
THE COMIC'S CITY

The prelude for Plato's ideal cities is the comedies of Aristophanes. It is unknown why so little work has been done to connect these two philosophical systems which so clearly share multiple features. The fact that the philosophy of Aristophanes is Dionysian, and presented as comedy, does not prevent us from appreciating its importance and deriving benefit from its insights. You would think that philosophers can only think about what is clearly labeled as philosophy and must exclude everything else. Plato clearly did not have this problem as he took many of his main tenants and problems directly from Aristophanes or from the common universe of discourse that produced both of these geniuses. We must remember that Athens was not that big a place. Aristophanes refers to Socrates, and Plato refers to Aristophanes. They swam in the same universe of discourse and had extremely different reactions, both of which had very public effects. Plato founded the Academy, and Aristophanes produced comic theater for all. Both had such an impact on their contemporaries and

those who followed, that their works were preserved when so many were destroyed. Thus, the ideas were similar, though the means of exposition were radically different. This gives us an excellent tool to test our hypothesis that not only are the structures we are unearthing fundamental to philosophy, but to Greco-Western culture as well. Aristophanes and Plato both write dialogue. Both hide behind the mask of their writing so that we do not know their true positions. Both present us with arguments within the flow of logos that are related to mythos. Both consider in depth the same ideas. The real difference is in their seriousness and in the overt philosophical depth. Plato is overtly philosophical and serious, though ironic throughout. Aristophanes is covertly philosophical inasmuch as he claims to impart wisdom in spite of the comedy. In Aristophanes, everything is held up to ridicule including the powers that be like Cleon, a ruling demagogue of the times. But the fact that Aristophanes attacks Cleon in such an unrelenting fashion in spite of the fact the latter repeatedly seeks revenge, gives the Comedies a decidedly serious aspect. Aristophanes' comedies are a frontal attack on the status quo which uses very extreme ideas as part of the arsenal for making points against what is seen to be wrong. By using ideas as weapons, Aristophanes invites his audience to think in a manner different from Plato, but no less effective. Where we concentrate on

Plato's irony and equivocation, we must, in turn, concentrate on the serious purpose that Aristophanes has in his war against everything he considers bad in Athens. Aristophanes is almost a perfect illustration of what Plato calls the war of the all against the all including oneself. Aristophanes is engaged in war against everything he considers wrong, including himself, if need be. This war is undertaken on the comic stage and in words instead of on the battlefield. As such, it might be seen as an example of the drinking party gone very wrong in every possible way, so as to exemplify what is wrong with Athenian society, with an attempt to purge it by ridicule and absurdity. It is the purely Dionysian drinking party where the actors who enchant us and render us dazed with delight are the sober ones leading us to improve ourselves.

One would think that at this point it would be the *Ecclesiazusae*, The Assembly Women, that would be our point of focus. An excellent study of this play has been done by Kenneth S. Rothwell, Jr. called Politics and Persuasion in Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae [EJ Brill 1990]. The main point that we must consider in this study is the characterization of the main character Praxagora as the embodiment of Peitho. But the main thrust of our analysis will be directed at Aristophanes' last extant play, *Wealth*. It will be clear to whoever knows these plays

that where *The Assembly Women* represents the high utopia ideals in bold form, so it is that *Wealth* represents the low utopian ideals more clearly. So for our study, which focuses on the low utopian ideal, the latter play will be more important. Significantly just as Plato's *Republic* is flawed from the city planners' perspective, so too is *The Assembly Women* flawed from the critics perspective, while *Laws* and *Wealth* are both better formed in all respects. It is clear that the ideal, where identity is attempted to be embodied, always remains rough hewn in form, whereas the level at which autopoietic formations appear has a better chance to achieve some form of wholeness and completeness in composition. This, I believe, is no random occurrence. In the composition where identity is achieved, structures must remain sketches because to do more would destroy the illusion of the achievement of identity. But autopoietic unities have structure of their own from a theoretical perspective, so the compositions may display this.

First, let us discuss *Peitho* and *Praxagora*. *Peitho* is persuasion. We have already run into *Peitho* in the poem of *Parmenides*. Here we find that the play that exemplifies the ideas central to the *Republic* is a display of *Peitho*. This is very significant and related to the defense by Plato of persuasion in the construction of his

ideal laws. Here we demonstrate that the inner structure of Conceptual Being holds for Plato because of his recognition of the importance of Peitho in the framing of laws and in the embodiment of Peitho in the main character of Aristophanes' ground-breaking play. Peitho is an attribute of Aphrodite as show by the fact ...

Paulsanias also mentions a statue of Peitho in the shrine of Aphrodite at Megara, along with statues of Eros, Himeros ("desire"), Pothos ("longing"), and Praxis.¹

These five statues give us some insight into the structure of Aphrodite of which Peitho is one very important part. But notice that longing, desire, sexual arousal (eros) and action are the elements that stand over and against persuasion. This is very significant because as we have speculated, Aphrodite has a very special place in the genetic unfolding of our worldview. Now we get some hint what the composition of Aphrodite herself is from the viewpoint of the Greeks. Plato is constantly playing on the erotic underpinnings of philosophy, so it is clear that Aphrodite is still very important as a sub-structure and underpinning of our worldview. Socrates himself is said to have learned rhetoric from Aspasia who may be the prototype for Praxagora. Thus, the relation between women and speech is established and clear as a

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foundation for both political and philosophical speeches. Thus, the whole nature of Aphrodite comes to frame both political and philosophical discourse. And we are quickly led to the conclusion that the five fold nature of Aphrodite is an embodiment of the autopoietic ring. That persuasion leads from eros to action, and action, in turn, leads to longing so we get a circular formation within which humans are easily trapped as if by a strange attractor.

Remember from our discussion of Parmenides, that Peitho, as a goddess, has four faces: Constraint (must), Fate (is doomed), Justice (is right), and Persuasion (would). It would be interesting to know what the faces of the other four goddesses were. Rothwell discovers four similar but slightly different meanings of Peitho in Aristophanes: Deceit, Seduction, Persuasion, and Force. The clear point is that persuasion and force are intimately linked, and that the reason for force may be either fate or rightness. The persuasive force may be seen as deceitful or seductive. Plato sees the lawgiver as a doctor. He distinguishes between two kinds of doctors -- the slave and the free. The slave doctor orders the patient to do what he sees fit for their recovery, while the free doctor first persuades before ordering.

Then you understand that sick people in the cities, slaves and free, are treated differently. The slaves

are for the most part treated by slaves, who either go on rounds or remain at the dispensaries. None of these latter doctors gives or receives any account of each malady afflicting each domestic slave. Instead, he gives him orders on the basis of the opinions he has derived from experience. Claiming to know with precision, he gives his commands just like a headstrong tyrant, and hurries to some other sick domestic slave. In this way he relieves his master of the trouble of caring for the sick. [the allopath]

The free doctor mostly cares for and looks after the maladies of free men. He investigates these from their beginning and according to nature, communing with the patient himself and his friends, and both learns something himself from the invalids and, as much as he can, teaches the one who is sick. He doesn't give orders until he has in some sense persuaded. When he has on each occasion tamed the sick person with persuasion, he attempts in leading him back to health. [the homeopath] 720c-e]

. . .

Besides, in the laws just mentioned, not only does the one version differ by double the amount of practical virtue, but, as was said just a moment

ago, the comparison with the dual species of doctors is a very correct comparison.

In this regard, it's likely that none of the lawgivers has ever reflected on the fact that it is possible to use two means of giving laws, persuasion and violence (insofar as the uneducated condition of the mob permits). They have used only the later; failing to mix compulsion with persuasion in their lawgiving, they have employed unmitigated violence alone. But I, O blessed ones, see a need for yet a third way of handling laws, one not at all in use nowadays. [722b-c]

Here violence and persuasion are mixed in the practice of the Homeopathic doctor, while the Alleopath uses violence alone. This relates the laws to peitho directly because of the necessity of persuasion when dealing with free men rather than slaves. In this analogy we see that there is an inner relation between slavery, freedom, war and torturous truth. The slave is generally the one who has been conquered in the war. The free man is the conquerer. So slavery is a direct result of war. War is, of course, the harshest face of reality. The slave is the one tortured to reveal the truth.

That truth is unitary, that truth may finally be extracted by torture, is part of our legacy from the Greeks and, therefore, part of our idea of "truth."²

Torture performs at least two functions in the Athenian state. As an instrument of demarcation, it delineates the boundary between slave and free, between the untouchable bodies of free citizens and the tortureable bodies of slaves. The ambiguity of slave status, the difficulty of sustaining an absolute sense of differences, is addressed through this practice of the state, which carves the line between slave and free on the bodies of the unfree. In the work of the wheel, the rack, and the whip, the torturer carries out the work of the polis; citizen is made distinct from non-citizen, Greek from barbarian, slave from free. The practice of *basanos* administers to the anxiety about enslavement, hauntingly evoked in the texts of Athenian tragedy that recall the fall of cities, particularly the fall of Troy, evoked as well in the histories that recount Athenian destruction of subject allies.³

In fact, as Page duBois points out, the words of the slave under torture are given higher value in terms of the attribution of truth than the words of the free man. Many times the body of the slave is tortured to get at the truth of the master of which it is considered part. The slave is defined by Aristotle as not having reason, but being capable of recognizing it. The slave is assumed to be

2. Torture and Truth; Page duBois; p. 5

3. Torture and Truth; Page duBois; p. 63-64

lying unless tortured, but assumed to be telling the truth once tortured. The free man using his reason may decide whether to tell the truth or lie. In lying, he gambles his freedom, risking being turned into a slave. The fact of his lying may be determined on the basis of the torture of a slave. So we see there is an inner relation between freedom and slavery related to the concept of torturous truth. The words of the free man must agree with the words of the tortured slave in order to be seen as true.

The doctor of the slave does not need persuasion. Force is enough for cure of the slave, whereas the doctor of the free man needs persuasion which deals with reason possessed by the free man. Since Plato's laws are meant for the free citizens of his new city, they must be accompanied by a prelude that explains them and puts the free man in the right frame of mind to accept the laws. The difference between the slave and the free man has its origin in war, *the real*, and is maintained by the city in the laws of torture. The laws of torture establishes the criteria for truth. The truth occurs only when what the tortured slave and the untouchable free men say they are identical. So we see that each of the elements of Primordial Being reinforce each other. Because free men cannot be tortured and forced, we need persuasion. Persuasion seduces reason. Reason looks for the why associated with everything. Persuasion gives reasons

why. But persuasion may be deceitful, which can only be known by torturing the slave and seeing if his words agrees with his masters'. Only the master has reasons for doing things. The slave can only recognize the reasons of the master, but he has no reasons himself. Reasons motivate the master to choose one course of action over another. Without reasons, freedom would be overwhelming as one could not choose one course of action over another lacking compulsion. Reasons are a form of compulsion that the free man imposes on himself. The freeman locates the locus of truth elsewhere outside of himself and reason, in the body of the slave, the woman, the barbarian. Where reasons provide motivation, the actual dynamic is toward the discovery of truth in the body of the other in an act of destructive domination. Reason is directly related to violence toward the other, and dependent on being safe from violence oneself.

Praxagora sees herself as a doctor for the city. She says that the women must take over in order to save the city. But in order for the women to save the city, they must practice deceit and pretend to be men. They must act like men, and speak like men and enter the assembly to vote themselves into power. This means that the other who has the truth in their bodies must enter the assembly, which is the province of reason, and persuade so that they

may enact the laws that will compel health. The laws in question are communistic utopian laws of exactly the sort that Plato proposes in his high utopian city in the Republic. These laws establish common property, the sharing of wives and husbands, and ultimately the equality of the sexes. Thus, the laws that will save the city destroy many of the master/slave dualistic distinctions which exist between rich and poor, between husband and wife, between man and woman. The women see themselves as projecting the rule of the household on the whole city and, in that, destroy the difference between the two. Essentially then, everyone in the city becomes like Gyges' ancestor, able to walk through walls which, under the new laws, will be torn down.

Hail, radiant orb (I'm talking to my lamp),
Borne on swift wheel to light this world of ours --
A more appropriate phrase than you might think,
For in an invocation of this kind
It is quite proper to describe the birth
And other details of the god addressed,
And you WERE born upon a wheel,
And from your nozzle spurts the sacred flame.
Awake, and give the signal as agreed!
It's right that you should be the only one
To overhear our plans, for, after all,
You know so much about our private lives.
You watch while in the ecstasies of love
Our bodies twist and heave, and no one dreams
Of putting you outside; you singeing flame

Has penetrated many a hairy nook
And secret crevice of the female form;
You are at hand when furtive wives unlock
The storehouse door, or siphon off the wine --
And can be trusted not to tell the world.⁴

This ode to the phallus with which the play starts speaks directly of the secret truth in the bodies of the women. The twisting and heaving of the female form is described as if from the outside, as if it were from torture. Man is the one who owns the day, and a man would be speaking to the sun as a radiant orb moving swiftly on a chariot with wheels. Praxagora, being a woman, instead owns the night, and the sun becomes the lamp, and the wheel becomes the potters wheel upon which the lamp is made. The lamp, which normally witnesses the encounters between man and woman in the night, is now being used to give a signal to other women in preparation for their deceit. The lamp, which knows so many secrets, will witness the plans for taking over the city. The woman, Praxagora, speaks to the lamp as if it were her slave, which is ironic since it is standing in for the phallus. But unlike a real slave, the lamp cannot reveal the truth under torture. So the opening speech reflects the general turning upside down of the distinctions in the city. Not only does the lamp have knowledge of sexual congress and the bodies of the women, but also the deceits of the women when they steal from their husbands. However,

4. The Assembly Women p222-223; David Barrett

this has double meaning since a standard analogy for women is the storehouse and the jar that would act as wine container. So, for a woman to steal from her husband, taking from the very things that represent her sexuality, gives us a picture of how much deceit is assumed to be ingrained in the nature of woman, like the slave. The woman's slave is the lamp which she carries with her to make it possible to move around at night on sexual or deceptive missions and to signal her lovers, or co-conspirators. It is this model that Praxagora would impose on the whole city. She would subvert the phallus of domination that dominates the world like the sun, and make it her own slave. This is done by breaking down barriers and revealing what is normally hidden. She talks of the lamp that knows her secrets, but not her husband. The lamp is a third party that sheds light on what should otherwise remain hidden. By bringing what should remain hidden into the light and turning all the dualistic distinctions upside down, Praxagora intends to heal the city. What should remain hidden are the women. They disguise themselves and go to the assembly, into the light of public scrutiny. So they conceal themselves in order to reveal their cure, a cure that they alone possess because it is they who have the household and know best how to turn the city into a single household.

Slowly it becomes clear that in this play there is a

dialectic of revealing and concealing at work. This presencing, while hiding, speaks of the nature of manifestation. Heidegger, as summarized by Joan Stambaugh, speaks of unconcealment in four senses:

- 1) Unconcealing as preservation
- 2) Strife between concealment and unconcealment
- 3) Concealment as distortion
- 4) The Open⁵

In the *Assembly Women* all these senses are explored implicitly. The women wish to heal the city so that their becoming unconcealed is a way of preserving the city which is being run into the ground by men. In order to bring what the women know about running the household to the rest of the city, unconcealing it, they must conceal themselves and their true nature. This concealing themselves in the guises of men is a distortion. They do not have to worry that they will be betrayed by their slaves because the slaves of women (i.e. lamps and other household equipment) are mute. Thus, their distortion of the truth cannot be found out through torture. They are immune from being revealed in their falsehood, unlike their husbands, except by themselves. They must give a good performance, and thus must rehearse their speeches,

5. *The Finitude of Being* page 44

in order to simulate men within the openness of the assembly. Openness means open to the intersubjective gaze. Women, as wives of citizens, normally would be prisoners locked away in their households. For them to venture into the open, under everyone's scrutiny, is a dangerous act of unconcealment which is meant to preserve the city by placing in the open that which normally is never freed in that arena, and can only be freed through deceit.

There is no doubt that this play has metaphysical structures encoded into it because these structures determine the worldview of its author and the audience who finds the play funny. These structures are, however, basically static because there is really only a single action in the play which is the overturning of the normal and the institution of the laws of the women. Praxagora leaves the stage as soon as she has established that her deceit worked, and she has convinced her husband to abide by the laws. Following that the episodes are basically concerning the ownership of private property and the laws of sexual precedence where the older come first. The final scene is of Praxagora's husband, perhaps rejuvenated, arriving at the feast. The play itself leaves much to be desired from the point of view of plot and action. It basically makes its point concerning the turning of society upside down, and disintegrates into Dionysian

chaos. For us the important point is that this turning of the laws upside down must be based on persuasion instead of force, and Praxagora is the embodiment of Peitho which must perform this persuasion. The persuasion must occur in the special site of reason and free men within the city -- the assembly. The assembly is the openness to the intersubjective gaze. In order to enter the assembly, the women must conceal themselves and distort their appearance. But this is done so that the unconcealment that preserves might take place. Once the persuasion occurs, then what follows is the force of law which causes the property owners to relinquish their possessions, and the old to take sexual precedence over the younger. Insane laws are still laws which may be enforced by exclusion from the communal meal, or by the abduction of the young man by the older women.

As we saw with Parmenides, Peitho is not part of the structure of Being, i.e. concealing and unconcealing, but exists as an antecedent to it. So here the women would change the laws about the concealment of the women and the unconcealment of the men, but they must conceal, distort and persuade in order to get this law changed. The law will only remain changed as long as their secret concerning the plot to overturn the assembly is never revealed. Fortunately for the women, their simulation of men was good enough not to be discovered at the time,

and their slaves are mute. Plato's laws are similar in that they must be levied through persuasion first, before they can have force. Once they have force, then they become a fate for the guilty. In the autopoietic ring of Aphrodite, persuasion comes between eros and action, but before longing, which leads to desire and back to eros. The women are the preservers of this mutually arising causal network which expresses clinging and craving. Between eros and action may be force in the case of rape, as the rapes by Zeus. Or perhaps there is, instead, seduction and persuasion. In any case, the move from arousal to action has within it an element of fate, normally expressed in terms of the offspring. But whether the coupling is "right" through the sanction of marriage is a different question. Praxagora, the one who is active in the openness of the agora, would destroy the rights of men over women and vice versa. She would randomize fate by making it impossible to identify the father of the offspring. She would change the model of compulsion, giving precedence to the old over the young. She would use the force of law to turn the city into one big household which is the same as making everyone within the city identical.

There is a difference between the openness of the assembly within the city and the opening up and leveling of the whole city, making everyone like Gyges' ancestor.

The radical openness creates a space in which nothing is concealed. When nothing is concealed, it is as if everything were concealed since things cannot be brought to presence in their proper context. Without the context of revealing, the revelation is flawed and does not bring out the thing appearing in the best light. This tends to obscure everything. Praxagora's program would create a radical opening within the city. This radical opening has the structure of Being itself. It begins with concealing and distortion. It attempts an unconcealing which is a preservation of the whole. It occurs through the dangerous passage in which there is strife between concealment and unconcealment. It occurs in the openness of the assembly. But from the openness of the assembly it brings a radical openness to the entire city, which literally destroys all the walls and blows away all the dualistic distinctions. It makes the whole city a household by destroying all households. It reveals what is hidden in all the households, particularly the women. This radical openness makes the mechanism of showing and hiding, based on the spatial and social relations in the city, impossible. Thus, the radical openness really hides everything by making everything accessible. The radical openness is a nihilistic condition in which concealment and unconcealment are rendered identical. It is similar to the lawgivers' selection in the production of the real city that selects some family customs over others, imposing

the selection on everyone. The natural variety is suppressed. Likewise, the radical openness suppresses variety by making the whole city identical. The households completely lose their importance. This is a major difference between high and low utopia. In the low utopia, the household becomes all important, while in the high utopia, the household is destroyed.

When we consider the household and its relation to the city, we get a glimpse of the *holon*. The household is the intermediary between the individual and the city. For the individual the household is the pivot of their being shown or being hidden. This is based on gender. Women are hidden within the household, and men forced to go out into the city. The tyrant makes the whole city his household and does not allow any open area in the city for mutual reflective gaze and speech. The man must go into the open, just and the women must remain hidden. The marriage brings the open and the closed together in a union that allows them to belong together and be the same as the progenitors of the household. The household allows a deliberate policy of showing and hiding to be lived. This policy allows each thing that is shown and each thing that is hidden to have its appropriate context, so it is seen in the best light that enhances its presence. Thus, for Greek society, the woman is hidden to all but her husband and her beauty is seen in what to them was

the best context. For Greek society the man went into the open of the assembly, and thus presented himself in the right context. The revealing and concealing of the two were understood by all as culturally appropriate. All of this appropriate revealing is lost in the high utopian city of Praxagora. By making all things and bodies available to everyone, she destroys the appropriateness. Heidegger calls this rendering everything available the *Framing*. He goes on to say that Framing and Appropriation are opposites which simultaneously occur in the Presencing of Being. Praxagora's city, the high utopia, is the model of Framing on the social and political level. The low utopia, such as that appears in the first part of the Republic and The Laws, preserves the household and thereby highlights appropriation -- the rendering to presence what is appropriate in the appropriate context. Both of these models of Being entail each other. It is expressed in the difference between identity and belonging together. The household allows the belonging together of marriage to govern showing and hiding. The identity of everyone in the high utopia makes everyone available to everyone else but also becomes nihilistic, since we can no longer tell revealing apart from concealing. When we impose the structure of Being on the whole city, nihilism results. When we allow the structure of Being to be expressed in natural variety of the households, then we gain appropriation over Framing,

which allows more to be seen in what is revealed. Every man has a wife. Even though he does not have access to all women, he knows the hidden side of the city through his participation in the culturally approved structure of showing and hiding. As such, each man has an abode to which he can return from out of the openness. Openness is only alluring when we have shelter. Where there is only the open, we die of exposure. So we see that the high utopia is a strawman set up as a foil for the low utopia. By taking things to an extreme, we can see the value in the low utopia which we would not see otherwise. Between the low and high utopian there is an showing and hiding structure. The high utopia ventures too far into the open, and thus shows that the real openness is married with something hidden in the household. The other openness looks alluring until we search out its consequences and discover that the city in which we cannot tell the household from the city is actually nihilistic.

The plot of the Assembly Women leaves much to be desired. One of the reasons is that much of the essential action takes place off stage. The plot was actually hatched at the Skira festival that is attended only by women. The rehearsal for the assault on the assembly occurs on stage, but the actual speeches of the assembly are reported by Chremes to Praxagora's husband,

Belpyrus. Then the following scenes are sporadic episodes in the implementation of the laws of the women. This sporadic quality of the final scenes is what detracts from the structure of the comedy. However, even though much of the action takes place off stage, there are four basic phases to the actions that underlie the play.

- 1) The plot is hatched at the Skira festival
- 2) The rehearsal
- 3) The assault on the Assembly
- 4) Implementation of the women's laws

These are the four phases of the coming into being of the new order. That coming into being originates in the otherness of the women and moves in to repattern the city as a whole. These stages correspond to the four stages of emergence. At Skira the men do not even know the plot exists and have no way to find out. Something is out there -- the otherness of the women -- but the men do not know what it is. The rehearsal is an anomaly with women gathering at night. In the assembly, the anomaly is brought together and organized for all to see. In the fourth stage, the anomaly is incorporated into society at large.

This pattern, which is the fundamental process of

emergence of any genuinely new thing, is repeated in Wealth in a completely different context. Each of these two plays is about a total restructuring of society. It is significant that they accompany a clearly demarcated series of stages by which the new order comes to be. In Wealth, the plot follows the series of stages, and most of the action occurs on stage. Wealth stands to the Assembly of Women as the lower utopia stands to the higher utopia. Wealth does not turn over all the social structures, but only shifts who gets the wealth from the bad to the good. This, as it happens, is precisely the point of the Noble Lie of Plato, who attempts to convince his gullible citizens that only the Good get the good things in life. Well, bringing this about is exactly the point of Aristophanes' last play.

Chremylus goes to the delphic oracle to ask if his son should do bad things because only those who do bad things get rewarded. The oracle tells him to hang on to the first person he sees. The play opens with Chremylus and his slave Carion following around an unknown man. When they finally persuade/force him to reveal his identity, we discover that the stranger is Wealth. Wealth is blind, and we discover that he has been blinded by Zeus, and that this is why he spends all his time with bad people instead of good. Chremylus hatches a plot to restore the sight of Wealth and to share his new found

wealth with all his friends. Together they take Wealth to the house of healing, and Wealth is healed. Hence forth wealth will only abide with the good, and the rest of the story consists of the working out of the implications of this fundamental reversal of fortunes for the good and bad people. Here again there are four distinct stages.

- 1) Oracle
- 2) Bringing blind Wealth home
- 3) Curing the blindness of Wealth
- 4) Wealth abiding with the Good and the sharing of Wealth.

Hereto the origin of the basic notion of the reversal of fortunes starts off in the otherness of the realm of the gods. At this point men know that the gods are out there and can answer questions, but how and why is largely unknown. The finding of Wealth is an anomaly based on indications from the oracle. The curing of the blindness of Wealth is by taking him to the house of cures that serves the same function as the assembly in the Assembly Women. It brings the sickness into an open space where it may be dealt with. Once Wealth has been cured, then it is possible to integrate the new insight of Wealth into normal everyday life. The good become rich, and the bad become poor, exactly as Plato's lie would have us believe things really are. In this play the consultation of the oracle and the healing take place off stage, but this does

not seem as disruptive to the plot as in the case of the Assembly Women.

In each case there is a fundamental repatterning of society, and in each case there is a fourfold set of steps by which this repatterning occurs. We take that to mean that each is a genuine emergence and not an artificial repatterning. The main difference is that in the case of the high utopia related play, Assembly Women, the households are destroyed, while in the low utopia related play, Wealth, the households are strengthened. In the Assembly Women, the Other is within the city, in women; while in Wealth, the Other is the Gods beyond the city. The revolution in the Assembly of Women is secular while the revolution in Wealth is divine. Wealth is, in fact, the very image of what Plato calls The Good. The play Wealth is about appropriating the source of all good things. The play Assembly Women is about redistributing and sharing the property that already exists. Thus, the Assembly Women operates on the basis of beings already present, while in Wealth we are striking a more basic level by making available the source of beings which can never be made present. In fact, the impossibility of the play Wealth is making a source of beings into a being. On the other hand in the play Assembly Women, what is advocated is merely a rearrangement of beings to which some comply and to

which others resist. The Framing renders available beings without regard to their sources. Appropriation, on the other hand, appropriates the sources so that the arising of beings is appropriate in the sense that the beings arise for the good and fail to arise for the bad. This radical change occurs without destroying the household. Fates are merely altered so that the good get lucky while the bad become unlucky. In fact, we can see that this play is almost a perfect example of the kind of art that Plato demands in *The Laws*. It is art that expresses very well the Noble Lie. It is art that would be allowed within the colony of *The Laws* where almost all other art is banned. Aristophanes at least knew how to tell the right kind of lies.

Persuasion plays a large part in the play *Wealth*. Wisdom is cajoled and threatened into revealing his identity. And once Chremylus and Blepsidemus decide to cure *Wealth* of his blindness, there is a debate between them and *Poverty* in which persuasion plays a large role. In fact, after agreeing to the debate, when *Poverty* presents a good case, then Chremylus utters the line, "I will not be persuaded even if I am," which is very significant. *Poverty* argues that she makes men better, and when her argument becomes stronger than her interlocutors', they just refuse to listen. Thus, here is an example of how persuasion breaks down. *Poverty* says they will beg her

to come back some day. Poverty obviously has some wisdom that Wealth lacks. Wealth cannot tell the good from the bad without his external sight. This is a bad sign, since the blind are assumed to have inner sight. Wealth does not have that inner sight and so we get the curious inversion that even though Wealth is a source, it is trapped on the surface of things. Poverty, on the other hand, has real depth. Chremylus and Blepsidemus bet two deaths that they will win the case with poverty. They bet their lives, and they clearly lose the argument. But when they get to the point where they might have to admit defeat, they stop up their ears and refuse to listen. The main argument of Poverty is that no one will pursue a craft if they had everything they needed. This is exactly the starting point of Plato for building his low utopia in the Republic. Poverty says they will be reduced to doing their own plowing and digging, and will have a miserable life because they must do everything themselves that they now get from specialists. Poverty claims to be different from Pauperism, those who have nothing at all. Poverty claims to give people just what they need and no more, and produce lean and wasplike men who are deadly to their enemies. There is a wisdom to poverty, and Chremylus and Blepsidemus do not want to hear about it. They prefer to live on the surface of things, even though it will be the death of them. What appears with wealth is self-deception. Chremylus and Belepsidemus want

wealth, even if it is bad for them. They want everything to be all right on the surface, even if that means turning away from the truth that all things are opposites and that the world they would create is no longer balanced.

Because Chremylus and Belpsidemus do not understand the play of opposites, it becomes clear they have not really laid hold of the Good in Plato's sense. Wealth appears to be good to those who cling to the surface of things. They are blind to the true source of all Good things. Their blindness is not cured in the play. The Good is beyond the opposites. If you get rid of one opposite and do not understand the opposites, it is not possible to reach the Good. It appears that the bad people inherit poverty. This trial by fire may make the bad people into good, just as wealth describes how good people become bad when they seize hold of them. Thus, we expect to see a rolling over of opposites, even under the new rules, because as good people become bad, they will lose wealth, and as bad people become good, they will gain wealth. In this play of opposites, the Good itself shows forth. The showing forth of the Good, the source of all good things, is the true function of manifestation. It is the appropriation which shows forth what is appropriate, whereas the Framing only shows us beings, but does not make their source apparent through indications. The showing forth of the Good does not

mean that it appears as a being as Wealth does. Instead, it means that the play of opposites, when set free, makes it clear that the Good can come through either opposite. Good can come through wealth or poverty. Sometimes wealth is a bane. Some times poverty is a disaster. But at other times wealth is the source of good, and the same with poverty. We see Good when we see the upwelling of variety, as from a cornucopia. This appears within and throughout the play of opposites. It is the true heart of manifestation. Manifestation does not just manifest things. Manifestation manifests global qualities of its own. When we see these global qualities, such as the upwelling of variety within manifestation, then we see an aspect of the Good. Of course the good has other qualities but its hallmark is the endless production of variety which is good in itself, and which should not be suppressed. Both appropriation within the lower utopia, and Framing of the higher utopia, are forms of suppression of variety. The higher utopia suppresses by overt nihilistic production -- by the Framing of extreme nihilistic alternatives as the only alternatives. The lower utopia suppresses by imposing the autopoietic stasis upon the situation. In the case of Wealth, we see that a false image of the Good from within the play of opposites is taken for the Good itself. Attempting to produce stasis, even the dynamic stasis of autopoiesis, within the dynamic of the opposites is the fundamental error of the

lower utopia.

This lack of balance in the harnessing of Wealth reminds us of the Framing which stores up energies to be available for use. So we see that within appropriation there is the source of the Framing. Likewise, there is within the Framing, appropriation. The Framing depends on the production of nihilistic opposites, which even in their extremeness are appropriate to each other. By driving to an extreme in one direction, one gets the extreme from the other direction. So destroying the household makes the city one big household. The tyrant is the one who treats the whole city as his own household. So the high utopian ideal, where all are free, has the same effect as tyranny. People are tyrannized by the radical openness which refuses them the possibility of appropriate showing and hiding.

The sharing of Wealth, which occurs in the low utopian play, corresponds to the portion of the high utopian vision that is not alien to Greece. The sharing of women and the concept of sexual equality were the alien elements of this vision. It is significant that these alien aspects are introduced by women and not men. In the play *Wealth*, the men introduce the sharing of property only. So we see that the play *Wealth*, as in *The Laws* a much more conservative vision which upholds the household. That

means it preserves the intermediary unit between the individual and the city. In the high utopia, there is no mediating element between the individual and the city. The individual is exposed to everyone as a sexual object, as a social object, as a producing object. In the play *Wealth* the individual is sheltered from the whole city by the household. Both men and women take advantage of this sheltering. However, in *Wealth*, each household has laid hold of a source of variety and plenty. That source sustains the household without work in a speciality. So the specialization which Plato sees as the beginning of the low utopia is exactly what Aristophanes negates. When we compare these two utopias to the real city, it becomes clear that Praxagora sees the real city as one in which men are failing to govern properly; and Chremylus sees it as one in which only the bad people have money. Both of these comic cities present us a picture of the real city as the negative of the proposed different solutions. That real city about which we know so little stands as the antithesis on which the plays are commentaries. But why do we need two commentaries that move off from the real city to two distances, one short and the other long? The answer to that may be found perhaps in the interval structure. The real city is a limit of an interval. The higher utopia is another limit of the same interval, and the lower utopia is the point of reversibility within that same limit. As we have seen, the real city contains an

artificially induced chaos. This appears in many ways. For instance, there is the chaos of the law courts and endless litigation. There is the chaos of the Assembly which moves from one demagog to another as shown in the play *The Knights*. There is orchestrated chaos in almost every realm of human activity within the city. This is what gives the real city its “reality.” In complete contrast to this is the high utopian ideal in which all the barriers are broken down so that everyone becomes identical, like the barbarians. An instance of this is the Skythians, a favorite example of the alien to the Greeks. They went to the extreme in their tyranny to believe that each person was part of the body of their king, just as the Greek slave were considered part of the body of their master. Bruce Lincoln describes this in “On the Scythian Royal Burials” in War, Death, And Sacrifice.

Other data also reveals that social identity among the Scyths was largely corporate, and that social groups possessed focal representatives. Among these is the fact that close retainers ... were required to take any oaths sworn by their leader as a solidarity with him. Moreover, the Scythian sense of corporate identity was given a stunning metaphoric description by Herodotus, as was recognized by Seth Bernardette ... For whereas Darius was able to take an accurate census of his 700,000-strong army by requiring each man to

place a single pebble on a common pile, a similar attempt by the Scyths failed. For the Scythian king Ariantus commanded every scyth to bring him, not a pebble, but a bronze arrowhead, and these he melted down and cast into an enormous amphora, six times greater than the largest vessel known to the Greeks, and six fingers thick on all sides. This colossal vessel was nothing less than the tangible representation of Scythian society: a corporate whole in which all individuals merged: a totality called into existence by the king. [page 193-4]

So by these Scythian standards it is amazing that the Greeks saw themselves as individuals. This individuality is seen in the Comedies as Aristophanes calls members of the community out by name for ridicule. When all the citizens are individuals with their center of focus within each individual body, it is difficult to merge these individuals back into a whole again. By breaking down the barriers of the households, the Greeks could at least imagine that to be a way to achieve the wholeness that the Scythians had naturally, without going to such an extreme. But to achieve that natural wholeness based on the city, the Greeks would become something other than themselves. The Greeks, like all the Indo-Europeans, had this ideal of the *holoid*. But the Greeks were fragmented so that this ideal could only be projected as an

unachievable longing for unity at the other limit from the self-imposed chaos that they designated as real. Between these two extremes there was another possibility which both Aristophanes and Plato saw. This was the possibility of the autopoietic unity. It does not collapse Primordial Being, which is embedded in the reality of their language into the total fusion of Conceptual Being, but instead stops at the half way point where there were four fundamental elements partially fused, instead of the eight embedded in primordial Being. This halfway house is partially real and partially ideal. It stands at the crossroads, or chiasm of the interval between the real and the ideal. At this crossroads there is the possibility of tapping the sources, building a city with its own wells to withstand siege, which take from the source of the Good beneath the low utopian city. Once you tap into this source, it is possible to drink from it for a long time. Both Plato and Aristophanes hopes to realize this possibility in order to create an alternative to the nihilistic opposites of reality and ideality. Reality and ideality are nihilistic opposites. They are appropriate to each other. Both are aspects of the Framing, two sides of the same coin. Inasmuch as ideality and reality are both dual artificial constructs, they stand opposite the autopoietic unity which mediates them. But the autopoietic unity has just the right structure to isolate the source of the Good and tap it. Where the real and the ideal cities are empty

husks, the autopoietic unity is full. This fullness appears in what Heidegger calls the Appropriation which stands opposite the Framing. Appropriation and Framing are the SAME. They belong together. We all see about us the work of the Framing. But what we do not notice, unless we look closely, is the autopoietic possibility of Appropriation. We do not notice the appropriateness of the nihilistic opposites for each other. Ideality and Reality complement each other perfectly. The idealist and the realist need each other as foils. But more than that, one misses the Appropriation itself which is the other side of the Framing. In the Autopoietic unity, each element is appropriate to its place. They fit together like a clockwork mechanism, as if made to fit perfectly, by a craftsman of unknown origin. That the autopoietic unity is a possibility within the metaphysical tradition that is a wondrous mystery. A jewel like a cut diamond. Normally we are caught up with either reality or ideality, and we miss completely the middle ground between them. Husserl called it essence perception. But that is usually because we assume the vantage point of the autopoietic unity, and we cannot see it for all our looking at the duality or reality and ideality. In order to see it, we must relinquish appropriation and take up a position in the reality/ideality dual and look back at appropriation.

When thinking enters into Appropriation, the history of being as metaphysics comes to an end,

even though metaphysics may continue on. What continues might be compared to the long rumble of thunder that follows the lightening flash. The rumble of thunder is still there, but nothing decisive begins to happen in it. What was decisive was the lightening flash.

Thinking then stands in and before that which has sent the various forms of epochal being. This, however, what sends as Appropriation, is itself unhistorical, or more precisely without destiny.⁶

Metaphysics has been the history of the self-withdrawal of what does the sending in favor of what is sent and allowed to presence. What sends cannot send itself as well. But Heidegger goes a step further and states that not only does being not send itself; it withdraws. Withdrawing seems to be a condition of sending or at least concomitant with it.

What has been sending is Appropriation, which itself has no history and no destiny.⁷

By translating these “metaphysical” ideas of Heidegger into a concrete relation between reality, ideality, and their opposite, we give depth and substance to what might otherwise be very nebulous concepts. We cannot

6. Heidegger quote from 'On Time and Being'

7. The Finitude of Being; Joan Stambaugh; page75-76

understand the higher utopia except in exact nihilistic opposition to the real city. In Aristophanes, we get a lot of insight into the everyday life of the citizens, albeit through the lens of his scathing ridicule. He continuously throws out bizarre ideal situations in order to highlight this reality. This is what makes his plays so ingenious for us. But no one considers why he must do that to get a rise out of his audience. This is because of the distorted and extreme nature of the “reality” that the Greek man in the street is experiencing. Whenever our senses are overloaded, it is only by producing a sharper pain that one can get a normal response. The bizarre nature of the socially constructed everyday world as a designated “reality” causes the playwright and the philosopher to attempt to get their audience’s attention by producing ideals which have shock value as counters to “reality.” What remains hidden in this process is the appropriate, which is outside the history of the dialectic of ideology and reality. In fact, the autopoietic has no history. It is a fragment of endless time brought into the in-time realm. Or at least it is an attempt to tap Wealth and hold on to that source forever within time. Modern biologists, like Maturana and Varela, have rediscovered this theoretical possibility and think of it as a new invention. In fact, nothing is “new.” If that possibility did not already exist within the framework of the metaphysical tradition, it could not be discovered. It was, in fact, exactly this

possibility that Plato and Aristophanes were exploring at the beginning of the philosophical tradition that is now arising again. Heidegger already saw that possibility as the dual of Framing once he got a good picture of what that is, i.e. the holding together, yet apart, of nihilistic opposites. Once that structure is grasped, it is merely a matter of imagining its opposite. However, the trick is that in order to see it, one must relinquish it and move into the play of nihilistic opposites in order to get a view of what was previously hidden. With that move, one steps into the chaos of history. Thus, Appropriation conceals itself because if you can see it, you cannot realize it. But if you cannot see it, it is possible to realize it. A very strange and paradoxical situation. For this reason most of Heidegger's text about Appropriation sounds like doubletalk. He struggles to express what you cannot grasp, unless you let go of it. That which you cannot see if you grasp it. Heidegger realizes that there is an inner structure of Being. He struggles to express it. Without that struggle modern metaphysics would not exist.

We now dwell more in the forgottenness (lethe) than in the openness (aletheia) of being. Only the experience of Appropriation is going to be able to get us to being itself, as opposed to the ordering and production of beings in which we are now engaged. Appropriation is the belonging together

of man and being where man stands within and perdures the Openness of being.

An excellent way to approach the Appropriation would be to look into the essence of Framing, since it is a passageway from metaphysics to the other kind of thinking [⁸], for Framing is essentially ambiguous. “The Principle of Identity” already said: Framing (the gathering unity of all ways of placing) is the completion and fulfillment of metaphysics and at the same time the revealing preparations of Appropriation. For this reason it is not a question of viewing the rise of technology as a negative occurrence (but not as a positive occurrence in the sense of a paradise on earth either). Framing is, so to speak, the photographic negative of Appropriation. [⁹]

The somewhat inscrutable relation of Framing and Appropriation is captured in this passage. Framing is the completion of metaphysics and *at the same time* prepares for and reveals Appropriation. Framing is a Janus head with two faces looking in opposite directions. In some way difficult to understand or spell out, Framing and Appropriation are present at the same time. The image of the photographic negative, which is

8. called a 'Janus head' in *On Time and Being*, page 53

9. Heidegger Quote from *Vier Seminare*, page 104

suggestive but hardly more than that, involves the simultaneity of Framing and Appropriation.

[omission]

With the term “Appropriation,” Heidegger is attempting to think something probably unprecedented and perhaps not totally feasible. It is a question of how far back he can bend language. He now wants to think being itself without regard to its relation to beings as their ground. But he in no way wants to think it without regard to its relation to man. On the contrary, being is not thinkable without regard to its relating to man.¹⁰

Here we suggest that Appropriation is not unprecedented; but that this possibility was well known at the beginning of metaphysics, known even to the comics. What Heidegger is doing is applying the duality theorem of mathematical Category Theory. If Being has a structure, then if we reverse the arrows, we get the dual of that structure. Heidegger plays with this dual as if it were an alternative to the Framing structure of Being. Instead, it is the dual of that structure that appears worked out in the low utopian models of Plato and Aristophanes. They could not think it abstractly as Heidegger does. They had to provide a human scale working model. So they built

10. The Finitude of Being; Joan Stambaugh; page 53-4

appropriate cities -- cities in which every aspect was appropriate -- as the opposite of the real cities and the extreme ideal cities -- cities so extreme that they thrust us into the Other.

The flaw in Heidegger's approach is that he forgets the social aspect of man. It is in the social aspect that the appropriation appears most strongly. This is why Plato built ideal cities. Appropriation is the inner structure of intersubjectivity. Framing and the dialectic of reality and ideality all exist for the individual and the city as a whole. But appropriation is based in the household, in the natural intersubjective forms. The city is an abstraction which no one member experiences directly. The individual is a concrete isolated unit which eventually becomes, after much ridicule, the center of subjectivity. But the household is the human scale intersubjective unit of society. Thus, the low utopia must preserve and express the household unit as a means of access to what is appropriate as an alternative to the craziness within the city and the craziness within the individual. So as sociologists, we can recognize how the relation of Framing and Appropriation expresses itself within socius. Deleuze and Guattari touch on it when they only recognize *desiring machines* and the *socius* as designated-as-real levels in their theories of ideation (the Oedipus Complex = ideation). For them, the person is a

fantasy. We might add that it is an intersubjective fantasy. It is not just the person that believes that he/she has unity. We all attribute unity to individuals as persons with subjectivity which can therefore see objective reality. Deleuze and Guattari attack the family. But the Greek household is not the nuclear family. The household was an intersubjective construct above the level of the nuclear family including kinfolk and slaves and hangers-on of all sorts. The nuclear family is an artificial construct produced by the breakdown of kinship structures. Now even that is breaking down into single parent families. Focus on the nuclear families is a product of the decline of our own society. But you can see that in order to de-realize the person, Deleuze and Guattari have to make into the locus of reality the socius and the desiring machine. The socius and the desiring machine are the opposite dual of the subjective person. They merely thought the opposite of the person, and that dual is split instead of whole. So to, in a completely different context closer to the origin of our tradition, the opposite process occurred, focused at a different level of reality. There it was the household that was the focal unity within Greek society. In order to produce individuality, it needed to be deconstructed, and what resulted was the opposition between individual and city. They are the dual of the household projected inward and outward. Plato explicitly tells us that they are identical

because he can explore the soul by building pictures of the city. In the high utopia, and in reality, there is a constant attack on the household. The household is the ship which is constantly buffeted within the Greek city. It takes the brunt of the attack of the high utopia which pretends to turn the city into a single household in order to destroy the household by blowing it out of all proportion. The household does not scale to the size of a city except as a tyranny. On the other hand, the household in the low utopias are made the center of those societies and made inviolable in some sense. Aristophanes bestows on them endless wealth. Plato controls their number within the city of *The Laws*. These idealized households are just as unreal as the reality/ideality of the Framing. There everything is appropriate to the human scale, but we do not live in perfect households with unlimited internal sources of wealth or a static number of instances. Households are in flux and must produce their shared wealth. The human scale relation between person and household is the key to understanding appropriation as an intersubjective phenomena -- a structure of intersubjectivity. Framing gives us non-human scale relations between individuals and the city, which is the origin of the concept of democracy. In a democracy, the individuals have an unmediated relation to the entire city. The tyranny, oligarchy and timocracy set up mediations between the

individual and the whole city. Thus, in democracy, these mediations are torn down and the individual is exposed without protection to the whole. In some sense the arising of democracy was a compromise between the destruction of the household and the preservation of the household. In the democracy, the heads of the household were exposed to the whole through the Assembly. This radical exposure was balanced by the concealment of women within the household. That concealment was a compensation to overexposure.

We move now to Aristophanes' play the Birds. This play is very important in bolstering our contention that Aristophanes was dealing with metaphysical themes which mirror the themes that Plato was dealing with in the Republic and Laws. If we consider the higher utopia to be inhabited by the Gods and not men, while the real city is inhabited by men, then the birds and their intermediary city becomes the locus of the lower utopia. The Birds starts with two Athenians leaving Athens in disgust at the constant litigation within the real city. They each leave with a bird searching for the way to the realm of the Birds. Upon arrival, Euelpides and Peisthetaerus find Hoopoe who formerly was the man Tereus. After some conversation, Peisthetaerus suggests that the birds found a city between Heaven and Earth which effectively shuts off the sacrifices of men to the

gods. They should build a wall around the Air and not allow either men or gods to pass through their realm. Euelpides and Peisthetaerus become birds themselves, and the birds win their war with both men and gods becoming sovereign of the universe. Once their city has been set up, many people attempt to get in who have corrupted the real city, and they are turned away.

The city of the birds is the lower utopia between the real city and the city of the gods on Olympus. Euelpides and Peisthetaerus want to escape the real city. But unlike Trygaeus who sets out for Olympus in the play *Peace*, these two set out for the intermediary realm, the air. The play *Peace* in structure is very similar to *Wealth*. Trygaeus goes to heaven to get peace and succeeds bringing peace to the Greeks. So in Aristophanes, we have examples of setting out for two very different destinations which can be associated with the high and low utopias.

EUELPIDES: "It's very hard, isn't it, that when you've got two people who actually WANT to 'go to the crows,' and they can't find the way! You see, gentlemen (you do realize, by the way, that strictly speaking you aren't here at all), we've got Acestor's disease -- only in our case it's the other way round. He spends all his time, as an outsider, trying to find a way IN; whereas we -- respectable

citizens, born of the purest Athenian stock, acting under no compulsion whatever -- are clearing out. And why, you may ask, have we taken wing (on foot) from our native city? Well it isn't that we've anything against the city as such: it's as grand and happy a place as ever a man paid a fine in. But there it is: the cicadas chirp away in the trees for a month on end, perhaps even two; but the Athenians yammer away in the law courts of the whole of their lives. Which is why you see us on the march, with our basket and our brazier and our myrtle, looking for a land without lawsuits, where we can settle down and live in peace. We're trying to find Teresus, the Hoopoe; he must do quite a lot of flying around, he may have come across the king of place we are looking for."¹¹

Euelpides and Piesthetaerus are leaving the real city, which is embroiled in lawsuits. This obsession with laws in the real city is cited many places in Aristophanes' plays and can be seen as one of the main obsessions of the city in the metaphysical era. Here, the war of all against all is through litigation, using the laws that man imposes on himself. The war of all against all includes the war against oneself in which man becomes alienated from everyone else. Euelpides and Piesthetaerus have become alienated from this nihilistic situation into which

11. The Birds page 156

the real city has fallen. They are searching for a way out, not unlike the impetus of this present study. The way outward is contrast with the Skythians attempt to gain a way inward. In the present study, we have realized that the only way out is by going inward. Without the promise of actual arrival at the lower or higher utopias, we must explore the inner structure of the real city from time immemorial. Like Heidegger, we wish to escape from metaphysics which is embodied in the structures of the higher and lower utopias. However, we must first understand those metaphysical structures thoroughly.

When our pair meet the Footbird, servant of the Hoopoe, both are shocked. The men from Athens pretend to be birds, and we find out that Footbird, like his master, used to be a man. So in the initial confrontation, which is shocking to both, we have men trying to pretend they are birds and men who have been turned to birds. This confrontation is like a mirroring. Each side is looking into a mirror, seeing the dual. Birdman sees Manbird, and both are frightened. Footbird is a servant. Thus, even in the realm of the birds, there are slaves, just like the low utopia. Once the pair meet the Hoopoe, they admit they are men and say they have come to consult him.

Euelpides: "We wanted to consult you."

Hoopoe: "What About."

Euelpides: "Well, you were once a man, just like us. And you used to get into debt, just like us. And you liked to get out of paying, just like us. And then suddenly you got turned into a bird. And you flew over the land, and you circled over the sea, and you got a bird's eye view of everything. But a man's eye view at the same time. And that's why we've come here to see you. Perhaps YOU can tell us where to find a really comfortable city: warm and welcoming, like a soft warm fleecy blanket."

Hoopoe: "So you're looking for a city that's greater than Athens?"

Euelpides: "Not greater. Just easier to live in."

As the play progresses, we find that Euelpides and Peisthetaerus have a very unreal ideal of the kind of place they would like to live. Each of them wish to live in the sort of place where others want to share what is theirs by inviting others to their wedding feasts or sharing their sons. The Hoopoe suggests some real places that they could live, which are all rejected for one reason or another. The Euelpides asks the Hoopoe what it is like to live in the realm of the Birds. The Hoopoe replies that it is pleasant enough. But you must learn to live without a

purse. So the birds are seen as those who need no money and eat each day without effort. In the midst of this discussion Peisthetaerus pipes up suddenly as he has had an idea.

Peithetaeterus: “My goodness, the possibilities I can see for you birds -- and power too, if you’ll let yourselves be guided by me.”

Hoopoe: “Guided by you? In what way?”

Peithetaeterus: “You want my advice? Very well. In the first place give up this habit of flying stupidly around all day; it’s getting you a bad name. I mean, where we come from, ask someone like Teleas about one of these flighty types we have and he’ll say ‘Oh, the man’s an absolute BIRD -- restless, shifty, flighty, unreliable, can’t stay in one place for two minutes on end.’”

Hoopoe: “I see what you mean: a fair criticism. But what SHOULD we do?”

Peithetaeterus: “Stay in one place and found a city.”

Peithetaeterus asks the Hoopoe to look around and say what he sees. The Hoopoe says he sees the sky.

Peithetaeterus: “The sky, exactly: the great vault of heaven. Revolving on its axis -- to which only

the birds have access. Build a wall around it, turn this vast immensity into a vast, immense city, and then -- you'll rule over man as you now rule over insects; and as for the gods, they'll starve to death like the Melians."

Hoopoe: "How?"

Peithetaeterus: "The air lies between the earth and the sky, doesn't it? If we Athenians want to consult the oracle at Delphi, we have to ask the Boeotians to allow us through. Well, in future, when men offer sacrifices to the gods, the gods will have to pay duty on them, otherwise you won't grant transit rights for those fragrant meaty odors to pass through space, across foreign territory."

Hoopoe: "Well, I'll be snared. Ods net, traps, and scarecrows, it's the most brilliant idea I ever heard. Ill be delighted to help you found this city - - provided the other birds agree, of course.

The Hoopoe calls the rest of the birds with a song from his wife, the nightingale, and from himself. The birds come and immediately want to fight the two men who are compared to a couple of wolves. The Hoopoe says in response that you learn best from your enemies, and this is how cities learned to fortify themselves. Finally, the birds allow Peithetaeterus to speak, and he uses all the

ruses of rhetoric to persuade them that they were the original kings, not the gods. He eventually persuades them by showing how the birds and the gods are always seen together, and saying that it is because the birds came first. Eventually they accept his argument and invite the two men to become one of them. They even know how to make them grow wings like the rest of the birds by chewing on a certain root. Once the birds have absorbed the message of Peithetaeterus, they retell the story of creation from their own newly gained perspective as the nightingale sings.

Chorus: "Listen, you men down there in the half-light! Shadowy, impalpable, dream-like phantoms: feeble, wingless, ephemeral creatures of clay, dragging out your painful lives till you wither like the leaves and crumble again to dust! Pay attention to us, the immortals; to us, the eternal, the airborne, the un-aging, the imperishable; and hear from us the whole truth about what lies around and above you! We will explain to you the nature of birds, the birth of the gods, the genealogy of rivers, the origin of Erebus and Chaos -- and when you have learnt the truth, you can pay off old Prodicus with our compliments. In the beginning there existed only Chaos, Night, Black Erebus and Dreary Tartarus: there was no Earth, no Air, no Sky. It was in the

boundless world of Erebus that the first egg was laid by black-winged Night; and from this egg, in due season, sprang Eros the deeply-desired, Eros the bright, the golden-winged. And it was he, mingling in Tartarus with murky Chaos, who begot our race and hatched us out and led us up to the light. There was no race of immortal gods till Eros brought the elements together in love: only then did the Sky, the Ocean and the Earth come into being, and the deathless race of all the blessed gods.

So you see we are much older than any of the gods.

And that we are children of Eros is plain by many tokens.

Like him, we fly.

Like him, we are associated with love.

Why, many a bashful beloved, in the prime of beauty and youth has been won over, thanks to us: the gift of a quail, a goose or a cockerel at the critical moment has been known to work wonders.

It is from us, the birds, that Man receives all his greatest blessings. From us he learns of the coming of spring, of winter, of autumn. The cry of the crane as it flies back to Libya tells him it is

the season for sowing; the shipmaster knows that he can hang up his rudder and enjoy a good night's rest; Orestes weaves himself a warm winter cloak -- no point in feeding to death while he's on his way to steal someone else's. But when the kite appears, another season is at hand. Time for sheep shearing! Spring is here! Then comes the swallow: time to sell those warm woolen clothes and buy something more summery.

We are your oracles too: Among, your Dodona, your Delphi, your Phoebus Apollo. Whatever you are going to do whether it's a matter of trade, or feeding the family, or getting married, you always consult the birds. Why, you even use the word bird for anything that brings good luck or bad luck; whether it's a chance remark, a sneeze, an unexpected meeting, a noise, as servant or a donkey, you call it a bird! So you see, we really are the oracle you depend on most!

So let us be your gods
And your Muses prophetic
To all your requests
We'll be most sympathetic

We won't put on airs
Like the gods you've been used to,
Or skulk in the clouds
As Apollo and Zeus do;

We'll always be present

To aid and defend you;
There's really no end
To the blessings we'll send you:

Long life and good fortune,
Peace, happiness, wealth,
Youth, laughter, and dancing,
Good cheer and good health.¹²

Here we have a rewriting of the myths of creation to justify the claim of the birds over the gods for sovereignty. The birds are attempting to persuade men that it is the birds who are the rightful sponsors of mankind. All of this, and what follows along the same vein, is a fine parody. But it brings us to the point of inquiring into the relation of men to the gods which can be challenged in this way. Heidegger speaks of the Fourfold. The Fourfold are heaven, earth, gods, and mortals. This structure is the focus of this play, for it interposes a realm of Air between Heaven and Earth and the sovereignty of Birds between gods and mortals. For Heidegger the Fourfold is the inner structure of Being when thought non-metaphysically. In Aristophanes' play, we see a wedge driven between the elements of the Fourfold. The relation between the elements of the Fourfold is one of mutual mirroring which does not support any images. This, as Jean Stambaugh points out, sounds a lot like interpenetration. Each element of the

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Fourfold contains all the other elements. None of them are things. But they all are present in each thing. Aristophanes, by driving a wedge between the elements of the Fourfold, makes visible that structure. At the same time he also highlights its opposite. That opposite is the low utopia that floats in the air rather than residing in the heavens. The Fourfold is a structure which is exactly like the Framing except it lacks dualism. Heaven and Earth are complementary opposites. Mortals and immortals are complementary opposites. They sum up the relations between the real city and the higher ideal city with parallel oppositions. But the Fourfold is the explicit structuring of Appropriation as it appears as the photographic negative of Framing. So we see that the photographic negative of Framing is the same opposition without dualism, reduced to opposition. Now it is the opposition of Heaven to Earth which includes nature; and it is the opposition of mortals to immortals. But are the gods immortal? Aristophanes makes fun of this very point by having the birds claim immortality. The answer is no. The jinn live longer than humans, and it is their lie that they are immortal. So there is an error in the laying out of the Fourfold. Jinn and men are dual opposites. What lies between them is the Angel, a creature of light which cannot do wrong, who must uphold the RTA or cosmic harmony and follows the command of God. So Heidegger's Fourfold is a modification of the Framing. It

precisely corresponds to the Framing in structure without the dualism and nihilism that makes the Framing so undesirable. However, the Fourfold does not signify Appropriation as unity. Appropriation as unity is signified by the Autopoietic nature of the lower utopia, which corresponds exactly to the city of the birds. This makes us want to look more closely at the playful myth of origins. First there was only Chaos, Night, Black Erebus (covered) and Dreary Tartarus. Within the womb of the Covered blackwinged Night the first egg was laid. From this egg came Eros. Eros mingled with Chaos in Tartarus to give rise to the Birds. Only then did Eros bring the elements together in love. Sky, Ocean and Earth as well as the gods were born. This is quite different from the philosophical creation myth from the Theogony of Hesiod where Darkness was first, and the union was between Darkness and Chaos who gave rise to Night, Day, Erebus, and Air. In fact, it reverses the myth of Hesiod in which Night and Erebus are offspring.

The reversal of the creation myth is appropriate, for it is necessary to think of Appropriation as unity instead of multiplicity, as it is thought by Heidegger in the Fourfold. Thus, we need to reverse our posture. Night lays the egg of Eros within “the covered.” That egg might be seen to signify the unity of Appropriation which is concealed by the advancement of the structure of the Fourfold. And

what is within that Egg? EROS, the deeply-desired. This is very interesting as eros is one of the gods, like Peithos, that represents the attributes of Aphrodite. Eros, or love, as Empedocles says draws together the elements from out of the chaos and gives rise to the heaven, sky, and earth as well as the ocean. Thus, the elements of the Fourfold Heaven, Earth, gods and mortals all come from Eros after the birds. The birds are the primordial creatures. Of course, this is meant to be a joke. But it also has a serious aspect. Because when we think of Aristophanes' creation myth from the point of view of metaphysics, we see him going back before the Fourfold and placing there the unity of Appropriation which he sees as giving rise to desire. Thus, we have not left the realm of Being -- we are not thinking outside the realm of Being, but instead have gone to the very core of it. At the core of Being, whether as enframing or Fourfold, we see desire -- the clinging to existence. The birds claim to embody most perfectly this clinging. They live in the realm of air, which must be lighted chaos. The birds live within the realm of constant change. They are the ones that ride upon the updrafts and glide through the cross-drafts. Thus, the birds, buffeted continuously by the weather, are the ones who have mastered dynamic clinging to the utmost degree. They do not need the structure of enframing or appropriation to exist within the dynamics of the chaotic air within that abyss. So here we can

interpret the position of the birds as truly prior to that of gods and men because the birds are those who can swim within the dynamic and ever changing atmosphere before the structure of the Framing/Fourfold appears.

Notice in Aristophanes' spoof on the creation myth of Heisod, that it is more ordered and rational than the official version. Creation starts with a different Fourfold: Night, Covering, Chaos, Tartarus. Tartarus is the A-byss. Chaos is the lack of order. Covering is preservation and perhaps distortion. Night is the lack of lighting. This Fourfold describes the opposite of Presencing, interpreted as Being. It is when Night transgresses against Covering that the egg of Eros is laid. From that egg is born Eros who again transgresses against both Chaos and Tartarus to create the birds. Once the birds are created, then Eros goes further, drawing together the elements and producing the positive structure of the Fourfold Heaven, Earth, Gods and Men. Looking at the structure of Being, we can see that the negative Fourfold balances the positive Fourfold. The egg, which becomes desire, balances these two Fourfold structures. Here we can remember that with Pietho we had another different four fold structure: Constraint, Fate, Justice and Persuasion. In fact, with each of the five parts of Aphrodite: Desire, Eros, Peitho, Action, Longing this four fold structure would probably arise in different ways.

Chaos: Constraint

Abyss: Fate

Covering: Justice

Night: Persuasion

These different fourfold faces in their qualities may have some relation to each other. Unfortunately, we do not have the fourfold structures related to longing, desire, and action. But whether they do or not, it is clear that it is possible to look at the relations between each of the positive Fourfold elements:

Gods(Jinn) --| Angels |-- Mortals

Gods(Jinn) --| Titans |-- Earth

Gods(Jinn) --| Olympus |-- Heaven

Earth --| Real City |-- Mortals

Earth --| Cloud Cuckoo Land (Air) |-- Heaven

Heaven --| Low Utopia |-- Mortals.

By looking at these mediations between the parts of the Fourfold, it is clear that the structure of the relations between the three cities is programmed into the distinction between the elements of the four fold. Here the Angels mediate between men and Jinn who are

opposites of each other. We can see the other Fourfold as the faces of this tetrahedron of concepts.

Mortals -- HEAVEN -- Gods --> Fate : Abyss

Mortals -- EARTH -- Gods --> Justice : Covering

Heaven -- MORTALS -- Earth --> Persuasion:
Night

Heaven -- GODS -- Earth --> Constraint : Chaos

Here it is unclear exactly what the mediated relations are indicating. Heaven mediates between Mortals and Gods. This gives us Fate, as the Chinese have always called the Mandate of Heaven. From out of the Groundlessness comes a destiny. Earth mediates between Mortals and Gods. Earth covers over the injustice of the world. Unmarked graves have always symbolized this covering over of the injustice in the intime realm by the earth until everything is revealed in endless time. Mortals mediate between Heaven and Earth. This mediation is clearest at night when we see the stars and planets and moon, but is still clear in the day when we see the sun. The lights of heaven revolve above the earth which man watches as he stands on the earth. Gods mediate between Heaven and Earth. They provide the constraints that hold the universal structure together and away from chaos. Each of these mediations probably have a counterpart in

Action, Longing and Desire.

But let's take the hint of Aristophanes and explore the mythology regarding Tereus (watcher) who, turned into the Hoopoe, seems so benign in our play. He coveted his wife's sister and did injustice by hiding his wife away, telling his father-in-law that she was dead. When the father-in-law sent for the younger sister, he raped her and cut out his wife's tongue. She communicated with her sister by way of a message woven into the bridal gown. Tereus, also reacting to an oracle that said his son would die by a close relative, unjustly killed his own brother. The wife killed her son and served his meat to the father. When Tereus was about to kill the sisters with the same axe that he had killed his own brother, they were all turned into birds.

Notice how this story is similar to the cosmogony that Aristophanes concocts. There is a transgression of boundaries within the dark Fourfold like the transgression of the boundaries between sisters. This is prompted by desire. Out of the transgression comes the creation of something mute, in both cases (the egg or the wife of Tereus). That mute thing is transformed into the vengeful wife, or eros, which again transgresses the boundary by killing the son or mingling with Chaos in Tartarus. From that second transgression there is a

creation of birds. This parallelism is too conspicuous to be an accident. Here Eros becomes the agent of destruction rather than creation. Persuasion and warning both are prevented by the cutting out of the tongue of the wife. But the warning is woven into the wedding dress instead. The weaving into the wedding dress is clearly the weaving of fate. The wife is held incognito, and this is constraint. The whole scene revolves around injustice between siblings, parents, husbands and wives. It is a scene of presencing and revealing of the most dreadful kind. This twisted, distorted revealing stands behind the whole of the Birds as an undercurrent that would have been known to the audience. It is the unexplored basement which the whole play glosses over. But just as the positive Fourfold of Heidegger assumes the dark fourfold of Aristophanes, the dark deeds of the Hoopoe are never mentioned within the glossing superficiality of the play. It is this corrupting influence that has already appeared among the birds and taught them speech. The two Athenians merely come to impose a new pattern whose groundwork has already been laid by Tereus. Just as the terrible man and his women were turned into birds, so the birds are transformed into the likeness of conquering Indo-European minded men.

Out of the dark fourfold of Chaos, Abyss, Night and Covering comes Eros, which gives rise to the lighting.

The darkening is the opposite of the lightening, whether that darkening be by the removal of light, by the advent of disorder, by the intentional hiding, or by or by the absence of foundation. This dark fourfold lies beneath the four elements of the Autopoietic unity.

Holoid --- Ephemeron --> Covering

Novum --- Epoch --> Abyss

Essencing --- Eventivity --> Night

Holon --- Integra --> Chaos

The *holoid* and the *ephemeron* are both different types of covering which hide and distort the natural variety. The *novum* and *epoch* are different aspects of the Abyss which pull the carped out from under all the beings within the world when the world changes its gestalt patterning. *Essencing* and *eventivity* are an absence of light. They focus on the beings and conceal Being. The *holon* and the *integra* are the opposite of chaos. Chaos is artificial disordering. The *holon* and the *integra* attempt to hold that disordering at bay by conferring on the part wholeness and uniqueness with the patterning of natural variety. Each of the different elements of the negative fourfold speak to us of suppression; either by withholding light, concealment, disordering, or producing a vacancy. Thus, we see that the fourfold of the autopoietic unity

stands between the Heideggerian Fourfold and the dark fourfold of Aristophanes. It allows the egg of eros, as a unity, to exist. The dark fourfold gives rise to this unity by the transgression of boundaries within the unconscious of concealment. A-lethia means uncovering. In the movement of uncovering, there is a moment before the arising of the positive Fourfold of the world, which turns into the Framing, in which the four aspects of suppression appear positive. That moment of hesitation, called by Heidegger Appropriation, is the place of autopoietic unity. From that point of perfect balance between the negative and positive Fourfolds, the egg or autopoietic unity was produced. It is no less based on Eros than the unfolded world of the Fourfold. However, here the energies are folded in on each other and perfectly balanced between the first and second transgressions. These two transgressions are still metaphysical. We are still speaking here of transcendence, of victory in war and the practice of a brutal form of slavery in peace. The darkness falls upon what is covered. This is a double darkness, so conspicuously present in all the Indo-European actions in which they do not even know they are missing balance. Tereus imprisons his wife and calls her dead. Likewise, this is a double injustice, to her and her family. The offspring of this double injustice, double darkness, is Eros. Tereus rapes the sister. The act of misplaced potency is mirrored by the rendering impotent

of the tongue of the wife. The wife communicates through a message woven in cloth. This weave is the seal of fate. The oracle speaks and is misinterpreted, leading to the unjust death of the brother. Then when the message is read by the sister, the action of the wife against the father, through the son, is the ultimate betrayal of the wife toward the betraying husband. The double darkness is followed by reciprocal revenge. At the moment before that revenge, they are all turned into species of birds: Hoopoe, Nightingale, Swallow. The quality inherent in the nature of each of these birds was seen as a pattern which the mythology unfolds. Like seeing the mythology written in the stars, seeing it written in the species of birds serves as a reminder of the mythic injustices that underlie the city of the birds infected by the crimes of men. The birds saw the two Athenians as wolves. This initial appraisal has been repeated over and over as colonists have moved out and around the world. But in each case, the colonialists persuade some of the members of each race to betray their own kind. The corrupting influence of Tereus was to teach the birds language; he gave them a tongue just as he took away that of his wife. The once they had language, then the Athenians could persuade them to be unjust to mortals and gods alike and erect a barrier between heaven and earth.

The birds succeed in walling off their realm and preventing the gods from receiving their sacrifices so that the Gods eventually give over their power to the Birds. This was symbolized by Peithetaeterus marrying Sovereignty at the behest of Zeus. The rest of the play works out the logic of the transfer of power to the birds from the gods with scenes where Posiedon and Heracles appear to negotiate. Also, a flock of humans attempt to enter the city and are turned away, thus saving it from becoming corrupted like the real city. One of those who attempts to enter is the statute vendor:

Statute-seller: "But if an offense be committed by a Much Cuckoovain against an Athenian --"

Peithetaeterus: "What, more sinister documents?"

Statute-seller: "Buy my lovely by-laws! Statutes, regulations, decrees! Come on, sir, you'll be wanting new laws here -- I've got just what you want."

Peithetaeterus: "What's that?"

Statute-seller: "Article 6. Furthermore, the weights, measures and currency of the Much Cuckoovians shall be identical with those of the Olophyxians."

Peithetaeterus: "I'll Olophyx you if you don't clear off."

Statute-seller: "Here, what are you doing?"

Peithetaeterus: "Take your laws away and be quick about it, or I'll give you some laws you won't care for."¹³

Think of Plato as that statute seller. Plato wishes to impose law on the lower utopia, perhaps running the risk of making it like Athens itself, where the citizens engage in litigation continually. But both Plato and Peithetaeterus have the same end in mind, which is to keep the lower utopia pure of the corruption of the real city. Plato wishes to return to the pristine state of the laws of Solon who was his forbearer. His laws attempt to simplify and rationalize the laws made by man and imposed on himself.

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