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### I.—Pindar, Sophocles, and the Thirty Years' Peace

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to show (1) that Pindar's reaction to the Thirty Years' Peace is reflected not only in the *Eighth Pythian*, generally dated to 446 B.C., but also in the *Eighth Nemean*, which is generally dated to 460–457 B.C. but which, it is argued, should be dated to 445 B.C.; (2) that Sophocles' *Ajax* is closely connected with Pindar's *Eighth Nemean*, being composed c. 444 B.C., and representing Sophocles' view of the moral and tragic issues already projected into the myth of Ajax by Pindar in the *Eighth Nemean*.

#### II. PINDAR'S *Eighth Pythian*

Modern Pindaric scholarship has accepted the scholiast's information that the *Eighth Pythian* celebrates a victory won in the Pythian Games of August 446 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

The year 446 B.C. is a critical one in Greek political history. The Athenian land empire, established in five years of fighting (460–455 B.C.), and maintained for eight more years, had collapsed as a result of the revolt of Boeotia and the Boeotian victory at the battle of Coronea in 447 B.C., followed by the revolt of Megara

<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 439; O. Schroeder, *Pindars Pythien* (Leipzig and Berlin 1922) 68; L. R. Farnell, *The Works of Pindar* (London 1930) 1.129–130; W. Schmid and O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (Munich 1929) I.1.572–573; H. T. Wade-Gery and C. M. Bowra, *Pindar, Pythian Odes* (London 1928) 143–146; H. T. Wade-Gery, "Thucydides the son of Melesias," *JHS* 52 (1932) 214–215; Schwenn, *RE* 20.1678; A. Turyn, *Pindari Epinicia* (New York 1944) 122.

and Euboea and the Spartan invasion of Attica in the summer of 446 B.C. The Athenian attempt to impose an imperial unification of Greece had failed, and in the following winter (446/445 B.C.) Athens and Sparta signed the Thirty Years' Peace. The Thirty Years' Peace was based on the abandonment by Athens of her land empire and the recognition by Sparta of the Athenian naval empire in the Aegean; it thus re-established that balance of power between Athens and Sparta which had developed in the Persian Wars, which had been accepted by Athens under Cimon, and which Athens under Pericles had temporarily upset.

Modern Pindaric scholarship is also agreed that the theme and mood of the *Eighth Pythian* reflect Pindar's reaction to this contemporary political situation. His aristocratic sympathies and his Theban patriotism turned him against Athens, when Athens turned against Greece. When Athens was under Cimon's leadership, was still a moderate democracy, and was still directing its imperialist energies to the Aegean Sea and the war against Persia, Pindar had celebrated Athens as the "bulwark of Greece" in an enthusiastic Dithyramb. After the Athenian conquest of Boeotia in 457 B.C., he expressed his outraged Theban patriotism, his loyalty to the traditions of the Theban military aristocracy, and his hope for *revanche*, in the *Seventh Isthmian*. There can be therefore no doubt that he would exult in the Boeotian victory over Athens at Coronea, at the recovery of Boeotian independence, and at the overthrow of the democratic puppet governments which Athens had installed in Boeotia.<sup>2</sup>

But Pindar's personal emotional involvement in the political situation in 446 B.C. is derived not only from his loyalty to the Theban aristocracy, but also from his friendship with the aristocracy of Aegina, the home city of the victor celebrated in the *Eighth Pythian*. Aegina, like Thebes, had been conquered by Athens in 457 B.C.; but unlike Thebes, Aegina had not recovered her independence in 446 B.C.; as an island Aegina remained under the control of the Athenian navy after the collapse of the Athenian land empire. In the negotiations for the Thirty Years' Peace (winter 446/445 B.C.) the future of Aegina was one of the controversial issues: "Sparta was bound by every consideration of honour to secure the independence of Aegina . . . in the end Athens gained her point. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Pindar, Frg. 63 (ed. Bowra); Wilamowitz 272-274, 411-413; Farnell 1.277-281; Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52.214-215, 224.

Sparta saved her face by the proviso that Aegina was to enjoy autonomy, although she was to pay tribute to Athens and to be included in her Empire."<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 446 B.C. the immediate future of Boeotia and Thebes was certain: their independence was in their own hands and was not subject to negotiation between Athens and Sparta. The immediate future of Aegina was not certain. Even before the departure of Athenian plenipotentiaries for Sparta, it looked as if Greece was on the verge of a negotiated peace, in view of the peculiar kind of military campaign conducted by the Spartans that summer. The Spartan army, after invading Attica as far as Eleusis, withdrew again without striking a blow; the Spartan king, Pleistoanax, who was in command and his adviser, Cleandridas, were later accused and convicted of having been bribed by Pericles. Whether or not there was bribery, it seems necessary to assume that there were negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

It is theoretically possible that Pindar knew the final terms of the Thirty Years' Peace when he wrote the *Eighth Pythian*; but this possibility is practically excluded by the mood of the ode itself. Not only does it end with an abrupt prayer for the freedom of Aegina, but throughout its emotional appeal depends on the ambiguous juxtaposition of hope and despair, triumph and defeat, light and darkness. This ambiguity expresses the anguish of a heart profoundly concerned over the uncertain future.<sup>5</sup>

The ode begins with an invocation (1-20) of Peace. "Peace," or the "peaceful life" (*ἡσυχία*), is a conservative, aristocratic slogan: its meaning is preservation of the *status quo* both in the internal constitutions of cities, and in international relations. It therefore distills the essence of the old order which was being challenged by Athens. The same word is used by the Corinthians in Thucydides when they denounce Athens as a city "by nature incapable of either leading a peaceful life itself or permitting others to lead it." When, therefore, Pindar refers to the capacity of Peace to be rough with

<sup>3</sup> E. M. Walker, *CAH* 5.91; references in G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* (Gotha 1897) III.1.436, note 5.

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Walker, *CAH* 5.90-91; Thuc. 1.114.2 and 2.21.1.

<sup>5</sup> The following commentary on the *Eighth Pythian* follows Wilamowitz and Wade-Gery in its notion of the historical context of the ode, differing from them mainly in emphasizing that Pindar did not at the time know the final terms of the Thirty Years' Peace. The interpretation of the text is also greatly indebted to G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley 1945) 147-149.

her opponents, and prolongs this note with a new interpretation of the myth of the Gigantomachy, making that conflict one between the Giants and Peace, there is at the back of his mind a condemnation of Athens as being, like the Giants, a subversive ruffian power, and an allusion to the recent defeats administered to Athens by the friends of Peace. But Peace is also the spirit which is inspiring the international negotiations which Pindar expects: she "holds the final keys of conferences and wars"; she "unerringly discerns the right moment for gentle intercourse" (3-7). The two aspects of Peace are fused into one: the negotiated peace will not be a peace at any price; the friends of Peace have routed the aggressor and are negotiating from strength; therefore in the first line in the poem Pindar confidently juxtaposes the words "Peace" and "Justice."<sup>6</sup>

The second section of the ode (21-40) is devoted to the praise of Aegina, the Aeginetan athlete, and his family. Aegina, though fallen on evil days, remains true to her heroic traditions, and still produces good men. But Pindar does more than reaffirm his approval of Aegina; he also offers consolation: the Graces still stand beside her. Pindar's formula "fallen, but not far from the Graces" juxtaposes light and darkness, as in the famous finale of the ode: "Man is the dream of a shadow. But when the god-given radiance comes, we are crowned with bright light and sweet life" (96-97). That radiance is what the Graces have to bestow on fallen Aegina.<sup>7</sup>

In the third section (41-60) Pindar gives a condensed treatment of an episode in the myth of the Epigoni, the sons who avenged their fathers: their fathers, the famous Seven led by Adrastus, had failed in their expedition against Thebes; the sons succeeded. Pindar selects the moment when Amphiaraus, one of the original Seven, is moved by his son Alcmaeon's departure to prophesy Alcmaeon's prowess, the success of the expedition, and, in contrast with his son's good fortune, the death of Adrastus' son. This mythical episode is linked with the preceding section by an explicit comparison between the Aeginetan athlete and Alcmaeon: they both live up to the standard set by their ancestors (44-45). This cardinal ethical principle of hereditary aristocracy is exemplified not only in Alcmaeon and the Aeginetan athlete, but also in Aegina

<sup>6</sup> Thuc. 1.70. Cf. Thuc. 1.102; Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52.214-215, 224-225; Farnell 1.130; Wade-Gery, "The Question of Tribute in 449/448 B.C.," *Hesperia* 14 (1945) 228.

<sup>7</sup> On the meaning of *ἐρεος* in line 21 cf. Norwood 147-149.

as a whole (cf. 24-28). But the Epigoni not only were, like their fathers, good men; unlike their fathers they were successful in war. Hence the myth enables Pindar to suggest that the present generation may, like the Epigoni, succeed where their fathers failed. In the *Seventh Isthmian*, written for a Theban who fell in the battle in which Athens conquered Boeotia in 457 B.C., Pindar had, by a reference to Amphiaraus, suggested a hope for Epigoni and for *revanche*: now he sees that hope materializing. At the same time, preserving the basic dualism in the mood of the ode as a whole, he crosses the light of hope with the shadow of tragedy. In contrast with Amphiaraus' son Alcmaeon, Adrastus' son died in the battle.<sup>8</sup>

In the fourth section (61-80) the theme of light and darkness, which runs throughout the ode, takes a new form. The athlete's successes, which are the gift of Apollo (64-66), and which culminate in the radiant moment of the present victory celebration (70-72), are contrasted with the dark uncertainties of the future, which is controlled not by man, but by a capricious divine power (73-78). In the first section there was a conflict between order and disorder, and order triumphed. In the second section Aegina, for all her righteousness, has fallen; and her fall, even if it is cushioned by the Graces, is still a tragedy and is left unexplained. In the third section the contrast between the good fortune in Amphiaraus' family and the tragedy in Adrastus' family is attributed to "divine chance" (53), but the nature of "divine chance" is left unexplained. In the fourth section Pindar faces the problem of chance squarely, gathers the facts and projects them into the figure of a capricious divine power. The existence of this element of caprice in the universe is a challenge to the reign of Peace and Justice quite different from the challenge of the Giants. Pindar is confident of the punishment of the unjust; but as the poem moves forward, the fate of the just becomes the central problem, and it is the tragic misfortunes of the just that are epitomized in the figure of the divine power who tosses high now one man, now another, and brings another down beneath his hands.<sup>9</sup>

In the fifth and final section (81-100) Pindar returns again to the victories of the Aeginetan athlete. In the second section these

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz 413.

<sup>9</sup> On the meaning of lines 76-78, cf. Norwood 148.

victories had been viewed as evidence that the athlete's family and city still breed fine men (28, 35-38); in the fourth section they had been viewed as the gift of the god Apollo (64-66); here Pindar emphasizes the contrast between the triumph of the victor and the heartbreak of the vanquished. And the triumph of the victor is short lived. "Brief is the rise of joy for men: in the same way it falls to the ground, shaken by a contrary mood. We are creatures of a day: What are we? What are we not? Man is the dream of a shadow. But when the god-given radiance comes, we are crowned with bright light and sweet life. Aegina, dear mother, bring this city back to the path of freedom, with the help of Zeus and King Aeacus, of Peleus and good Telamon and Achilles." The poem thus ends on the theme of the fragility of human success and the inability of man to control his destiny. There is no theodicy to explain away the tragic facts — only the affirmation that they do not cancel the sweet radiance of the moment. There is no return to the supremacy of Peace and Justice — only the abrupt and anguished prayer for the freedom of Aegina.

### III. PINDAR'S *Eighth Nemean*

The meaning and beauty of the *Eighth Nemean* can only be appreciated by an analysis of the structure round which it is built.<sup>10</sup>

The ode is divided into three parts (1-17, 18-34, 35-51); each of them a metrical unit, each with a distinctive subject matter, each with a distinctive mood, yet all interrelated by an interfusing flow of emotion and thought.

The mood of the first section is set by the first lines. The invocation of beauty, love, and youth stamp the mood as one of desire: but the development — the distinction between the gentle and ungente loves, and the wish for that kind of love which it is both proper and possible to satisfy — shows that the mood is that special kind of desire that springs from disappointment or loss: the Greeks called it *πóθος*. The emphasis in the first section is on good King Aeacus whose leadership was voluntarily recognized by all the great men of his time, including the great men of Athens and Sparta (11-12); in Aeacus there is the perfect union of virtue,

<sup>10</sup> The most valuable discussions of the *Eighth Nemean* are Wilamowitz 406-411; Farnell 1.213-217; Norwood 149-152. But none of these are in my opinion satisfactory, since Wilamowitz and Farnell misconceive the historical context (see below, 13), and Norwood of course pays no attention to it.

wisdom and power (8). The mood and the subject blend because Aeacus represents the great past of Aegina — the past which is dead. In the idyllic picture of the loves shepherding the gifts of Aphrodite to the bed of Zeus and Aegina the mood becomes escapist, almost romantic. Now Aegina has fallen on evil days, and Pindar comes to Aeacus as a suppliant on behalf of the city and its citizens. From the melancholy contrast of the past and the present Pindar, anticipating the final resolution of the ode, gathers a comforting truth valid in the past, the present and always: "Felicity planted with God's help endures."<sup>11</sup>

The mood of the second section is strife and bitterness. The transition from the end of the previous section is softened by the reference to Cinyras: "Felicity planted with God's help endures . . . it was God who in ancient times loaded Cinyras with wealth." It is still true that a god-given felicity is available to men, but Cinyras' perfect felicity crowned with wealth, like Aeacus' perfect virtue crowned with power, is found only in the legendary past (the relation between wealth and felicity is left obscure, to be elucidated in the final section, 37-41). The mood of bitterness and strife is introduced first by the reference to the envy and hostility which the poet faces in the present (20-21); it is elaborated by the description of the strife between Ajax and Odysseus in the legendary past (23-32): it culminates in the reflection that strife and deceit are with us in the past, in the present, and always (32-34). But it is still true that only the felicity planted with God's help endures: deceit crushes the light and raises high the glory of the children of darkness, but their glory is rotten (34).<sup>12</sup>

Thus the first two sections are in sharp contrast with each other: the idyllic picture of the loves shepherding the gifts of Aphrodite to the bed of Zeus and Aegina (6-7) is set against the somber description of the carnage of the Trojan War (28-32). In contrast with Aeacus, we have Ajax and Odysseus: in Aeacus is the perfect union of virtue, wisdom and power; Ajax has virtue, Odysseus has a crooked kind of wisdom without virtue, and the power and the glory go to him. The discovery that all was not idyllic in the past raises the flow of emotion and thought to a new level: the tender nostalgia of the first section is replaced by somber realism; this is

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz 410; Norwood 151.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Norwood 151.

the critical turning point in the movement of emotion and thought of the poem as a whole.

In the third section Pindar reaffirms his faith in the old-fashioned piety and virtue symbolized by Aeacus in the first section, and at the same time reformulates his faith so as to take account of the brutal facts symbolized by Ajax' suicide and Odysseus' triumph in the second section. The time dimension emphasized in the first section is the past; in the second section the emphasis is divided between past and present; in the final section the focus is on the present. Corresponding to Aeacus in the first section, Ajax and Odysseus in the second, the predominant personality in the final section is the poet himself.<sup>13</sup>

In reformulating his faith Pindar, as in the first two sections, reaches for a truth valid in the past, the present, and always, and the progression of his thought can be plotted by going back to the eternal truths formulated in the first two sections. The three passages are interconnected by what Norwood calls the symbol of the sapling tree. The first formulation is that felicity planted with God's help endures, even as God loaded Cinyras with wealth; the second formulation is that deceit raises high the glory of the children of darkness, but their glory is rotten; in the third section Pindar dismisses wealth (36-37; contrast Cinyras) and dedicates himself to the pursuit of honor and traditional *aretê*, coming to rest in the eternal truth that "virtue (*aretê*) grows as when beneath freshening dews a tree springs up into the liquid air, raised high among men who are wise and righteous" (40-42). Felicity planted with God's help endures, but the felicity is virtue itself, without wealth, together with honor and support from men who, like Aeacus, are wise and righteous. The fundamental note in the third section is the re-affirmation of loyalty to the ancient ways — *prisca fides*. The ideal pattern symbolized by Aeacus in the first section is reaffirmed, but in a transmuted form: the ideal pattern is no longer embodied in virtuous government, but in the fellowship of virtuous men united in friendship. "The services of friends are many" (42).

Pindar had made himself the symbol of the life dedicated to virtue (35-39); now he makes his poem the symbol of the services of friendship. In the first section Pindar had referred to his

<sup>13</sup> Pindar is not concerned with the personality of the athlete: cf. Wilamowitz 410; Farnell 1.214-215. Contrast Norwood 260.



poem as a "Lydian ribbon musically embroidered" (15); this rather baroque image is in harmony with the romantic escapist mood of that section. In the second section Pindar had mentioned the carping criticism "which always fastens on the good" (21-22) to which his poetry is subjected: Pindar as a good poet, like the good man Ajax, has suffered from envy and calumny. In the third section he implies he is not going to be deterred by carping criticism when he declares his intention to go on "praising what is truly praiseworthy and strewing blame on sinners" (39). In this context the good man and the good poet are fused, so that Pindar becomes himself the symbol of the good man and the good friend.<sup>14</sup>

As he offers the services of friendship at the end of the poem, Pindar reintroduces the atmosphere of disappointment and loss which also pervades the first section, only modulating the mood from escapist desire into resignation and consolation (42-50). The services of friendship are greatest in times of trouble (42-43); the heart yearns to share happiness with a friend, but empty hopes come to a barren end (43-45). Instead Pindar's Muse will raise a stone monument to the athlete, his family, and his country; he is glad to acclaim achievement, and the spell of song can also soothe the pain of grief (46-50). The last two lines take the consolation of poetry and set it against the background of the battles long ago which were the theme of the second section: "The triumphal ode was heard in ancient days, even before the strife between Adrastus and the men of Cadmus." Poetry, like war, like deceit, like *aretê* itself, is to be found in the past, the present, and always; Pindar the poet, as well as Pindar the man, is true to the ancient ways.<sup>15</sup>

If this analysis is correct, there is a vital unity to the aesthetic structure and to the flow of emotion and thought in the poem. The three sections of the poem form a triadic unity: the first two sections state a conflict and problem which are resolved in the third section. The basic message of the poem is that though we have fallen on evil days, when virtue and success do not go together, we must still be true to the ancient ways, finding our reward in *aretê* itself and in friendship; for even in ancient times did not Ajax suffer even as we?

An analysis of the *Eighth Nemean* as a poem, without reference to any biographical information about the poet, shows that it is

<sup>14</sup> On line 15, cf. Wilamowitz 406, n. 1; Farnell 2.305-306; Norwood 149.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz 409.

both an expression and a catharsis of some traumatic experience. Pindar's use of the word *aretê* shows that in general he identified it with success; it is therefore a crisis in his life when, in the *Eighth Nemean*, he faces the fact that *aretê* and success do not always go together. If it is possible to discover the nature of that crisis, it will deepen our appreciation of the poem, enlarge our understanding of the relation between literature and life, and enable us to use the *Eighth Nemean* not only as a work of art but also as a historical document.<sup>16</sup>

An unprejudiced surrender to the text of the poem suggests that the traumatic experience which inspired the *Eighth Nemean* must be sought in the history of Aegina: all serious attempts to establish the date of the poem have started from this hypothesis and have been in effect attempts to discover the appropriate moment in Aeginetan history.<sup>17</sup>

Nineteenth-century scholarship finally reached the conclusion that the *Eighth Nemean* was composed about 491 B.C. The case is well stated by Bury:

The allusions to the political situation could scarcely be clearer than they are without becoming more than allusive. When the ambassadors of Darius visited Greece in 491 to demand earth and water as tokens of subjection, Aegina had submitted, and Athens had eagerly seized the opportunity of humbling her rival, by accusing her at Sparta of treachery to the cause of Hellenic freedom. The Spartans listened to the charges and the result was, chiefly owing to the activity of King Cleomenes, that ten of the noblest Aeginetans were sent as hostages to Athens. It was said by a political opponent that Cleomenes was bribed by the Athenians. . . . Pindar makes the sorrows of Ajax the central point of his hymn. . . . In this case the story of Ajax was particularly suggestive, for Odysseus was a suitable prototype of the Athenians, so noted for their readiness of speech and wit. The case of Ajax shows that the art of cajolery by cunning words is of ancient date. But it is some consolation to reflect that the power of words to heal pain is of ancient date too; and Pindar suggests that he comes to minister a song of healing to the wounds of Aegina. It is also a consolation to remember the power of her great

<sup>16</sup> On Pindar's notion of *aretê* see Norwood 49. As a result of his refusal to consider Pindar's thought as a historical process in a historical context, Norwood sees it only as chaotic. I am leaving aside the problem of the *Fourth Isthmian*, the authenticity of which is questioned by Norwood 172-175.

<sup>17</sup> I cannot take the eccentric theory of A. Puech, *Pindare* (Paris 1923) 3.107 seriously.

hero Aeacus, and that the men of Athens and Sparta were once upon a time proud and eager to acknowledge his lordship.<sup>18</sup>

This nineteenth-century interpretation has been rightly rejected by modern scholars. Their objections are summarized by Farnell: "This theory fails to explain why Pindar in 491 B.C. should be so shamelessly pro-Persian, what Aegina by that time had done to deserve Ajax for her heroic prototype, and why Athens as early as 491 should be stigmatized as glib-tongued and treacherous. It also ignores the features in the style and subject matter of the odes that mark the poet's advancing age and mellow maturity." The features in the subject matter of the ode to which Farnell refers are the clear indications that Pindar is an established and venerable figure as a poet (20–22, 35–39), as a preacher (35–39), and as a friend of Aegina (42–51). Our analysis of the poem strengthens the case against the nineteenth-century view. The 491 B.C. crisis in the affairs of Aegina, though real enough, cannot bear the weight of the ethical superstructure which Pindar develops in the *Eighth Nemean*. It is not possible to see how Pindar could have been stimulated by that occasion to reaffirm his faith in *aretê*, even though *aretê* is fallen on evil days: this is the heart of the poem, and it is significant that Bury does not take account of it. Even if Farnell is exaggerating the difficulties in imagining Pindar to be pro-Persian in 491 B.C., the mood of the pro-Persian party in 491 will not be resignation and pessimism, but will look forward confidently to the imminent Persian attack and their own vindication.<sup>19</sup>

As an alternative to the 491 B.C. date, twentieth-century scholarship has sought to relate the ode to the 460–457 crisis in the history of Aegina, when Athens, in one of her first moves of aggressive expansion under the leadership of Pericles, attacked Aegina and reduced her to the status of a tribute-bearing subject. This hypothesis avoids the objections which are fatal to the 491 B.C. date. There is no doubt that Pindar would and did regard Aegina's loss of independence as a defeat of *aretê*; it is equally clear that in this period he could speak as an established poet and familiar friend to Aegina.

<sup>18</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar* (London 1890) 145–146.

<sup>19</sup> Farnell 2.303. However I do not see why Ajax could not have already been identified with Aegina. The ode was performed as part of a public ceremony at the shrine of Aeacus in Aegina; cf. Wilamowitz 406.

And yet a closer examination reveals difficulties. First of all, modern scholarship has not been able to make up its mind whether the ode was composed before or after the capitulation of Aegina in 457 B.C. Farnell thinks that it was composed before Aegina lost its independence, but when it was already threatened, and therefore dates it to about 460 B.C. Wilamowitz rejects this date on the grounds that the poem must be dated after the Athenian attack on Aegina, that its performance can hardly be imagined during the blockade, and that therefore it must be dated after the capitulation in 457. In favor of this date Wilamowitz argues that Aegina was left in possession of autonomy, and that this autonomy is sufficient to explain the facts which suggested to Farnell a date before the capitulation — the element of hope implied in Pindar's prayer for Aegina (13–14), and the reaffirmation of faith in *aretê* (40–42). Our analysis of the poem strengthens Wilamowitz' argument that the ode was composed after the fall of Aegina; only the fall of Aegina seems an adequate cause for the ethical crisis inherent in the poem itself, or for the mood of resignation in the closing section. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the capitulation of 457 B.C. left Aegina in possession of autonomy, and an autonomous Aegina does seem to be implied by the element of hope and consolation in the poem. We are therefore left in a quandary.<sup>20</sup>

In the second place, twentieth-century scholarship has advanced no satisfactory interpretation of the significance of the myth of Ajax. This was the strong point of the nineteenth-century interpretation: there is no doubt that the myth of Ajax is the central point of the ode, and the nineteenth-century interpretation kept its central significance. But it is clear that in relation to the 460–457 B.C. crisis, if Aegina is Ajax, it is impossible to identify Odysseus with Athens. Athens subdued Aegina by force; Pindar's bitter diatribe against fraud, symbolized by Odysseus, cannot be given a political interpretation in relation to this date. Consequently twentieth-century scholarship has to give a purely non-political interpretation of the significance of the myth of Ajax: according to both Wilamowitz and Farnell, the myth of Ajax, the victim of fraud and envy, refers not to Aegina, but to Pindar himself as the

<sup>20</sup> Wilamowitz 411; Farnell 1.214, 2.303; Schwenn, *RE* 20.1676. On the condition of Aegina after 457 B.C. see Busolt III.1.322; *CAH* 5.90. The fall of Aegina seems most clearly implied by lines 46–47: Pindar's Muse will raise a stone monument to the athlete's country (I can make nothing of *λάβρον*).

object of carping criticism. But apart from the impropriety of making Ajax "the tongueless man with a stout heart" (24) stand for Pindar himself, this interpretation destroys the unity, and with the unity the meaning of the poem. The first and third sections remain political and ethical in their substance; the second section, containing the myth of the ode, flies off on a tangent, irrelevant, and in bad taste, comparing the poet beset by carping critics to the tragic suicide of Ajax.<sup>21</sup>

All these difficulties are resolved by a new hypothesis as to the date of the *Eighth Nemean*. The myth of Ajax must be interpreted politically, and, so interpreted, it must be related to a time when Aegina could be said to have been vanquished by fraud. The reference to the good old days when the leadership of Aeacus (Aegina) was recognized by the heroes of Sparta as well as Athens (11-12) implies that Sparta as well as Athens is involved in an injustice done to Aegina. The allusions to the future of Aegina suggest that Aegina is in some ambiguous condition, fallen but in some sense free. The tone in which Pindar refers to himself indicates that the poem belongs to the latter part of his career. All these conditions are satisfied if we place the composition of the ode in the year 445 B.C., after the Nemean games held in that year. Then the event which produced in Pindar the spiritual crisis reflected in the poem is the Thirty Years' Peace, concluded between Athens and Sparta in the winter of 446/445 B.C. The future of Aegina was settled not by force, but by negotiations between the two great powers. Later historians have agreed that Athens got the best of the negotiations, and in particular, got the best of the negotiations over the future of Aegina. In 445 B.C. therefore Aegina can appropriately be identified with Ajax: Aegina was the victim of fraud, of which Athens was the prime agent, but in which Sparta was also involved. That there was a wide-spread feeling on the anti-Athenian side that there was something fraudulent in the Thirty Years' Peace is shown by the fact that about this time the Spartans deposed King Pleistoanax and banished his advisor Cleandridas, on the ground that they had been bribed by Pericles when they suddenly abandoned the invasion of Attica in the summer of 446 B.C. The actual terms of the settlement of Aegina in the Thirty Years' Peace were that Aegina was to have "autonomy,"

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz 409; Farnell 1.216.

although she was to pay tribute to Athens and belong to her Empire. These terms leave Aegina in exactly that ambiguous condition, fallen but in some sense free, which is implied by the poem.<sup>22</sup>

Why was Pindar moved so deeply, and moved to reformulate his ethical creed, by the Thirty Years' Peace? It is striking how both in the *Eighth Pythian* and the *Eighth Nemean* the fate of Aegina is of central importance to Pindar, in spite of the fact that he is a Boeotian aristocrat. Even though the Boeotian aristocrats achieved a great victory over Athens at Coronea in 447 B.C., and restored the independence of Boeotia, and even though the Thirty Years' Peace set the seal of diplomatic recognition on their victory, Pindar, to put it mildly, is in no mood to celebrate. It does not seem sufficient to refer to his long-standing admiration for, and friendship with Aegina. If the *Eighth Pythian* and *Eighth Nemean* are — and who will deny that they are? — sincere expressions of something deeply felt, then to Pindar the fall of Aegina was more significant than the restoration in Boeotia. He is not speaking as a Boeotian aristocrat or as a friend of Aegina, but is voicing the profoundest aspirations of conservative Greece, whose goddess is the Peace of the *Eighth Pythian* and whose ethic is the *aretê* of the *Eighth Nemean*. For a moment, in 446 B.C., conservative Greece permitted itself to hope for deliverance from the restless revolutionary expansion of Athens; the Thirty Years' Peace meant that the Athenian Empire had come to stay. Pindar had nursed hopes of *revanche* and restoration as late as 446 B.C. as the *Eighth Pythian* shows; in the *Eighth Nemean* he faces the fact that the past will not be restored and that the conservative ethic must be reformulated to take account of the realities of the present. The constant movement between past and present in search for an ethic that is eternally true, as well as the mood of nostalgia and resignation, show that in Pindar's view the Thirty Years' Peace writes *finis* to a historical epoch.

As a mythical symbol of the conflict between the old order and the revolutionary imperialism of Athens Pindar takes the contest between Ajax and Odysseus over the armor of Achilles. The analogy between the Trojan war and the Persian war, traceable in the art and literature of the fifth century B.C., makes the myth particularly apt: just as Ajax and Odysseus had worked side-by-side

<sup>22</sup> E. M. Walker, *CAH* 5.90–91.

in the first phase of the Trojan war, only to fall into deadly enmity later, so Athens and Aegina had fought side-by-side at the battle of Salamis only to fall into those hostilities which led to the subjugation of Aegina. Pindar gives a new version of the myth, as he says himself (20-21). The novelty consists in the idea that the award of the prize to Odysseus was due to the fact that there was something fraudulent about the voting; this novelty increases the analogy between Ajax and the "betrayal" of Aegina in the 'Thirty Years' Peace negotiations. More important, however, is the new light in which he sees the social and ethical implications of Ajax' suicide. Ajax' suicide becomes the symbol of the defeat of the old social order; at the same time, by recognizing in the myth the defeat of the old social order and the realities of the present, Pindar is able to introduce into his conservative aristocratic ethic a new and essentially tragic perspective.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV. SOPHOCLES' *Ajax*

M. C. van der Kolf, in a study of Pindar's use of mythology, was the first to argue that Sophocles' *Ajax*, line 1135, in which Teucer accuses Menelaus of crooked manipulation of the voting in the award of Achilles' armor to Odysseus, is indebted to Pindar's

<sup>23</sup> Cf. M. C. van der Kolf, *Quaeritur quomodo Pindarus fabulas tractaverit* (Rotterdam 1924) 33-35, 65-67; C. Robert, *Bild und Lied* (Berlin 1881) 213-221. R. Lattimore, *The Odes of Pindar* (Chicago 1947) 119 translates *κρυφίαισι ἐν ψήφοις* (line 26) "in their secret ballots." Although the phrase could, in certain contexts, mean what we mean by a secret ballot (cf. *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1424b1), it cannot mean that here. The Duris vase which depicts the voting shows an open ballot with *ψήφοι* (Robert, *op. cit.*, 218-219); if Pindar had changed the tradition and made it a secret ballot, it would have meant an endorsement of the voting as fair, because secret. But the root is often used with a sinister connotation, implying something crooked or fraudulent; cf. Aesch., *Choephoroe* 773; Soph., *Phil.* 1112 and *Trach.* 360. Only if we take *κρυφίαισι* in this sense can we understand why it is emphasized by being placed first in the sentence, and why Pindar chose as the verb *θεράπευσαν*, with its connotation of servility (lost in Lattimore's translation, "made much of Odysseus"). Sophocles' paraphrase, *κλέπτῃς ψήφοποιός* (*Ajax* 1135; cf. below, 16), shows that he understood Pindar to be implying chicanery. There is nothing in any of the vase-paintings of the first half of the fifth century which necessarily implies fraudulent voting, and this must be the novelty which Pindar says he is offering; cf. Farnell 1.216. In the *Seventh Nemean* (20-30), written when Aegina was prospering (cf. Farnell 2.289), Pindar implies the award was a mistake (due to Homer's praise of Odysseus) but not that there was anything fraudulent about the voting. It is therefore a mistake to attribute fraudulent voting to the Epic Cycle, as does M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie, Erläuterungen* (Leipzig and Berlin 1930) 47, following M. Schmidt, *Troika* (Göttingen 1917) 15-16.

*Eighth Nemean*, and that therefore Sophocles' play was composed after Pindar's ode.<sup>24</sup>

As long as the *Eighth Nemean* was dated not later than 456 B.C. the proposition that Sophocles was indebted to Pindar threw little light on the date of the *Ajax*: most authorities were too impressed by the resemblances in form and content between the *Ajax* and the *Antigone* to be willing to place the composition of the *Ajax* very far from that of the *Antigone*, which is generally dated, by external evidence, to the year 442 B.C. If, however, the argument for dating the *Eighth Nemean* to 445 B.C. is valid, then we have a much more significant *terminus post quem*.<sup>25</sup>

Let us examine the validity of the argument that *Ajax* 1135 presupposes the *Eighth Nemean*. In the first place the two pieces refer to "crooked voting" in the award of arms in virtually identical terms (κρυφίαισι ἐν ψάφοις, *Eighth Nemean* 26; κλέπτῃς ψηφοποιός, *Ajax* 1135). In the second place Pindar elaborates on the idea, while in Sophocles it is an incidental remark. In the third place Pindar introduces the passage with a definite statement that he is going to offer a novelty (19–21), while Sophocles assumes prior familiarity with the idea.

There is one other significant verbal reminiscence of the *Eighth Nemean* in the *Ajax*. Pindar, in the *Eighth Nemean*, took the death of Ajax to illustrate the truth that envious criticism always fastens on the good, but has no quarrel with lesser men (22); the chorus of Salaminian sailors, at the beginning of Sophocles' play, reflecting on the fact that everyone was eager to believe the rumor that Ajax had slaughtered the cattle, says: "Point your arrows at a noble spirit, and they will not miss; but should a man speak such things against me, he would win no faith. It is on the powerful that envy creeps" (154–157). The passage, together with the next sentence, which urges the natural interdependence of great

<sup>24</sup> Van der Kolf (above, note 23) 67; Schmid-Stählin I.2.330; see also above, note 23. Contrast von Blumenthal, *RE* 3A.1084.

<sup>25</sup> Schmid-Stählin I.2.317, 325 date the *Antigone* to 442 B.C.; C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles* (Cambridge 1951) 45 dates it to 442 B.C. or possibly 441 B.C. Jacoby (*RE* Suppl. 2.236–237) tends to favor 443 B.C. In any case 441 B.C. is the latest possible date for the *Antigone*, and, according to our argument, 444 B.C. the earliest possible date for the *Ajax*. On the relation between the *Ajax* and the *Antigone*, cf. Schmid-Stählin I.2.329, 343. I cannot see such a stylistic gap between the two plays as does Whitman 42–43, following J. H. Finley, "The Origins of Thucydides' Style," *HSCP* 50 (1939) 57–59.



and small, has long been felt to need special explanation; the parallel in Pindar has long been noted.<sup>26</sup>

It seems to me we can and must proceed on the assumption that the *Ajax* was composed after the *Eighth Nemean*: that means, if our previous argument is correct, after July 445 B.C. From which it follows that the *Ajax* cannot have been produced on the Attic stage before 444 B.C. If, as is generally agreed, the *Ajax* is earlier than the *Antigone*, then it follows that the *Ajax* must have been produced in either 444 or 443 B.C.

The case for dating the *Ajax* 444/443 B.C. is strengthened by another consideration which, although in itself indecisive, yet deserves mention. In the dispute between Teucer and Menelaus an odd amount of attention is paid to the irrelevant issue of the rival merits of the bowman and the hoplite (1120–1123). It is logical to assume that this digression, like the similar digression on the same subject in Euripides' *Heracles* (160–164, 188–203), was inspired by contemporary developments in warfare. Now it appears that although Athens had an organized detachment of bowmen at least as early as the Persian Wars, this detachment was greatly expanded in the period immediately following the signing of the Thirty Years' Peace (446/445 B.C.). Granted that there is much that we do not know about this period: nevertheless this is the only known development in the history of the corps of bowmen at Athens which would explain the curious interest in the subject in the *Ajax*.<sup>27</sup>

If Sophocles had the *Eighth Nemean* in mind when he wrote the *Ajax*, perhaps within a year after the publication of the former, the question arises whether the play should not be regarded as in some sense an answer to Pindar's ode. Scholarly work on the sources of the *Ajax* has assumed that Sophocles drew either from the Epic Cycle or from an Aeschylean trilogy.<sup>28</sup> If the immediate

<sup>26</sup> Cf. R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles, The Ajax* (Boston 1871) 27; Schmid-Stählin I.2.324; T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (Oxford 1936) 180. I am also inclined to regard lines 125–126 as a reminiscence of the *Eighth Pythian*, lines 95–96; cf. Schmid-Stählin I.1.616, note 1; F. Dirlmeier, "Der Aias des Sophokles," *Neue Jahrbücher für Antike und deutsche Bildung* 1 (1938) 311. Schmid-Stählin I.1.616 note 1 and I.2.311 note 6 find reminiscences of other odes of Pindar in the *Ajax*.

<sup>27</sup> Andocides, *De pace* 7; A Plassart, "Les archers d'Athènes," *REG* 26 (1913) 197; J. Kromayer and G. Veith, *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer* (Munich 1928) 52.

<sup>28</sup> Schmid-Stählin I.2.331; von Blumenthal, *RE* 3A.1084; Whitman 62.

stimulus which evoked the creation of the *Ajax* was the *Eighth Nemean*, then a fresh light may be thrown on the still-vexed problem of the interpretation of the play. If the essence of Greek tragedy lies in its reinterpretation of myth, and if myth is not an arbitrary and idiosyncratic invention but a cultural symbol which the poet must accept before he can remodel it, then a comparison between Sophocles' *Ajax* and Pindar's *Eighth Nemean* should reveal both a core of symbolic meaning common to both and also the specific novelty peculiar to each.<sup>29</sup>

According to our hypothesis, the *Eighth Nemean* discloses the symbolic meaning already attached to the myth of Ajax in the mind of Sophocles and of his audience before the production of the play. In Pindar Ajax was the symbol of the old aristocratic *aretê*; his defeat in the contest over Achilles' armor and his consequent suicide symbolized the historic defeat of the aristocratic ideal in the middle of the fifth century B.C., ratified by the Thirty Years' Peace in 446/445 B.C.; Odysseus was the symbol of the new "bourgeois" order which had won the victory. Our contention is that this set of symbolic associations is carried over into Sophocles' *Ajax*.

That Ajax in Sophocles' play is an archetype of aristocratic *aretê* will be denied by no one, though the historical significance of the portrait is blurred or forgotten by interpreters who have, *a priori*, made up their mind that the message of Sophoclean tragedy bears no relation to the historical context. The vitality and concreteness of Sophocles' portrait refutes the notion that Ajax represents some bloodless abstraction such as the "great man who is marred by a great fault" or "the eternal hero, the central mystery of all life."<sup>30</sup> The portrait is concrete because it portrays a concrete type: it is the fullest statement in Greek literature of the ideals practiced in the first half of the fifth century by men such as Cimon and preached by poets such as Pindar. Sophocles shows Ajax led by the crisis in his life to define the essence of the aristocratic code: "The man of noble birth must either finely live or finely die; that is all you need to know" (479-480). His aristocratic devotion to the family honor is shown by his preoccupation with the disgrace he has brought on

<sup>29</sup> Cf. W. Schadewaldt, "Sophokles, Aias und Antigone," *Neue Wege zur Antike* 8 (1929) 102: "Tragödie bedeutet, kurz gesagt, dramatische Vergegenwärtigung der Gestalten des Mythos im attischen Geiste." See also W. Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York 1945) 1.66-67.

<sup>30</sup> C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 62; Whitman 66.

his father (434-440, 470-472, 845-851), and by his prayer for his son: "Son, may you be more fortunate than your father, but in all else like him, and you will not prove base" (550-551). His followers — Teucer and the chorus — show the kind of feudal loyalty which the true aristocrat can inspire (cf. especially 158-171), and which Ajax himself defines as the old style of friendship (349-350). Tecmessa, with feminine intuition, invokes family honor (505) and the aristocratic code (524) in her attempt to dissuade him from suicide. To the Athenian audience the social significance of the character of Ajax was immediately obvious: the easiest way for us to see it is to compare Ajax with Cimon in Plutarch's life. Cimon "lacked entirely the Attic cleverness and fluency of speech; in his outward bearing there was much nobility and truthfulness; the fashion of the man's spirit was rather Peloponnesian, 'plain, unadorned, and in great crises brave and true' as Euripides says of Heracles." Cimon's career was promoted by Aristides as "a foil to the cleverness and daring of Themistocles." Cimon's *aretê* was summed up in an epigram by a word which one scholar has taken to be the key to Ajax' character — "great-mindedness" (*μεγαλοφροσύνη*). Cimon, like Ajax in the play (1340, 1415), was celebrated by his contemporaries as "in every way the best of all Hellenic men," and his achievements were compared with those of the heroes who fought at Troy. Whether Sophocles' portrait is inspired by specific memories of Cimon is immaterial. Cimon was a "representative man"; after his death (449 B.C.) there were no more like him.<sup>31</sup>

Just as Themistocles was regarded by contemporaries as the polar opposite of Cimon, so Sophocles contrasts Ajax with Odysseus. Here again the point of the contrast is missed if, in order to make the tragedy a Sunday-school lesson in *sophrosynê*, we take Odysseus as the good boy, who has the modesty which Ajax lacks. The point is that Ajax and Odysseus represent two contrasted types of *aretê*. Sophocles not only carries over from Pindar the notion that Ajax and Odysseus represent opposite ethical types, but also carries over the identification of Odysseus with a non-aristocratic "bour-

<sup>31</sup> Plutarch, *Cimon* 4, 5, 7, 10. On the aristocratic *ethos* of Ajax, cf. K. von Fritz, "Zur Interpretation des Aias," *RhM* 83 (1934) 120; Schadewaldt (above, note 29) 104. The comparison with Cimon is emphasized by Whitman 45-46. Even if Sophocles was thinking specifically of Cimon, it does not necessarily follow that the Ajax was written so soon after Cimon's death as 447 B.C., as is suggested by Whitman. Thucydides the son of Melesias inherited the leadership of Cimon's party, but the times were different, and the man was different; cf. Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52.205-227.

geois" system of values. While the dominant virtue in Ajax is "great-mindedness," the dominant virtue in Odysseus is moderation (121–127; 1332–1399). Whereas Ajax lives in splendid isolation and self-sufficiency, Odysseus subordinates his ego to the welfare of the community (23–24, 1328–1329). Whereas Ajax is inflexible (see especially 594–595), Odysseus is pliable and can adjust to historical changes (1361, 1347, 1359), so that Agamemnon accuses him of inconsistency (1358). Whereas Ajax' *aretê* is rooted in family honor, Odysseus' *aretê*, his moderation and his respect for divine law, is rooted in enlightened selfishness and a vision of the common humanity which binds mankind together (121–126, 1365–1367). Altogether Odysseus has that kind of intelligence (*γνώμη σοφόν*, 1374), the ability to improvise adjustments to changing historical realities, together with the power of persuasive speech, which Thucydides admired in men like Themistocles and Pericles, both of them antagonists of Cimon.<sup>32</sup>

If in the character of Ajax Sophocles' essential aim was to represent a socio-historical type, then it is logical to guess that the tragedy of his death is a dramatic representation of a socio-historical crisis; if Sophocles has accepted the basic symbolism already projected into the myth by Pindar, then it must be so. Although a socio-historical interpretation is shockingly incompatible with the orthodox view of Sophocles — the limitations of which Cedric Whitman has cogently exposed — yet a study of the structure of the *Ajax*, without taking into account the *Eighth Nemean*, has already led a group of twentieth-century scholars to interpret the death of Ajax as the death of a historical epoch.<sup>33</sup> This interpretation is necessary if the peculiar diptych structure of the play is going to have any real justification. It is impossible to accept the notion that Sophocles needed the sequence of debates after the death of Ajax in order to settle the question "whether his virtues

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Whitman 65–66, 260 note 19; H. Weinstock, *Sophokles* (Leipzig and Berlin 1931) 59.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. von Blumenthal in *RE* 3A.1085; von Fritz (above, note 31) 124–126; R. Camerer in *Gnomon* 22 (1950) 140: "In dieser überzeitlichen Tragödie ist herausgegriffen ein historischer Augenblick." All of these writers have inherited Schadewaldt's notion that the essence of Sophoclean tragedy is the remodeling of myths of the heroic age in terms of the *polis*; hence they vaguely characterize Ajax as "primitive," "pre-political," "feudal." Our hypothesis is that the dialectic is between democratic Athens and the aristocratic order which Athens destroyed, between Sophocles and Pindar.

outweighed his faults," or even to defend "the ultimate values of a great individual in the face of whatever claims society may have against him."<sup>34</sup> Those questions have already been answered, in the only way a drama can answer them, by the exhibition of Ajax' character in the first part of the play; furthermore a vindication of Ajax by Odysseus, with his peculiar ethical premises, provides no real answer. If we say, however, that the issue in the second part of the play is the status of the *aretê* represented by Ajax, after its historic defeat, in a new Odyssean age, then the second part of the play comes to life.<sup>35</sup> After the death of Ajax we are in a different world, made up of obstinate but weak followers of Ajax, like Teucer (and Pindar), ruthless apostles of power, like Menelaus and Agamemnon, and the new *aretê* of Odysseus, the victor whose unexpected magnanimity and moderation brings about recognition of the *aretê* of the fallen hero and reconciliation with his followers. The diptych structure of Sophocles' play reflects the fact that the central issue in his mind was the relation between past and present, as it was also for Pindar in the *Eighth Nemean*. The contrast between past and present, and the changes produced by time are a recurrent theme in the choruses and the dialogue throughout the play.<sup>36</sup>

While the second part of the play shows us the attitude toward Ajax taken by various representatives of the new era, the first shows us, from the point of view of Ajax himself, the tragedy of a social-historical type liquidated by impersonal historical forces. If Sophocles had been concerned with some timeless and abstract problem in the ethics or metaphysics of heroism, he could not have given the scant attention which he does to the victory of Odysseus over Ajax in the award of Achilles' armor: this, as the chorus says (933-936) was the *fons et origo malorum*; this was the cause of Ajax' wrath. For Sophocles the award is a fact belonging to the past, and the central issue in the first half of the play is Ajax' adjustment to the present. The action begins with Ajax' attempt to undo the

<sup>34</sup> Bowra 49; Whitman 77-78.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Camerer (above, note 33) 140: "Die attische *ἀρετή*, die hier dargestellt ist, wird vor unseren Augen einem historischen Wandel des Urteils unterworfen, um sich auch vor gewandeltem Urteil in gewandelter Umwelt zu behaupten."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. lines 118-120, 131-132, 596-605, 714, 1185-1186, 1347, 1359, 1377, 1418-1420. Hector's sword (cf. 661-665, 817-822, 1026-1035) seems to me to be also a symbol of the contrast between present and past, and of a reversal brought about by time (note line 1026).

past and reverse the verdict of the award by an attack on Menelaus, Agamemnon, and Odysseus; the next twenty-four hours are the critical moment which will decide his fate (753-757); the development makes clear why the *aretê* he represents cannot survive defeat.

It is the intervention of divinity, in the person of Athena, which frustrates Ajax' attempt to undo the past. No sense can be made of Athena if we identify her with some abstract moral principle, as Cedric Whitman shows; nor on the other hand is Whitman's attempt to belittle her role convincing.<sup>37</sup> If we take Athena as the symbol of the mysterious objective forces which guarantee the irreversibility of the historical process, and, more specifically, as the *Zeitgeist* which gave Odysseus the victory in the award and which sanctions the values which Odysseus upholds, then we understand the eerie combination of moral principle and inhuman cruelty, of partiality and objectivity, in Athena in the first scene; we understand why she fades out of the action after she has frustrated Ajax' attempt to undo the past; we understand why she is said to have decreed that if Ajax will, in the critical day of his disgrace, submit, he can live on (756-757).

Sophocles represents Ajax himself as coming to realize that history has defeated him. "Time, long and infinite, brings all things out from darkness, and then after their period in the light, hides them away again. . . . Snow-strewn winter gives way to fruitful summer, and the weary round of night makes room for day with her white horses to kindle light. . . . We too — must we not learn submission?" (646-692). If, as is generally done, we underestimate the significance of the crucial word time in this great speech, and reduce its meaning to the necessity of "the submission of private aims to a universal order,"<sup>38</sup> then we have to attribute to Ajax either impossible conversion or an impossible insincerity. But Ajax' meaning is not that there is a timeless order which all things must obey,<sup>39</sup> but that time makes the old order yield to new. He recognizes his own doom (661-668); he recognizes, with a bitter

<sup>37</sup> Whitman 67-70.

<sup>38</sup> Bowra 42.

<sup>39</sup> M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie* (Leipzig and Berlin 1930) 177: "Aias . . . von dem ewig gültigen Naturgesetz redet, nach dem auch der Stärkste sich bescheiden muss." Cf. Weinstock (above, note 32) 51: "Also beugt auch er sich dem allgemeinen Gesetz." Whitman 76 finds the same meaning in the passage; his view that Ajax is simply describing a world-order which he rejects may vindicate the sincerity of the speech, but deprives it of its unmistakable tragic intensity and depth of feeling.

irony that shows his repugnance, the bourgeois morality of the new Odyssean age (678-683). Ajax' analysis of the cul-de-sac into which time has brought him is profoundly true and implies no conversion; Pindar in the *Eighth Nemean* had the same vision of the historic defeat of the aristocratic ideal, without being led thereby to apostasy. The speech turns on the contrast between past and present which, as we have seen, is built into the structure of the play.<sup>40</sup>

Thus if we relate the *Ajax* to the *Eighth Nemean* we are led to define Sophocles' theme as the historic defeat of the aristocratic *aretê*, the emergence of a new "bourgeois" system of values, and the status of the old *aretê* in the new order. This is also the theme of the *Eighth Nemean*; this is the common core of symbolic meaning which the myth has for both of them. Let us now examine the difference between the two versions, to see if they help us to define Sophocles' own particular message and point of view. The changes which Sophocles made in order to put the myth into a dramatic form do not concern us — for example, the introduction of Tecmessa and Teucer. The changes which imply a different attitude toward the myth, and therefore toward the reality it symbolizes, will be changes in the representation of the central figures, Ajax and Odysseus.

It is obvious that Sophocles has deliberately set out to challenge and modify Pindar's representation of Odysseus. In Pindar, Odysseus' cunning, deceitfulness, and persuasiveness make him a symbol of immoral intelligence which is to Ajax' *aretê* as darkness is to light (*Nemean* 8.25-34). Sophocles attributes Pindar's concept of Odysseus to Ajax' followers (149-150, 955-959, 971, 1382), and to Ajax himself in his madness (103) and after he has recovered his sanity (379-382, 445). But in the very first scene the audience would see Odysseus taught mercy and moderation in victory by the same goddess who gave him the victory, and the denouement of the play is the revelation to Ajax' followers that their (and Pindar's) concept of Odysseus is a misconception: the reversal is registered by Teucer when he praises Odysseus' nobility (or *aretê*

<sup>40</sup> See above, note 35. Cf. von Fritz (above, note 31) 124: "Das ist die bittere Erkenntnis, zu der er gekommen ist, dass in dieser Welt der Atriden und der Athena kein Platz mehr für ihn ist." The deception of his friends, although no doubt dramatically necessary so that Ajax can die alone, is also in character, since they, the remnant destined to survive, belong to a different world.

— ἀπιστ' Ὀδυσσεῦ 1381) and confesses that his estimation of him had been all wrong (1381–1382).

The consequences of Sophocles' insistence that there is good in what Odysseus stands for are far reaching. Odysseus' intervention, like some *deus ex machina*, enables the action to end on an optimistic note of reconciliation, which is in direct contrast with the sterile wrangling between Teucer and the Atreidae. Between Teucer and the Atreidae there can be no peace: immediately after recognizing Odysseus' nobility Teucer repeats Ajax' curse on them (1389–1392: cf. 835–844). Pindar saw no good in the winning side; he is, so to speak, in the situation of Teucer facing the Atreidae, defending Ajax' honor against slander. Consequently Pindar ends not in a mood of hope or reconciliation, but in a kind of resigned fortitude, reiterating his devotion to the past. Because Sophocles can see good on the winning side he has, in contrast with Pindar, an optimistic perspective on the present.

In his representation of Ajax, Sophocles achieves a marvellous combination of sympathetic portrayal and critical objectivity. The structure of the plot makes Ajax' reaction to defeat the acid test of the way of life he stands for. Pindar saw Ajax' suicide as self-evidently the right thing to do when honor had been injured and justice violated in the award. In the aristocratic ethic of Pindar *aretê* was identified with success, and defeat therefore unbearable. To Pindar, therefore, the cause of the suicide was in external circumstances — the award itself. But for Sophocles the suicide is the outcome of Ajax' own incapacity to reconcile himself to defeat, together with the objective forces, symbolized by Athena, which guarantee the irreversibility of his defeat, and insist that he submit to it. From this point of view Sophocles is able, as Pindar was not, to make an objective and critical appraisal of Ajax' *aretê*. He makes unmistakably clear the imperious logic in Ajax' *aretê* which makes suicide necessary. But for Sophocles, unlike Pindar, Ajax' is not the only kind of *aretê*. In the ethic practiced by Odysseus and sanctioned by Athena, Ajax' refusal to accept defeat is *hybris*, and *sophrosynê* entails acceptance of the present. This in effect turns principles of Pindar's ethics against Pindar's hero. Pindar in the *Eighth Nemean* (17) had reiterated a favorite principle of his when he said: "Felicity planted with god's help (σὺν θεῷ) is more likely to endure"; Sophocles goes out of his way to tell of Ajax' boastful rejection of the advice to "seek victory always



with god's help" (ὄν θεῶ 765; cf. 455-456). The depths of mad bestiality to which Ajax' refusal to accept defeat can lead are exhibited in the first scene. Hence Athena's intervention to prevent the undoing of the past is at the same time an intervention to uphold a moral principle (127-133, 756-777). Athena, like Pindar's own goddess Peace in the *Eighth Pythian* (10-12), "when-ever anyone lets fly the ungoverned rage in their heart, goes to meet her enemies with savage force and makes their *hybris* capsize."

But the fact that Sophocles criticizes the incapacity of Ajax to accept defeat does not mean that he elevates Odysseus into an eternally valid archetype by which Ajax is condemned. If the sympathy for Ajax developed in the first part of the play does not speak for itself, the second part shows Odysseus himself recognizing the superlative *aretê* of his enemy (1340, 1355, 1357, 1380). Nor does the fact that Sophocles sees Ajax in conflict with the objective forces of history, symbolized by Athena, mean that he finds the historical process just. There is no analysis of the justice of the initial award, no theodicy justifying Athena, such as Aeschylus would have given us. Sophocles' intent is rather to develop pity and understanding for the tragic victims of the historical process: hence in the first scene Athena, though identified with a moral principle, gives us an unforgettable display of divine inhumanity to man, from which Odysseus draws the lesson "I pity him in his misery, although he is my enemy, because he is caught fast in an evil fate; I think of my own lot no less than his. For I see we are but phantoms, all we who live, or fleeting shadows" (121-126).

Sophocles' rejection of Pindar's black and white judgment of Ajax and Odysseus means a more complex approach to the problem of *aretê*. Pindar had seen one *aretê*, the aristocratic *aretê* of Ajax, valid yesterday, today and forever, and still valid in defeat. Modern scholars have tried to find one eternally valid archetype of *aretê* in Sophocles; some say it is Ajax, others say it is Odysseus.<sup>41</sup> But the whole point of Sophocles' message is that history is not so simple as it seemed to Pindar. The old order and the new order each have their own distinctive *aretê*, and Sophocles' intent is to develop a

<sup>41</sup> Whitman 71 rightly criticizes Bowra for taking Odysseus as the yardstick by which Ajax is condemned. But Whitman, who interprets the play as simply a vindication of Ajax, has to belittle the role of Odysseus and Athena, and gets himself into intolerable perplexities on the subject of Ajax and *hybris* (*op. cit.* 69, 73). But why must Sophocles be so partisan?

mutual appreciation of each other so as to end on a note of reconciliation. In the first part of the play the partisans of Odysseus, who, we may imagine, were in a majority in the Athenian audience, are brought not only to pity Ajax as Odysseus does but also to understand, as never before, the *aretê* of "greatmindedness" (μεγαλοφροσύνη, cf. above, p. 19). In the second part of the play Ajax' followers are brought to recognize the *aretê* of Odysseus.

The central themes of Sophocles' *Ajax* — the conflict between past and present, the conflict between rival ideals of *aretê*, and the reconciliation of these two conflicts — show that the play is about a historical crisis. The comparison with Pindar, which led us to this analysis, leads also to the conclusion that it is about the Greek historical crisis of the middle fifth century, as finally resolved by the Thirty Years' Peace, and that it constitutes an Athenian reply to the interpretation of that crisis offered by Pindar.

Although our information about this period of Athenian history is scanty, we do know that in the years 444/443 B.C. Athens was deeply stirred by controversy over the morality of the Athenian Empire, and that at least in the years 443–440 B.C. Sophocles himself was brought into direct contact with the issues involved. It was in the spring of 443 B.C. that Thucydides the son of Melesias was ostracized, after challenging Pericles on the morality of spending the tribute from the Delian League on the public buildings in Athens: according to Plutarch, Thucydides' party maintained that "surely Hellas is insulted with a dire insult (ὕβρις) and manifestly subjected to tyranny when she sees that, with her own enforced contributions for the war, we are gilding and bedizening our city; which, for all the world like a wanton woman, adds to her wardrobe precious stones and costly statues and temples worth their millions."<sup>42</sup> The period in which, so far as we know, Sophocles was most active politically falls precisely in the years 443–440 B.C. In 443/442 B.C. he was chairman of the board of treasurers of the Delian League, at a time when an important financial reorganization was effected; around 440 B.C. he served along with Pericles on the board of generals in the war to suppress the revolt of Samos.<sup>43</sup> In both cases, be it noted, his political activity was concerned

<sup>42</sup> Plutarch, *Pericles* 12; cf. Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52.205–227; Wade-Gery, *Hesperia* 14.212–229. See also the critique of some of Wade-Gery's hypotheses by V. Ehrenberg, "The Foundation of Thurii," *AJP* 69 (1948) 149–170.

<sup>43</sup> References in Schmid-Stählin I.2.317–318.

directly with the Athenian Empire. To think that Sophocles was an unreflecting bureaucrat who performed his official duties without wrestling with the moral and tragic issues involved would be to insult both him and the Periclean Age.

The years of Sophocles' political activity are also the years in which he wrote the *Antigone*, and, according to our hypothesis, the *Ajax*. It therefore is hardly unreasonable to look for political significance in these two plays. In fact we have evidence that, whatever we may think, the Athenian audience did find contemporary political significance in them. The scholiast's introduction to the *Antigone* says that the play led to Sophocles' election as general in the Samian War.<sup>44</sup> As for the *Ajax*, Libanius, in a passage adduced more than a hundred years ago by Welcker but since forgotten, says that the *Ajax* created a sensation in the theater of the same kind as Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus*; the natural implication of the passage is that the *Ajax* had the same kind of contemporary political significance as Phrynichus' play notoriously did have.<sup>45</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the political significance of the *Antigone* or to attempt to justify the information that it persuaded the Athenians that Sophocles would be a good man to serve as Pericles' colleague in the war against Samos. But if our analysis of the *Ajax* is correct, the Athenians could legitimately see a political program in its message — a program of sympathetic understanding of their late enemies, moderation, reconciliation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Whitman 45 accepts the fact that one followed the other, but denies any causal connection between the two, on the ground that "political and military positions were not, of course, obtained in this way." But Sophocles was no normal appointment: Schmid-Stählin (*loc. cit.*) point out that neither Sophocles himself nor his contemporaries thought he had any aptitude for politics or warfare, and conclude that his election to high office was probably due to his tragedies.

<sup>45</sup> Libanius, *Declamatio* 14.20 (Vol. VI, p. 99, ed. Foerster): ἀλωσις μὲν πόλεως ἐν δράματι θηροῦντα τὸν δῆμον εἰδείξεν. Ἄλως δὲ ἀποστερούμενος παρὰ τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ ταφῆς ταῦτ' ἀποιεῖ. Cf. F. G. Welcker, *Kleine Schriften* (Bonn 1845) 2.340.

<sup>46</sup> Yet Sparta is not included in the reconciliation (1102, 1112); cf. Whitman 78, Welcker (above, note 45) 335–336. And Ajax is exclusively and emphatically connected with Athens (135, 202, 596–599, 861). It would seem that the forces Sophocles wished to see reconciled are rooted in the Athenian world, which would presumably include the Athenian Empire. It seems logical, in view of the date of the play, to interpret lines 158–161, where the chorus irrelevantly urge the mutual interdependence of great and small, as an ideal for the Delian League; and lines 1098–1104, where Teucer emphasizes the distinction between subject and ally, also looks like an allusion to the controversy over the Empire (see above, note 42). Whitman 80 acutely points out the affinity in tone between the *Ajax* and Pericles' Funeral Speech; this does not neces-

Sophocles, so far as we know, held public office twice in the years 443-440 B.C.; assuming that the second occasion was the result of the production of the *Antigone*, the hypothesis that the first occasion was the result of the production of the *Ajax* is tempting. If so, then Sophocles was elected chairman of the Treasurers of the Delian League not, as Wade-Gery says, because he was "one of Pericles' right-hand men at the critical moment,"<sup>47</sup> but because the *Ajax* had identified him with a policy of moderation and reconciliation. The fact that Pericles was firmly in the saddle at the time does not prove that Sophocles was politically a Periclean: Themistocles was the dominant figure in Athenian politics at the time of the foundation of the Delian League, but it was smart politics to entrust the original assessment to the "ostentatious probity" of Aristides.<sup>48</sup> Sophocles may have been the Aristides of 443 B.C. If there is any such relation between the *Ajax* and Sophocles' election, and if the current theory that military officers were elected in the seventh prytany, i.e., before the Dionysia, is correct, then the *Ajax* must have been produced in 444 B.C., which is in any case the logical date for a piece that was an answer to Pindar's ode of 445 B.C.

This historical, or, if you will, political interpretation of the *Ajax* is offered in no iconoclastic spirit. The study of Sophocles, as Whitman's book shows, has reached the point where it is ready to question the traditional picture of Sophocles' serene detachment from contemporary reality. Students of the *Ajax*, from Welcker to Whitman, have felt that there was a peculiar political ring to the play that had to be accounted for. Nor does our interpretation reduce the *Ajax* to political allegory; on the contrary, it is because he accepted the framework of a myth that Sophocles was able to show the universal and timeless significance of a particular and contemporary moment.

sarily imply that Sophocles was Periclean in 444 B.C. Pericles' "national unity" policy seems to have taken shape only after the ostracism of Thucydides in 443 B.C. (Plutarch, *Pericles* 11, 15), not, as is suggested by Whitman 46, around 447 B.C.

<sup>47</sup> Wade-Gery, *JHS* 52.219, note 58.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. G. Glotz, *Histoire grecque* (Paris 1948) 2.114.