod quisque familiae pecuniaeque habebat, in medium dabat et coibatur societas inseparabilis.

In consideration of these passages and a few others which seem to confirm certain details,⁷ there can be no doubt that Timaeus believed in the existence of communism in the early society. However, according to his information not all followers of Pythagoras participated in the communal scheme. After tentative admission to the society, a candidate must first go through a three-year probationary period, and then, in addition, a five-year period of "silence." The phrasing of Iamblichus and Diogenes makes it clear that this silence is purely a ritual matter connected with the mystery-like instruction and religious ceremonies of the order. The ceremonies are conducted by Pythagoras behind a veil or curtain. Those who have passed this five-year test may pass behind the curtain and see him face to face during the ceremonies; the others must merely listen. The phrase in Diogenes *ἐγίνοντο τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ* seems to mean that the initiates became members of Pythagoras' household, but this is not parallel to the expression of Iamblichus, and since there are other indications, mentioned above,

⁵ The period of silence is indefinite or varies with the individual, some explanatory material is inserted, and an additional grade is added beyond the *mathematikoi*, that of *physikoi*.

⁶ Gellius had a habit of "beginning with his conversation with a scholar and continuing with a quotation from some book out of which the great man produced a solution for his problem." (H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Latin Literature* [New York, 1936] 450f.)

⁷ E.g., Justin (20.4.14) speaks of their "separatam a ceteris civibus vitam." Cf. also Antonius Diogenes *ap. Porph. V.P.* 33.

that this section of Diogenes is carelessly compiled, it may rest on a misunderstanding.

It was during the five-year period that the member's property was given over to the group, and administered by certain "disciples chosen for this task, who were called *πολιτικοί*, being also stewards, in a sense, and legislators." Presumably Timaeus is speaking primarily of landed property here, for a little further on he alludes to money in this way: "this too they had in common, managed for the common good by certain suitable persons whom they called financial stewards (*οικονομικοὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους*)."⁸ The distinction made here between *οὐσίαι* and money may indicate that the former is used by Timaeus in the common sense of "estates." In the most explicit of the parallel passages (Iamblichus 72) he speaks of "the possessions of each one, that is their *οὐσίαι*."

It appears from the passages studied that there were, as Timaeus understood the matter, at least three grades of membership in the society—the complete initiates, those serving the five-year apprenticeship, and those in the three-year period. Probably there was also another group of adherents, of a lower degree of perfection, and the tests and trials described are in preparation for a special high degree of discipleship.⁹ The following table shows the relation of the terms used in these passages:¹⁰

Iamb. 72	Iamb. 29–30	D.L. 8.10	Iamb. 80–1	Iamb. §1 (=
ὁμιλητοὶ	} ἀκροαταί, ἀκουσματικοί	}	} Πυθαγορισταί (private property)	} <i>Comm. Math.</i> 76.19ff. Festa) ἀκουσματικοί
3-year δοκιμασία				
5-year silence (common property)	} 600 φιλοσο- φούντες (common property)	5-year silence	} Πυθαγόρειοι (common property)	} μαθηματικοί
ἐσωτερικοί (common property)		ἐγίνοντο τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ		

⁸ Iamb. V.P. 74.

⁹ In Timaeus Fr. 77 (Iamb. 71, *Schol. Pl. Phdr.* 279c, p. 36 above), the word *συνδιατρίβειν* probably does not mean merely "be a member of the society," for that would imply that all members were in the three-year test period or beyond it.

¹⁰ There are still unsolved questions about the organization of the early society, the grades of membership, etc. For example, some of the terms listed here may have come into use only during the fifth century or even later; and subsequently a great many confusions arose because the historical situation of the early society was not understood. On the other hand, the close correspondences found here seem to indicate that this table reflects fairly accurately the views of Timaeus, who derived these from an authentic earlier tradition.

There seems to be no good reason to doubt the validity of Timaeus' testimony unless it is specifically contradicted. Writing in the late fourth or early third century, he dealt with the Pythagorean society within the framework of his general history of Sicily and Italy. At times he interpreted contemporary history somewhat according to his own political prejudices, but he had no reason to falsify Pythagorean history, and he is known to have used documentary sources for some facts at least.¹¹ It has sometimes been imagined that the whole concept of communism in the Pythagorean society was deduced by Timaeus from their reported use of the phrase *κοινὰ τὰ φίλων*. But the whole character of the exposition of Timaeus has to be considered in this connection, and his casual use of the proverb renders this interpretation unlikely. Some have thought that the idea of communism was imported into Pythagorean history under the influence of Plato's *Republic*; but even if we supposed Timaeus himself to be influenced by Plato, what motive could he have had for devising such a fiction, and then elaborating it by fitting it into his account of the organization of the society? The detail of his exposition goes far beyond anything suggested by Plato. Extreme skepticism might suggest that Timaeus himself was following sources (Pythagorean or other) which had built up a story of Pythagorean communism under the influence of Plato. This would mean that they must also have invented the whole circumstantial account of Pythagorean organization, as described in the passages connected with Timaeus' Fragment 77. But again, what would their motive be? Such falsehoods would not enhance the glory or prove the divinity of Pythagoras, as did the miracles reported by Aristotle and others.

Other testimony relating to the earliest period of the society may provide some corroboration for Timaeus, but scarcely any new information. Heraclides Ponticus, the pupil of Plato and Speusippus, said in his *Abaris* that Pythagoras "bade Abaris to remain there (in Croton) and help in improving the members, and to share his accumulated gold with Pythagoras' associates, who had been persuaded by reason to reinforce in deed the saying 'the possessions of friends are common.'" ¹² The Abaris story as a whole was a fanciful romance, but Heraclides used serious as well

¹¹ See R. Laqueur in *RE s.v.* "Timaïos 3", 1076ff., K. von Fritz, *op. cit.*, 65f., E. Minar, *op. cit.*, 52.

¹² *Iamb.* 92.

as fictional material in his books, and could not have simply invented this casually mentioned feature of the Pythagorean background of his story. The closeness of the facts to those reported by Timaeus—a few years later, probably—is striking. Timaeus cannot have derived his material from Heraclides, because his account is very circumstantial and the description of the organization of the society would scarcely fit into the scheme of Heraclides' work. We know, in fact, that Timaeus was hostile to Heraclides precisely because of his tendencies to fanciful exaggeration.¹³ The common use of the proverb might point to the use of the same source by the two writers, but this is not necessarily the case, as the proverb was a very popular one at that time. It would naturally get attached to the Pythagorean history, and Heraclides does not mention the fact that Pythagoras was the first to use it.

Diocles of Magnesia in his epitome of Greek philosophy (first century B.C.) said "that Epicurus did not think right that his pupils should put their property into a common stock (*εἰς τὸ κοινὸν κατατίθεσθαι τὰς οὐσίας*) as Pythagoras did, saying that the possessions of friends are common."¹⁴ If we might suppose that all of this was based on something Epicurus had written or said, another source contemporary to Timaeus would be gained; but it seems more likely that the last clause is an addition by Diocles. Perhaps the ever-recurring words *κοινόν* and *οὐσίας* along with the citation of the proverb, hint at Timaeus' influence.

Other evidence in the historical tradition about property-ownership among the Pythagoreans does not seem to add much to our knowledge. The question of redivision of land, raised by the common citizens, was important at the time of both revolts against the society, in 509 and 454 B.C.¹⁵ In the first case, after the conquest of Sybaris, the Pythagoreans "decreed that the conquered land should not be divided up for new colonists according to the wishes of the common people;" and in the second instance the redistribution of land and abolition of debts were accomplished some years after the attack on the society which definitely broke its political power. However, while this indicates that the Pythagoreans or the aristocratic class which they represented were thought

¹³ D.L. 8.72.

¹⁴ D.L. 10.11.

¹⁵ Iamb. 255, 262.

to have appropriated too much land, it does not show whether or not they held any of it in common. References are made occasionally to "the house of Pythagoras," or of Milo or some other member, but this may mean simply the houses in which these men lived.

Nor is there any indication how long this communistic organization may have endured. In the sources of Timaeus it seems to have been definitely connected with the person of Pythagoras himself, and it may have passed out of use with his death or his departure from Croton. Pythagoras came to that city about 529, left for Metapontum in 509, and died there about 494. On the other hand, it cannot have lasted beyond the great revolt in the middle of the fifth century which broke the society's political power and scattered the membership.

By the time of Archytas' political leadership in Tarentum (perhaps 366-360 B.C.), the society had certainly abandoned the custom. However, at about this time the Tarentines, probably under Pythagorean influence, adopted a custom for political purposes which is reminiscent of the earlier communism. Aristotle says, "By sharing the use of their own property with the poor, they gain their good will."¹⁶ Whatever the details of this scheme may have been, it obviously does not mean that the members of the society or of the governing class held their property in common.

In discussions of early Pythagoreanism, much has been made of arguments from the silence of Plato and Aristotle. If the early communism is historical, why does Plato not allude to it in the *Republic*, where he describes an ideal state with communistic features? There seem to be at least three good reasons. In the first place, although Pythagorean communism, like Plato's, was restricted to the leaders in the community, it was not an official aspect of the state organization, but was practiced by the members of an exclusive society; and it was not so extensive as that which Plato envisaged, since it did not include the community of wives and children. Secondly, Plato was not particularly interested in historical precedents. Though his states are, of course, developed in the context of Greek political thought, the *Republic* especially is expected to stand on its logical perfection rather than on actual

¹⁶ *Pol.* 6.1320b10; cf. E. Minar, *op. cit.*, 86-90, and also, for the theoretical reflection of this in Archytas' works, 91, 111-113.

examples. It is something completely new and different.¹⁷ Finally, it should be remembered that even if Plato had wished to use an historical example, he might have hesitated because of the Pythagoreans' lack of permanent success. The state he devised was to last forever, and community of property among the Guards was to help insure this, whereas in Southern Italy this very community of property was one of the important grounds on which the Pythagoreans were thrown out of power after a few years.

It is notable that Aristotle nowhere in his discussions of communism in the *Politics* mentions the Pythagorean experiment in Croton.¹⁸ However, like Plato, Aristotle was primarily interested in an "official" communism. He does not believe in the practicality of common property, but that "by friendly consent there should be a common use of it." His public meals would be open to all the citizens.¹⁹ His historical examples in the sections dealing with the problem are all vague ("this is the practice of some nations"), except where Sparta and Crete are mentioned; and there he is referring to conditions existing in his own time.²⁰

Politically, economically, and also intellectually, Pythagoreanism represents a defensive reaction of the aristocratic groups among whom it took shape against the growing tendencies to democratic demands and action. This reaction naturally was influenced in the specific form which it took by the intellectual currents of the age, and most of all by the personal idiosyncrasies and ideals of the founder. This means especially the strong religious and moral prepossessions which seemed all-important to Pythagoras. He demanded adherence to complicated ritual practices and abstinences, and also thought of the moral perfection of the individual as the

¹⁷ This is not to say that Plato was not influenced in the development of his idea by knowledge about the experience in Italy; nor that there are not hints of this in his writings. To mention only the most obvious, he often uses the supposedly Pythagorean proverb that "friends have all things in common" (notably in *Rep.* 4.424A, 5.449c, and *Lg.* 5.739c; in *Ly.* 207c, *Phdr.* 279c, and *Cri.* 112E there is no political or economic implication). The Pythagorean "way of life" is mentioned in *Rep.* 10.600c. In the *Laws* Plato is no longer advocating community of property except as an ideal (5.739c); and if he frequently mentions the communal institutions of Sparta and Crete, that is because of the dramatic framework of the dialogue.

¹⁸ His allusion to the arrangements in Tarentum has been noticed already.

¹⁹ *Pol.* 7.1330a1 ff.; cf. 2.1263a29-39.

²⁰ He says (2.1264a5), "Great light would be thrown on this subject if we could see such a form of government in actual process of construction," but he is referring to Plato's *Republic*, which, as shown above, was quite different from the Pythagorean organization.

most important element in the regeneration of society. Thus while his followers must abstain from the use of beans, from "cutting fire with a knife," and the like, they must also maintain sexual chastity and respect for elders. It is in this connection that we must think of Pythagoras' "communistic" idea as being developed. Renunciation of personal property gives assurance of whole-hearted sincerity in devotion to the moral and religious ideals of the society. It shows how much less important are material things than the welfare of the soul in this life and the next.

Another important fact is that the member's goods were renounced in favor of the group. It is "friends" whose possessions are rightfully considered as common. The central point of Pythagorean thought throughout its history was harmony, the fitting together of the parts in any whole—the cosmos, society, or the individual. Men are naturally members of the human family and must not allow individual or separatist tendencies to supersede their loyalty to the group. This does not mean without qualification, however, that all men are brothers and must share their fortune; obviously the "friends" intended in the slogan are a rather select group united by religious beliefs and capable of passing rigorous tests lasting several years.²¹ It is not out of line with Pythagorean thought that some should thus be treated differently from others, for the Pythagorean harmony was an "agreement of dissentients,"²² a fitting together of unequal parts, not as equals, but in accordance with their natural differences and varying merit. Thus the members of the society undoubtedly considered themselves as the group naturally suited and intended to rule over their fellow-citizens, and they felt that it was truly for the good of all that they set themselves off as a special group.

The necessity which they felt of sacrificing personal interest in the interest of the group added strength to the movement, and is to some extent a measure of the severity of the social and political situation which required this strong front. This does not mean that Pythagoras or his followers consciously thought of their religion or morality as an aristocratic political tool. Though the sum of their activity had a political effect in the interest of a

²¹ As a matter of fact the word *φίλος* as well as *ἑταῖρος*, is sometimes apparently used as a technical term for the members of the society (Porph. *V.P.* 56, Plut. *De Gen. Socr.* 13.583a, etc.).

²² Philolaus *Fr.* 10 Diels: *πολυμυγέων ἔνωσις καὶ δίχα φρονούντων συμφρόνησις*.

single class, they doubtless believed sincerely that it was taken with the good of all men as its aim. However, the ascetic aspect must not be overemphasized. If the member gave over his goods to the society to be administered, he received in return an ample subsistence. As we have seen, when the society had obtained decisive control of the affairs of the city of Croton, the common people had occasion to complain that they were neglected in the distribution of public land. There is also some indication that the Pythagoreans may have sanctioned or indulged in actual luxury,²³ and at any rate there is no hint of anything resembling a vow of poverty.

²³ Timaeus *Fr.* 82.