
It behooves us to look inside the household (oikos) before we pass on into the domain of transcendence beyond the household within the polis. We have had some small view of its internals from the Odyssey which showed us the four main constituents beyond the husband. They are the wife, the son, the housekeeper who guards the stores, and the farmer who produces the agricultural products. These are the remnants of the household which Odysseus finds on his return, and which he unites again. These structures within the household preserve the major functions. There is the reproductive function, and the storage or preserving functions, which are in the domain of the wife. There is the function of lineage preservation, and the productive function, which are in the domain of the husband. In the absence of Odysseus, his son stands in for him in the function of maintaining the lineage of the household. Note that two functions are productive either of fruits of the earth or fruits of the human body. Two functions are preservative, either of the fruits of labors that are stored up for later use within the house, or

the best fruits of reproduction and education within the house to take over the lineage of the household. Genealogies were very important to the ancient Greeks as to many traditional cultures. Continuity of the patriarchal line of descent maintains the connection of an individual household with the continuity of the species. This line of descent also represents those who will fight with others from the city for the polis defending the collective households. The preservation of the lineage means preservation and rendering safe all those within the household. Thus, the lineage is the connection between the household and the city. It is what is displayed outwardly and most proudly within the city by the males of the household. On the other hand, the reproductive function of the women is what is most hidden within the household, to the extent that upperclass women do not leave the household, staying all the time indoors, and out of sight. The agricultural and preservative functions may be split off from the immediate family members and assigned to trusted servants. These, likewise, are seen as male and female functions. Preserving may mean also preparing, taking raw materials and turning them into clothing or food or other types of articles produced by women. The household binds men and women together, but at the same time distinguishes them from each other. Each rules over an arena of production and preservation. What the one produces, the other preserves. This means

that the two functions are interlocking, not merely complementary. It is something more integrated than complementary opposites. In fact, it is a unity based on the autopoietic ring of Aphrodite which is bound by the non-nihilistic distinction of marriage.

One of the few views inside the household of ancient Greece is the idealized picture presented to us by Xenophon in Oikonomikos (The Estate-manager). This a Socratic dialogue on estate management produced by a contemporary of Plato. As we have nothing comparable from Plato, it is only right that we look at this dialogue for some indication of the inner workings of the household (oikos). As it turns out, this fits our needs very well as it is a conservative gentleman's guide to the right way to run an oikos. We do not read it to find out what Socrates thought about the matter, as it is fairly clear that Xenophon is putting his own ideas in the mouth of Socrates. But we have not been distinguishing between Plato's and Socrates' thoughts up to this point either. For us, Socrates is a fictional character only. The fact that the Athenian Stranger and Socrates act so similar is enough for us to identify them. They are masks for Plato who speaks through them, much like Xenophon, who appropriates one of these masks himself. Putting words into Socrates' mouth seems to become a major pastime by students after his death. This is probably because

Socrates spent his whole career drawing out others. His students saw him as a vessel for the expression of themselves. Unfortunately, this leaves us with little idea what Socrates himself might have thought, beyond a few broad generalizations. The name Socrates covers over the origin of moral philosophy. Only through speculation is it possible to reach toward that lost origin. But if we forget the debate and again apply our ad hoc methods of hermeneutics, phenomenology, dialectics, and structuralism, then we begin to see the broad outlines of the foundations Western worldview which are writ large through the presuppositions of the writers from this age. We study them because so much of our worldview is derived from, or refined through, these sources.

The first conversation in the dialogue is between Socrates and Critobulus. Within the dialogue, a earlier second conversation is recounted by Socrates which occurred between himself and Ischomachus, a truly good man. In approaching these two parts of the dialogue on estate management, we will follow our usual practice of skipping from point to point depending on the significance with which a particular passage strikes us, for there is no reason to recount what anyone can read for themselves. As we read, we are attempting to see the pattern which underlies these texts from Greek antiquity. It is amazing that Plato's texts are constructed

so that every small detail means something, and the smallest detail may reveal a piece of the puzzle. But the pattern was not just a construct of that one individual because when we look at the *Odyssey* and the works of Aristophanes, we see the same pattern articulated in different ways. So too, with Xenophon. Because we are not interested in the content itself but only the way the content indicates the same metaphysical regime underlying that content, the pieces fit together in an astounding way. And our purposely ad hoc method uses what it sees as necessary from all the disciplines. Our ad hoc method is phenomenological because we always look for what the phenomenon has to say to us in the way it comes into being. Our ad hoc method is Structural in that it is constantly looking for underlying patterns. Our ad hoc method is Hermeneutic in that it takes the text as a whole and moves between the images attempting to see the significance they lend themselves. Our ad hoc method is Dialectical in that we are always looking at the relations between part and whole. Our ad hoc method is inspired by Heuristic Research in that it continuously attempts to act as a midwife for new ways of seeing the kaleidoscope of texts and their hypertextual linkages. A method of no-method, which means always looking afresh at the material, taking all the sidetracks, becoming lost and attempting to see the hidden pattern in the lostness itself. In this spirit, we jump into this dialogue of

Xenophons with both feet, attempting to understand the nature of the household as well as possible before we move to the superstructure of the offices in the city, and the household becomes permanently lost to view.

The first part of the dialogue is a clever conversation between Socrates and Critobulus that is almost as good as we get in Plato. Socrates wraps Critobulus around his own words quite deftly. The whole point of the conversation is the definition of assets. Assets are what may be made use of for one's own good. Thus, what one owns cannot always be an asset. In fact, one's enemies may be of more use than anything else.

“So it follows from your argument that enemies, too, are assets for someone who is capable of deriving benefit from them.”

“I agree.”

“Therefore, it is the job of a good estate-manager to know how to make use of enemies, too, in such a way that benefit is derived from them.”

“Indubitably.”¹

I think the significance here is not merely a theoretical point. I believe it is clear that the view of the Greeks is that what is within the household, i.e. women and slaves,

1. The Estate-manager Xenophon p291

are enemies. The Greek man must learn to use these enemies within to the best advantage for himself. Whatever he can use to his own benefit are assets, but whatever he has that cannot be used to his benefit are not assets, and may actually be detrimental in spite of being valuable and useful to others. Those who do not use their property to their advantage, including women and slaves, become slaves themselves.

“Of course they have masters,” said Socrates. After all, they pray for happiness and want to do things from which they might derive good, but are prevented from doing these things by their rulers.”

“And who are these invisible rulers?” asked Critobulus.

“They’re not invisible at all.” said Socrates. “They are exceedingly conspicuous. And even you must see that they are the worst kind of rulers, if you regard laziness and mental flabbiness and irresponsibility as bad. There are others too -- *mistresses* and deceitful with it -- who pretend that they are pleasures, such as gambling and pointless parties; as time goes on, it becomes clear even to the victims of their seduction that they are afflictions disguised as pleasures, and that their rulership prohibits beneficial activity.”

“But there are other people, Socrates, who do not have these masters to prevent them from working, but who in fact are very enthusiastic about work and about arranging incomes and are surrounded by difficulties.”

“These people are slaves too,” said Socrates, “with very harsh masters set over them; some are ruled by gluttony, some by sex, some by drink, some by stupid and costly ambitions. These are such harsh rulers of people they govern that, as long as they see them flourishing and capable of work, they force them to take the fruits of their labors and spend them on their own desires; and when they see that old age has made them incapable of work, they abandon them to wretched senility, and try to enslave others instead. No, it’s just as crucial to fight for one’s freedom against these opponents, Critobulus, as it is to fight against those who try to enslave you by force of arms. In fact, when people are enslaved by enemies who are truly good, they are often forced by their masters’ reprimands to become better and to live the rest of their lives with fewer constraints. But *mistresses*, like the ones I’ve mentioned, never stop preying on people’s bodies and minds and estates as long as they rule them.”²

2. The Estate-manager Xenophon page 292, my emphasis

Here all the things which prevent good use of one's own property that comes from one's self are represented as female masters of men. Women and slaves which belong to a man are the enemies within and the portions of one's self that prevent one from controlling these, and making them useful (like laziness, mental flabbiness, irresponsibility, gluttony, sexual addiction, drunkenness, ambition, etc.) are seen as female rulers. Thus, all the factors which cause things to be un-useful to the man of the household, such as the defects in character of his wife and servants as well as his own, are seen to be from the feminine side of things. The struggle for mastery, utilitarianism, and freedom of action on the part of men operates within this realm.

Next in the dialogue, Socrates contrasts his own contentment with the avarice of Critobulus. Critobulus has over a hundred times more than Socrates but still needs more. So even if the invisible rulers are under control, there is the natural avarice of men which draws them to want more and more because they must provide more and more for others. Those others, like the suitors in the *Odyssey*, only know how to take, and when Critobulus might be in need, they will act as if they no longer know him. Here we are looking at a particular household which is caught in a spiral of inflation, constantly needing more and more in order to function

within the order of the city, whereas Socrates' household, on the other hand, may remain untouched by this positive feedback situation. The city, instead of sucking the life out of the household of Socrates, supports it and gives to it rather than takes. The difference is one of image within the city of the two men. One is the Sage and the other is the one who sees himself, and is seen by others, as important. The Sage is the source of wisdom, so he receives material goods, in return, from the city. He is the one, like Heraclitus and Democritus, who is concerned with educating his fellow citizens. The self-important one must conversely give material goods to the city because he is a sink of wisdom. The exchange of inward and outward must be conserved.

A city of households, like those of Socrates, might be able to maintain themselves in equilibrium as is necessary in Plato's lower utopia. But the tendency is to be like the household of Critobulus. Each household is either on the increase or decline. Households tend toward the extremes in this mainly because generally those who have get more, and those who don't have don't get³. The balance of wealth always unchecked leads to extreme imbalance. Capitalism is the name of this dynamic imbalance taken to extreme. All the laws relating to the four classes attempts to check this growth and decline by

3. See COMPLEXITY by M. Mitchell Waldrop (Simon & Schuster 1992)

setting upper and lower limits. But those external limits say nothing about what causes these variations. They are produced, not by a psychology, but by an “oikiology.” The oikos is a little system composed of ruler and ruled parts. When the proper ruler is instead ruled, then decline results from his unfreedom. But when the proper ruler actually rules the domain, then increase is the result. The “feminine” and “slavish” attributes that cause decline may come from the difficulties imposed by an unloyal wife and unruly servants, or from the dominance of the harsh mistresses which cause men to destroy themselves. In either case, it is the feminine, slavish and barbarian side of things that is to blame, whether they were internal or external. (Slaves were barbarians.) In the oikiology, the feminine comes from both these directions, not just from the outside as we might expect.

This fact that the feminine comes from both inside and outside to engulf the manly control of the oikos, is very significant. It makes us realize that the inside of the oikos is very much like Atlantis, the third best city. In that city, the positive and negative fourfold were balanced. As we look into it, we see that in the Oikos these fourfold structures which represent the essence of man and woman are also balanced. Each produces what the other preserves. And we also see that it is not men and women per se that are at stake here, but the fourfolds and their

intermingling. Men and women are markers, beacons, or signs that ride on the surface of this dynamic interface between opposite ontological regimes. The negative fourfold is the mask of pure immanence. The positive fourfold is the mask of pure transcendence. These pass through each other within the formation of the household. That men embody one and women the other, is merely a means of expressing by one of a myriad interlocking discursive distinctions the process of interface, interlocking, and passing through. The fascinating thing is that the higher utopia disgorges itself of the residue of Atlantis, and because of that, becomes one big household as shown by Praxagora. Ultimately, Atlantis and the higher utopia, Kaliopolis, are indistinguishable, and thus nihilistic opposites. The lower utopia, on the other hand, attempts to balance these two opposites in a dynamic which limits the negative fourfold to the inside of the households while preserving the realm of pure transcendence in the interspace between the household and the city. When we look on the household from an ontological perspective, we see the interplay of positive and negative fourfolds as primary. It could have been expressed in any way using different kinds of cultural signs. But it settled in Greek society on the relation between men and women as the principle signifiers. What we must take from this is not that there is a war between the sexes as projected on the Amazons by the

Greeks, or that the feminine has been culturally despised and thwarted. This is obviously true. But we must realize that these actors were engaged in the intertwining of positive and negative ontologies where the negative is no less important than the positive. But that these are nihilistic opposites which are too dark and too light, shows us clearly that the nihilistic view of the world was well entrenched at this time and has only become more entrenched as time has passed.

The brilliance of Greece comes from the intermingling and crossover between these two dominant ontological regimes which were polarized by the Greeks. And to make a very unpopular speculation, I believe that this whole formulation owes much to the Zoroastrian dualism as its foundation. Greece was a backwater of the Persian empires. The major tone of the region was set by the Persians with whom the Greeks were peripheral players on the stage of history in those times. The Zoroastrian dualism was the predominant view of the world which saw everything in existence as a war between the powers of light against the dark. The Greeks themselves had a culture that was a mixture of Indo-European and Semitic influences. We see these clearly in the various mythic complexes. But what we do not see there is the direct influence of Zoroastrianism. What little evidence there is for influence on the Presocratics from the Zoroastrianism

has been ignored. But I would say that once the relation of the positive and negative fourfolds has been discerned strung throughout the mythic complexes as well as Greek culture, then it will become clear that it is in this guise that the war between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman became inculcated as an organizing structure to the cultural domain of the Greek hinterland. In this way, the Greeks were merely viewing their own mixed heritage from the perspective of the dominant culture of their time. That viewpoint served to polarize and organize the cultural elements around the conflict between light and darkness, and those became aligned with male/female and other distinctions within the Greek spinoff culture. Though the Persians did not succeed in imperial struggles to subdue Greece, their influence was so great that they supplied the model around the universe of discourse, and discursive distinctions were organized. This is why the household is seen as a war between the light (positive fourfold) and dark (negative fourfold). What is at stake in the darkness is the covering, hiding, preserving, engendering. What is at stake in the light is displaying, controlling, preserving, growing. The fact that these major poles of presencing conflict and must be contained in a dynamic balance within the restricted space of the household is very significant. This means the household itself has a metaphysical structure that cannot be covered by the gloss of Conceptual Being alone. Where the negative

fourfold exists, the rest of Primordial Being must appear. Conceptual Being cut off can only support the positive fourfold, and then only as a static purely present moment in time with illusory continuity. Outside the household, Ontological Monism may appear to rule, but it is constantly being undercut silently by the presence of the negative fourfold and the Ontological Dual within the city, in the dark corners of the household, kept out of view, but always there somewhere as the harsh mistress from within the self (fated), barbarian slave girl (constrained), legal wife (persuaded), girl child to be given away (dealt justly with).

Critobulus pesters Socrates to reveal why some are successful in farming and others are not.

“Well, I’ve seen both types -- I know them well -- but I am still just as far from joining the profit makers.”

“That’s because you watch them as you watch tragic and comic actors, which you do not do with a view to becoming a playwright, I imagine, but to enjoy what you see or hear. That’s how it should be, I suppose, since you don’t want to become a playwright; but since you are forced to be involved with stud-farming, don’t you think it would be stupid not to ensure that you tackle the business professionally, bearing in mind

especially that where horses are concerned, those whose use brings advantage are also those whose sale brings profit?”

“Are you suggesting that I break in horses when they’re young, Socrates?”

“No, of course not -- no more than I would suggest that you buy farm-hands and train them from childhood; but I think that there are times in the lives of both horses and people when immediate use can be made of them AND they can go on improving. Next, I can demonstrate that some people treat their wives in such a way that they gain their cooperation in the job of increasing their estates, but others treat their wives in a way guaranteed to maximize the destruction of their estates.”

“And should one attribute this to the husband or the wife, Socrates?”

“If a sheep is in a bad way,” replied Socrates, “we usually blame the shepherd; if a horse’s behavior is unruly, we blame the trainer. As for a wife, if she has faults even though her husband has tried to teach her virtue, then we would probably be fair to blame the wife; but if he doesn’t teach her what is truly good and then finds her ignorant of it, wouldn’t it be fair to blame the husband? Now

we're all friends here Critobulus, so you must be absolutely honest with us. Don't you entrust more of your affairs to your wife than anyone else?"

"Yes," he replied.

"And is there anyone to whom you speak less than you do to your wife?"

"There aren't many, if any."

"Didn't you marry her when she was very young indeed and had had the least possible experience of the world?"

"Yes, she was very young."

"So it would be far more remarkable for her to know how to speak or behave properly than for her to make mistakes."

"But what about the people you mentioned who have good wives, Socrates? Did they educate them by themselves?"

"There's nothing like inquiry. I'll get you to meet Aspasia, and she'll give you a far more knowledgeable account of all this than I can. My opinion is that when a wife is a good partner in the house, her contribution is just as beneficial as the husband's. For the entry of wealth into the house is generally due to the husband's activities, but

expenditure is generally due to the wife's housekeeping; if both of these jobs are done well, households flourish; but if they are done badly, households suffer. And if you feel a need to know about any other branch of knowledge, I think that I can direct you to someone who does an admirable job in it.”⁴

There are many points of interest in this passage. Critobulus is accused of treating his farming as something that is external to himself. Here, becoming professional means to begin to treat the estate-management as if it were something that one took seriously and endeavored to master. Thus, we see that there are those men who see themselves as one actor among many, and those who seek to become playwrights and bring all the players within themselves and harmonize their actions as well as taking responsibility for the course of events. Socrates is gently suggesting that Critobulus get serious if he wants to make a profit at his farming. But getting serious means taking control and achieving transcendence. It suggests that the other actors are mere phantoms of the imagination of the playwright with no will of their own only various types of naturally given characteristics to be molded into a suitable pattern by the master. Getting serious means producing a symbolic perspective that hovers above the whole

4. The Estate-manager Xenophon page 298-300

household and dominates it. It means producing a continuity which comes from the master and envelops all those within the household. It is a type of Charisma which is later in the dialogue seen as a god given gift.

The analogy of horse taming is used throughout for the act of bringing the chaotic household under control, and the essential act of taming is directed at the wife. Thus, the statement that Socrates is suggesting that he break his horses when young that seems like a non sequitur is really the first allusion to the training of the wife. The raising of farmhands from childhood is exactly what happens in the case of women. They were raised from childhood specifically to fulfill their role within the household. They move from one father to another, with marriage at an early age after everything had been done to keep them ignorant of the ways of the world. The idea was maximum pliability on marriage. The husband “broke the girl” by imprinting his own pattern on her innocent and unhewn character. But the taming of marriage took place based upon the initiation ceremonies of young men and young women which occurred outside the city. In those initiation ceremonies, there was an abyss between the house of the father and the house of the husband in which the young women and young warriors participated. The women themselves felt great anxiety over the change of living arrangements after

marriage, and this built into an hysteria. In order to be tamed, they must first become wild. The initiation ceremony outside the city allowed them to become bears, and deer, and other totem animals. It also gave them an essential encounter with the young warriors which they were rarely destined to marry. It was the moment of their freedom as they moved from one prison to another. As they tasted that freedom, the normally tame women, confined all their prior life, would be inflamed with a certain wildness that would lend the marriage a certain excitement. The problem was to manage the transition from the prison of the father's house, through the wilderness initiation, back to the new prison of the husband's house. If all did not go well, then the women might escape entirely to become Amazons. From the woman's point of view her whole "real" life actually occurred in the short period of initiation. From the husband's point of view, he gained a woman who was not completely broken of spirit, but whose spirit had been inflamed by new possibilities that needed to be channeled anew. The initiation completely broke the patterning of the imprisonment with the father. With that pattern broken by the initiation, the woman was at her maximum malleability. The woman's life was dominated by discontinuity between the regimes of two households. She actually crossed the liminal borders between households, ideally only once in her life. But the period

of disruption between household regimes was the vivid experience of initiation in the wilderness. Men, on the other hand, never left the household. They were part of the preservation of the lineage. Thus, this major discontinuity is never passed. Yet a different initiation was necessary to bond the men for battle and prepare them to be warriors in the wilderness beyond the city defending the polis. So the initiation of the young warriors had to occur at roughly the next highest age group at the same time as the initiation of the young girls. These initiations were mock group marriages, as usually it was older men destined to become the husbands of the girls. But in some cases these were probably real marriages arranged between the sons and daughters of warriors who were friends. In fact, the latter practice probably degenerated into merely mock marriages. The marriages appear to have been fifty boys and girls at a time. The control over the wilderness that was to be unleashed in these initiations was exerted through fear. From among the fifty, one couple were slated to meet their death. The myth of the Dannids reverses this. Forty-nine die, and one does not. There are other aspects of this initiation ceremony that will be discussed in the later parts of this series of essays. This is because the problem of what occurs in the initiation ceremony beyond the city is a mystery lost in the mists of time, but which is crucial for the understanding of the cracked

foundations of the Indo-European worldview. Here, we are concentrating on what occurs within the city, but eventually when this is well understood, we must leave the city and understand the dynamics between male and female in the wilderness. These two dynamics are complementary duals, and together reveal the complete dynamics of the Indo-European worldview. The rupture at the border of the city, at the spring, is the fundamental rupture which all other distinctions attempt to displace. This wild/tame boundary is the one which Morris Berman calls our attention to in his book Coming To Our Senses. But in his ontological naivete he renders this distinction as present-at-hand. We cannot even begin to understand what it means unless we push it back into the realm of Wild Being. There we see the cleft between the city and the wilderness as a deep abyss which all the forces of the positive and negative fourfold are lined up to defend, producing a stalemate reaching deep into the roots of the Indo-European worldview.

“. . .bearing in mind especially that where horses are concerned, those whose use brings advantage are also those whose sale brings profit?”

“. . . there are times in their lives of both horses and people when immediate use can be made of them AND they can go on improving. . .”

These two related statements seem strange. Socrates is saying that “especially for horses” usability is directly related to profitability. Then he goes on to extend this to humans as well, saying that there is a time when usability and improvement go hand in hand. The translator says that this means you should buy them in poor condition, improve their condition, and then resell them in better condition for a higher price, as Ischomachus later recommends for farms. But I do not think that this interpretation is correct because we do not get people and humans in poor condition, but only look for those in the best possible condition, as they are organisms, and a prior poor condition is very difficult to remedy. What this harkens back to for us is the whole concept of completion in the NOW. There is a time when things are ripe by nature. In that condition, for things you do not eat directly, but only use peripherally without destroying, then, there is a time when they are at their maximum usefulness and one can go on using them, and they continue to improve before they reach their maximum in usefulness and begin to decline. Women are certainly of this nature if you consider them to be basically for procreation. The man uses the woman by impregnating her, and then may continue to use her to maintain the lineage for some time. This is the time of her maximum worth. In the case of procreation, the use is in maintaining the lineage. A similar principle applies to

most things if you view them from a purely utilitarian basis. There is what we call the lifespan of a usable thing. During this lifespan maximum use can be made, and you can keep using them. The professional concentrates on this lifespan of use to the exclusion of the rest of the existence of the thing. In this way, a technological system is set up with its highlighting of a particular aspect of existence and the filtering of other parts of the world. Socrates is suggesting not that Critomachus concentrate on the time when the horses, farmhands, and wives are children before they are useful -- nor presumably when they are too old to be used -- but specifically on the interval of usefulness of each thing attempting to get the maximum out of it as possible. This is really a similar approach then to what we saw before where those who achieved completion did injustice to those before and after completion. Here, the arena of completion is highlighted because for all things in the household they have a period of maximum prolonged and immediate use which should be treated as the object of a rigorous discipline. What is not useful is disregarded and thus unjustly discarded as too early or too late to be useful. At this point, the reason for some people doing well and others not becomes clear. Those who do well apply *techne*, becoming professional at what they do. Applying *techne* opens up a different world within which the positive fourfold is transformed into the enframing. In

the enframing, too young/too old is contrast to usable. This highlighting that does injustice intrinsically as a means to squeezing a surplus or profit from things in the world replaces the mutual mirroring of the fourfold. Surplus is the result of injustice to the weak. This is because this surplus is really the provision of the weak which has been stolen. When the surplus is used as capital, it is used to create more surplus, turning back in on itself. Thus, the whole edifice of the Oedipus complex, explored by Deleuze and Guattari, is set up. The Oedipus complex stands in for ideation, for transcendence grounding itself.

Immediately after focus on injustice through implication by suggesting the technological control for usability of all things in the household, Socrates turns to the treatment of wives by husbands -- suggesting that there is a way that men might treat their wives to get maximum use out of them so that they will help increase rather than destroy the oikos. The next analogies are to animals again -- we will notice that this is a trend. In the Republic, when Socrates plunges into the second wave where women and children within Kaliopolis is discussed, there are copious references to animals. Shepherds are to blame when their sheep are in a bad way. So husbands are to blame when their wives are unusable, except with the caveat that if they tried to educate them and failed, then

the blame goes to the wife herself and is a flaw in the material to be worked. So with a woman, education is the key to making best use of her to the ends of the man. We should expect this with Socrates. For him, education is always the key. Much of the dialog focuses on what that education for women should be like. Ischomachus gives the model for this in his lectures to his wife. His wife, like that of Critomachus, is young and impressionable. He is at the advantage because he knows the world beyond the house. The education really brings something of that outer world into the house and attempts to implant it in the mind of the woman. It attempts to modify her nature as the one who embodies the negative fourfold and stands for pure immanence. Positive fourfold attempts to take over the realm of darkness within the household, bringing a nomos to the oikos through a logos that has all the aspects of Peitho.

Socrates mentions Aspasia when Critomachus asks where good wives come from. Plato tells us that this courtesan of Pericles was the teacher of Socrates in Rhetoric. A speech of hers is reported by Socrates in the Menexenus. It is a wonderful example of rhetoric, in this case speaking of the dead warriors fallen in battle. In that speech, Aspasia says after recounting the great history of Athens in war and admonishing the children and parents of the dead to carry their grief lightly for the sake of the

fallen:

“This, O ye children and parents of the dead, is the message which they bid us deliver to you, and which I do deliver with the utmost seriousness. And in their name I beseech you, the children, to imitate your fathers, and you, parents, to be of good cheer about yourselves, for we will nourish your age, and take care of you both publicly and privately in any place in which one of us may meet one of you who are the parents of the dead. And the care of you which the city shows, you know yourselves, for she has made provision by law concerning the parents and children of those who die in war; the highest authority is specially entrusted with the duty of watching over them above all other citizens, and they will see that the fathers and mothers have no wrong done to them. The city herself shares in the education of the children, desiring as fair as it is possible that their orphanhood may not be felt by them. While they are children, she is a parent to them, and when they have arrived at man’s estate, she sends them to their several duties, in full armor clad; and bringing freshly to their minds the ways of their fathers, she places in their hands the instruments of their fathers’ virtues. For the sake of the women, she would have them first begin to rule over their own houses arrayed in the strength of

the arms of their fathers. And as for the dead, she never ceases honoring them celebrating, in common for all, rites that become the property of each, and in addition to this holding gymnastic and equestrian contests, and musical festivals of every sort. She is to the dead in the place of a son and heir, and to their sons in the place of a father, and to their parents and elder kindred in place of a guardian -- ever and always caring for them. Considering this, you ought to bear your calamity the more gently, for this you will be most endeared to the dead and to the living, and your sorrows will heal and be healed. And now do you and all, having lamented the dead in common according to the law, go your ways.

You have heard, Menexenus, the oration of Aspasia the Milesian.

MENEXENUS: Truly, Socrates, I marvel that Aspasia, who is only a woman, should be able to compose such a speech -- she must be a rare one.”⁵

Here the woman is at once present, yet absent. In the speech, Socrates is relating it to another man. In the speech itself, there is an address to those who are prior to and after completion, the children of the deceased and

5. Plato MENEXENUS page198, 24Collected Dialogues

their parents. The crux of the speech is the promise that the city will take care of them, both acting for the deceased warriors. Thus, the city becomes the one who cares for the weak, standing in for the warriors who have been killed at the height of their completion. Here the city becomes the one who nurtures, called “she” over and over, and thus becoming a mask for the woman Aspasia herself. But exactly what is missing is any mention of the rights of the wives of the soldiers. The wives are not mentioned at all, not even in passing. So here we have a woman who is silent about women when she composes her oration delivered by a man. I think that silence is significant. It is parallel to the talk about use. The woman is used by the man when she is in the zone of completion, but on his death does not appear among those who the city will nurture, even in a speech written by a woman. This silence, non-appearing, shows that the woman is in her essence the embodiment of the negative fourfold, pure immanence, that which does not appear. She is used, but when the user disappears, she is not mentioned as those who will be secured. We suppose she is expected to marry other men and join other households, leaving her children and husband’s parents to the city’s care. How about her care? She is not in any position to care for her children or the parents of her dead husband. She has no independent action whatsoever. The city takes over her function of nourishing and care for the

elderly.

Aspsia is a rare woman. She is the one who teaches Socrates how to use the logos. She is a woman who educates the Sage rather than being educated by her husband. She prepares speeches that her husband is proud to deliver. She is a woman who has achieved the same stature of her husband without competing with him. Each shines in their own light, and together they complement each other. Socrates says that when a wife is a good partner, then her contribution is equal to the husband's. Socrates says Aspsia is more capable than he of saying where good women come from. But he goes on to comment that income is related to the man, while expenditure is related to the woman, and these must be harmonized for the household to run smoothly. Thus, the input and the output of the household is given their male and female valances. The increase of input and decrease of output causes surplus to occur. The opposite causes the eventual destruction of the house. Restricting outflow is part of the job of preservation. Increasing the inflow is part of becoming professional, applying techne, to production.

In section four of the dialogue is a discussion of the relation between agriculture and war, using the King of Persia as an example. Here, the complementarily

between agriculture and warfare is emphasized by showing how the King of Persia gave equal importance to both. The King boasts that he does agricultural work himself in his enclosed gardens called pairi-daeza (from which our word paradise comes). This short description of the walled gardens gives us a different view of the estates as an attempt to create paradise on earth. Bringing nature into a cultured state in order to produce the most harmonious interface for mankind -- this is a completely different motive for organizing the household from the profit-oriented utilitarian motives underlined by Xenophon's Socrates.

The rest of the conversation with Critomachus sings the praises of agricultural pursuits. Critomachus presses Socrates to tell him how to do well in agriculture. So, the dialogue moves on, then, to the conversation between Socrates and Ischomachus, a truly good man. This conversation reveals an idealized conversation between a man and his wife concerning their joint duties in running the household. Ischomachus, at the beginning of the conversation, says that he spends all his time outside because his wife is perfectly capable of running the household by herself. Socrates asks him how she learned to do that.

“How on earth could she know that when I received her, Socrates?” he asked. “She wasn't

yet fifteen years old when she came to me, and in her life up till then considerable care had been taken that she should see and hear and discover as little as possible. Don't you think one should be content if all she knew when she came was how to turn wool into a cloak, and all she'd seen was how wool-spinning is assigned to the female servants? I was content Socrates," he added, "because when she came, she'd been excellently coached as far as her appetite was concerned, and that seems to me to be the most important training, for the husband as well as the wife."⁶

Here we see ignorance on the part of the young woman was an essential ingredient in her make-up. She was seen as essentially raw material for the man to impose his will upon. Ischomachus goes out of the way to note how his wife was "good" material to start with, having been schooled in the control of her appetite and knowing how to spin wool. Ischomachus starts to train her, first by sacrificing to the gods along with his wife who vowed to become a model wife. Ischomachus says he "waited until she'd been broken in and was tame enough for a conversation" before he spoke to her. Here, again, the image of taming the woman. The woman is the embodiment of the wild. She is the wild one within the household who threatens the city from within. Even a

6. The Estate Manager Xenophon page 311-2

woman who vowed to be a model wife needs to be tamed. Taming obviously refers to the initiation of sexual relations. Significantly, Ischomachus begins by asking his wife why her “parents gave you to me?” He says that surely each could have easily found someone to share their beds. It was for something else that they got married. It was because Ischomachus was looking for the best person to share his home and children with, and because her parents had her interests at heart. Thus, it is established from the beginning that marriage is about more than sexual relations, even though taming must occur before a home can be set up.

“But what we share now is this home of ours, and we share it because I make all my income available for both of us, and you have deposited all that you brought with you in the same common pool. There is no need to tote up which of us has made the greater contribution quantitatively, but we must appreciate that whichever of us is the better partner contributes more qualitatively.”⁷

Here we finally get some insight into what Xenophon thinks is the essence of the household, and he defines it as a “common pool” of resources. Ischomachus goes on to say that both of them must act responsibly “to ensure that their property is in the best possible condition and is

7. The Estate Manager Xenophon page 313

increased as much as fair and honest dealings permit.” So the goal is to preserve and make grow the common pool of resources. The wife understands how she can preserve, but not how she can increase the pool. So Ischomachus goes on to describe her contribution as being the same as the queen bee in the hive.

“What talents do you mean?” she asked.

“Ones which, in my opinion,” I said, “are far from worthless -- unless the jobs over which the queen bee of a hive presides are worthless! I’ll tell you what I’m getting at, my dear. I think that the gods exercised especially acute discernment in establishing the particular pairing which is called ‘male and female,’ to ensure that, when the partners cooperate, such a pair may be of the utmost mutual benefit. In the first place, this pairing with each other is established as a procreative unit so that the animal species might not die out. In the second place, human beings, at any rate, are supplied with the means to have supporters in their old age as a result of this pairing. In the third place, human life, unlike that of other animals, which live in the open, obviously require shelter. But if people are to have something to store in this shelter, then they need someone to work out in the open: ploughing, sowing, planting, and pasturing are all open-air

jobs, and they are the sources of the necessities of life. Now, when these necessities have been bought under cover, then in turn there is a need for someone to keep them safe and to do the jobs for which shelter is required. Looking after newborn children requires shelter, as does making bread from corn and clothes from wool.”

“Since both of these domains -- indoor and outdoor -- require work and attention, then God, as I see it, directly made woman’s nature suitable for the indoor jobs and tasks, and man’s nature suitable for the outdoor ones. For he made the masculine body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat and travel and military expeditions, which implies that he ordained the outdoor work of man; and God seems to me to have assigned the indoor work to woman, since he made the female body less capable in these respects. And knowing that he had made it the woman’s natural job to feed newborn children, he apportioned to her greater facility for loving newborn infants than he did to man. And because he had assigned to the woman the work of looking after the stores, God, recognizing that timidity is no disadvantage in such work, gave a larger share of fearfulness to woman than he did to man. And knowing that it would also be necessary for the one who does the outdoor work to provide

protection against potential wrongdoers, he gave him a greater share of courage. But because both sexes need to give as well as receive, he shared memory and awareness between them both, and consequently you wouldn't be able to say whether the male or the female sex has more of these. He also shared between them both the ability to be suitably responsible, and made it the right of whichever of them, the man or the woman, is better at this to reap more of its benefits. Insofar as the two sexes have different natural talents, their need for each other is greater, and their pairing is mutually more beneficial, because the one has the abilities the other lacks.”⁸

Here we see the complementarity between man and woman made explicit. The natural differences between them are used as a means of justifying the cultural roles assigned to each. The major distinction is between work indoors assigned to woman and work out of doors assigned to man. The argument is that each sex is naturally fitted to do their respective assigned tasks, and that this assignment has been made by the gods. In the next paragraph he argues that society also supports this arrangement which causes the household to come into existence. The first reason for the household is that procreation is based on this unity. The second is that

8. The Estate manager Xenophon page 313-4

people need support in their old age. Each generation looks after the next. The parents do justice to their children by taking care of them when they are young, and the children then reciprocate by taking care of the parents in their old age. But the third point is that the human needs shelter. If they are going to have something to “bring into” the shelter, then someone must work outside to get it, and then someone else must be inside to store and protect what is brought in. In this way, the two kinds of complementary production are related to each other. They form a balanced symmetry. And this is very important for the Greeks. There is a balanced symmetry like the golden mean between the roles of men and women. The golden mean makes one side of the ratio naturally bigger. So it is with the relations between men and women. Since the outside beyond the confines of the house is bigger, more dangerous, more difficult, and than the inside of the house the men have a natural advantage and dominance over women. Each is expected to inhabit their realms and harmoniously interface and integrate their roles and responsibilities to make the household work. And that work involves the increase of the common pool of resources within the household. Ischomachus goes on to show how the work of the woman does is like the queen bee.

“How are the queen bee’s tasks similar to the ones I should do?” asked my wife.

“In that although she stays in the hive,” I replied, “she doesn’t allow the bees to be idle: those whose duty it is to work outside, she sends out to their work. She has acquaints herself with everything that every bee brings into the hive, receives it and keeps it safe until it is required; when the time comes for it to be used, she distributes a fair proportion to each bee. She also oversees the construction of the honeycomb in the hive, making sure that it is constructed correctly and quickly; and she looks after the growing brood, making sure that it reaches maturity. When it does so, and the youngsters are capable of working, she sends them out to form a colony, with a queen to rule the company.”

For us the analogy of the queen bee is very fortunate. This is because we have already seen that in the Odyssey in the cave of the nymphs which reiterated the Indo-European primal scene, there were bees in the cave. So we know that bees were an important addition to this image for the Greeks. Here, we see another aspect of that image being exploited in order to make the oppressed woman appear as if her lot were the best possible one, given her natural abilities. Ischomachus has found a clever sophistry to encourage his wife by persuasion to fulfil the role assigned by society. She has to imagine herself a queen in her household. She rules over

everything that is “inside.” However, if we throw our minds back to the cave of the nymphs, we see the parallels. There are the amphoras that hold the hives with honey and are like the cells that the bees themselves make in the comb. The amphora is the storage jar within the house, like the cell is a storage container in the comb. The wife comes knowing how to weave, and the nymphs, too, weave their purple cloth. The cave is a shelter for the nymphs, as the house is a shelter for the human woman. Bees do indeed have queen bees that are the center of their society, even if they do not do exactly the tasks Ischomachus describes. In that society, the queen bee is the center of the reproductive powers of the hive. To what extent she orders the hive, or is ordered by it, is debateable. But for Ischomachus, the relation between taking in, preserving, ordering, and justly distributing is the key role he assigns the woman. And his analogy is a clever way to make it look as if that is a gift of responsibility for the woman which will make her proud and happy in her role. He notes that the queen bee never leaves the hive except to move the whole colony, and that new queens will be established if the hive expands to new colonies. The matriarchal basis of this analogy is clear. You get the image of society expanding by the establishment of new queens in their own households. Men, especially the servants, are the working drones.

The analogy to bees is a complex one. It allows us to see that the cave of the nymphs is a surrogate for the household. Storage and Weaving are sheltered. The olive trees that are on the farm are the domain of men. Together, men and women, like the Tree and Well, fit together into a whole picture. From the perspective of the right-thinking woman, she is the center of this whole activity, even though superficially it appears that she is a cultural prisoner.

“And the most gratifying thing of all will be if you turn out to be better than me, and make me your servant. This will mean that you need not worry that, as the years pass, you will have less standing in the household; instead you will have grounds for believing that, as you grow older, you will have more standing in the household, in proportion to the increase in your value to me as a partner and to our children as a protector of the home. For it is virtue rather than physical beauty of youth that increases true goodness in human life.”⁹

These words seem to suggest that perhaps this is not mere sophistry on the part of Ischomachus. It is apparent that women may reach the status, like that of Aspasia or the Queen of Schiera, in which they rule through the respect

9. The Estate manager; Xenophon page 316-7

they are held in by the people. This invites us to consider the extent to which the lot of women, which apparently had so little external freedom, may have offered other positive aspects that we cannot easily estimate from our non-traditional standpoint. This traditional culture had strong roles for men and women. It is the opposite of the ideal in modern cultures. It is hard for us to look at these traditional roles and see the positive aspects they might have had for all their lack of external freedom. But if we consider that internal freedom may be inversely proportional to external freedom, it is possible that these women enjoyed something that modern women cannot even begin to appreciate. As Germaine Greer saw the sisters of the traditional Indian family, she realized that Western women did not know what sisterhood really was. So traditional cultures made femininity something completely different from modern cultures. Here, we are not interested in which is right, though we suspect that the modern cultures concept is a distortion, based on the fact that everything else about it is a distortion. Here, we are only interested in how the signifiers of men and women line up to expose the basic distinctions that underlie the Western worldview as it were unfolding at this point in the history of the Aryan peoples. The distinction is very important. Woman is domesticated, like cattle, and then rendered wild, in order to be tamed. She becomes the center of the household which is her

prison, but from there has the possibility of attaining great respect to the extent she enters into her role and masters it. Affirming cultural values is rewarded. This is because the role of the woman underlies the whole of the society. She trains the children and holds together the household. She assumes the role of embodying the negative fourfold and making it a significant part of Greek society. The household is a shelter, a covering. Inside it is darkness cut off from the light of the outside world. The darkness allows the possessions to be hidden and kept secret. The covering allows them to be protected from the elements. The woman is more fearful and emotional than the man. This fearfulness is a sign of the chaotic emotions of the woman which may be given over to madness if infected by Dionysian frenzy. Dionysus is related to the holiness of the stream of life, flowing through humans. This stream crosses over the abyss of mortality and death to achieve immortality for the lineage. So the woman, by becoming completely her culturally defined role, brings the negative fourfold into proper balance with the positive fourfold. When this balance is not achieved, we only need to turn to tragedy, such as the Oresteia trilogy, to see what the results can be. When the powers of darkness within the household are unleashed, then there is terrible suffering and tragic consequences.

Ischomachus goes on to relate what occurred when he asked for something once which his wife could not produce. He uses this occasion to introduce order into the house. Ordering the house is likened to the packing of a ship in which it is crucial for everything to be well ordered and compactly stored as well as accessible. He likens it also to the organization of the army in readiness for war.

“What a fine impression is given by footwear of all different kinds when it is kept in rows! What a wonderful sight is clothing of all kinds, and blankets, and metalware, and tableware, when each item is stored separately! What a wonderful sight is the regular display of jars all kept nicely separate! ... This regularity explains why everything else too looks more beautiful when it is arranged and ordered. We are faced with a dance-troupe of utensils, and *the unobstructed space between them all is beautiful too*, just as the dancers in a circle-dance are not only beautiful to watch themselves, but *the space in the middle also looks beautiful and clear.*”¹⁰

We have seen that perhaps there was a kind of inner freedom which the women of Greek traditional society gained in spite of the outward imprisonment by taking on

10. The Estate-manager; Xenophon page 320; italics mine

their role and living it completely and in earnest. Part of that may have been the adoption of professionalism on the part of women who kept the home ordered, and thus imposed something of the positive fourfold within the domain of the negative fourfold. Ordering is something that displays the thing within the opening created by the positive fourfold between heaven and earth, mortals and immortals. Ischomachus describes the beauty of that space which is created when outward things are ordered. Greek architecture and vases display the epitome of such artful ordering. In that ordering, the earth comes and shows itself in the space of the heavens. The immortal and mortal aspects of things, their endless time and intimate dimensions become clear. Ischomachus wants to import this into the household which is essentially a disordered environment. It is disordered because it must endlessly display humanity at close quarters in their intimate interactions, which are anything but neat. However, every household has its own dynamic equilibrium between order and disorder. But it is clear that once Ischomachus begins to talk of order, we have left any hopes of discovering anything about the negative fourfold. Especially when *categories* of things are invented to make the ordering easier and inventories are taken. This cannot end except by the introduction of law within the household itself.

“Once all this was behind us, Socrates, I told my wife that none of it would be any good unless she made herself responsible for everything staying tidily arranged. I informed her that in countries with orderly constitutions, the citizens don’t stop at enacting a fine legal code, but also elect *guardians of the law* to keep an eye on things and to commend or punish legal or illegal actions respectively. *So I instructed my wife to think of herself as a guardian of the law within our household.* I told her to inspect our utensils, when she had a mind to do so, just as the commander of a garrison inspects his troops; and to assess whether or not each item was in good condition, just as the Council assesses the cavalry and their mounts; and to behave like a queen who, on the basis of the authority that is hers, commends and rewards anyone who deserves it, and reprimands and punishes when necessary. I also told her that, where our property was concerned, she shouldn’t be annoyed at my giving her more jobs to do than I gave the servants. I pointed out that servants’ involvement in their master’s assets is limited to fetching, looking after and protecting, but, unless their master lets them, they don’t have the right actually to make use of any of the assets -- it is only the master’s right to make use of anything he wants. Therefore, I

explained, the person who profits most if assets are safe and sound, but loses most if they are destroyed, should take the most responsibility for those assets.”¹¹

Socrates goes on to say that Ischomachus’ wife has the mind as good as a man’s. This is because the positive fourfold has been transferred into the oikos which normally only exists between the limits of oikos and polis. In the ideal society here described, there would not be any negative fourfold but everything would be light. This unfortunately does not describe human nature. The light and dark must balance each other. Especially when the light and dark are artificially produced nihilistic opposites. This means the balancing is more violent and sometimes results in the cancellation of everyone being dead at the end of the Tragedy.

Finally, there is a point of aesthetics where Ischomachus asks his wife to stop making herself up because those who make themselves up to appear to be something they are not, are less beautiful than those who allow their natural beauty to shine through. This is the earthen aspect that complements the order which is imposed in the positive fourfold. The immortals were sacrificed to at the beginning, and the whole discussion has been about the most intimate things concerning mortals and their

11. The Estate manager; Xenophon, page 323-4; italics mine

fated nature. Thus the whole of the speech by Ischomachus is an exercise in the importation of the positive fourfold into the realm of the household. The rest of the dialog concerns farming, and Ischomachus goes on to attempt to show Socrates that he already knows how to perform agriculture, that it is common knowledge with no secrets of the trade that are kept hidden. That part of the dialogue will not concern us, except to note that Ischomachus says in the end that even though agriculture is clear to everyone, only some people have the charisma that makes others want to follow them, and that this god given gift gives great advantage to some over others.

“Imagine someone who is completely unaware of what the land is capable of growing, and who can neither see its crops and tress, nor hear any accurate information about it. Even so, isn't it far easier for any person to find out about the land than about a horse, and isn't it far easier than finding out about a human being? For when the land shows something, it doesn't do so in order to deceive, but in a straight forward fashion it gives clear and accurate information about what it is and is not capable of. And I think that, because the land makes everything easy to know and learn, there is nothing better at exposing people who are bad rather than good. You see, it is not like the

other arts, where it is possible for people to plead ignorance if they fail to achieve anything; everyone knows that if you do good to the land, you will achieve good results, so failure on the land is a clear indictment of a bad character.”¹²

Ultimately, the land exposes goodness because it reflects the one who owns and works it. Those are good who can utilize their assets to make them increase. Goodness is increase of the common pool. That increase ultimately flows from the source of all good things. The household is the place to which the goods from the cornucopia flow, a reservoir from which they may be taken when they are needed and used. That reservoir sustains the ready-to-hand aspect of the using work of those in the household. The present-at-hand aspect is the ordered storeroom with its beautiful clarity of the openspaces between categorized and counted objects.

12. The Estate-manager; Xenophon; page 354

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