

DEMOCRITUS AND THE
SOURCES OF GREEK
ANTHROPOLOGY

THOMAS COLE



AMERICAN PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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AND THE SOURCES OF
GREEK ANTHROPOLOGY

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CONTENTS

| | |
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| Abbreviations | xi |
| Introduction: Sources and Methods in the Study of Ancient <i>Kulturgeschichte</i> | 1 |
| I. Common Motifs in Five Ancient Histories of Technology | 15 |
| II. A Pattern of Prehistory | 25 |
| III. Alternate Patterns of <i>Kulturgeschichte</i> : Possible Sources | 47 |
| IV. The Origin of Language (Diodorus, Vitruvius, Epicurus) | 60 |
| V. The Genealogy of Morals (Epicurus) | 70 |
| VI. The Genealogy of Morals (Polybius) | 80 |
| VII. A Fourth Century Version of Prehistory (<i>Laws</i> III) | 97 |
| VIII. Plato, Polybius, and Democritus | 107 |
| 1. The Genesis and Expansion of <i>Kosmoi</i> | 107 |
| 2. Society and the Family | 112 |
| 3. The Political, the Military, and the Royal Art | 120 |
| IX. Democritean Sociology and History in the Development of Greek Thought | 131 |
| X. The Heirs of Democritus | 148 |
| 1. The State of Nature (Plato, Dicaearchus, Tzetzes and the Cynics) | 148 |
| 2. Culture and the Gods (Euhemerism and Related Theories) | 153 |
| 3. Philosophy and Politics (Polybius, the Academy, Nau- siphanes) | 163 |
| 4. A Comprehensive Restatement (the Epicureans) | 170 |
| Appendix I: Diodorus 1.7-8 | 174 |
| Appendix II: Vitruvius and Posidonius | 193 |
| Appendix III: Polybius and the Stoics | 196 |
| Appendix IV: Democritus B30 and Euhemerus | 202 |
| Selected Bibliography | 207 |
| Index | 211 |

ABBREVIATIONS

Works which appear in the Selected Bibliography on pages 207-10 are cited in the footnotes in shortened form, omitting place and date of publication, and titles of articles in periodicals. A few works are cited by author's last name alone, as follows:

- Brink, C. O., "Ὀικείωσις and Οἰκειότης: Theophrastus and Zeno on Nature in Moral Theory," *Phronesis* 1 (1956) 123-45.
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- Philippson, R., "Die Rechtsphilosophie der Epikureer," *AGP* 23 (1910) 289-337 and 433-46.
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- Thraede, K., "Erfinder," *RAC* 5 (1962) 1191-1278.
- Uxkull-Gyllenband, W. von, *Griechische Kulturentstehungslehren = Bibliothek für Philosophie* 26 (1924).
- Walbank, F. W., *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford 1957).

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OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| <i>AGP</i> | <i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i> |
| <i>AJP</i> | <i>American Journal of Philology</i> |
| <i>BPW</i> | <i>Berliner philologische Wochenschrift</i> |
| <i>CP</i> | <i>Classical Philology</i> |
| <i>CQ</i> | <i>Classical Quarterly</i> |
| <i>CR</i> | <i>Classical Review</i> |
| <i>DAWB</i> | <i>Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Schriften der Sektion für Altertumswissenschaft</i> |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>FGrH</i> | F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (1923–58) |
| <i>HSCP</i> | <i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i> |
| <i>JHS</i> | <i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i> |
| <i>JRS</i> | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> |
| <i>MélRome</i> | <i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome</i> |
| <i>MusHelv</i> | <i>Museum Helveticum</i> |
| <i>NGG</i> | <i>Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen</i> |
| <i>NJbb</i> | <i>Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum</i> |
| <i>NPU</i> | <i>Neue philologische Untersuchungen</i> |
| <i>PhilRev</i> | <i>Philosophical Review</i> |
| <i>ProcBritAc</i> | <i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i> |
| <i>PubblTorino</i> | <i>Università di Torino, Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di lettere e Filosofia</i> |
| <i>RA</i> | <i>Revue archéologique</i> |
| <i>RAC</i> | <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart 1950–) |
| <i>RE</i> | Pauly–Wissowa–Kroll, <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1894–) |
| <i>REA</i> | <i>Revue des études anciennes</i> |
| <i>REG</i> | <i>Revue des études grecques</i> |
| <i>RendIstLomb</i> | <i>Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere, Rendiconti, Classe di Lettere e Scienze Morali e Storiche</i> |
| <i>RendLinc</i> | <i>Rendiconti dell' Accademia dei Lincei</i> |
| <i>RFIC</i> | <i>Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica</i> |
| <i>RhM</i> | <i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i> |
| <i>RPh</i> | <i>Revue de philologie</i> |
| <i>SIFC</i> | <i>Studi italiani di filologia classica</i> |
| <i>SO</i> | <i>Symbolae Osloenses</i> |
| <i>SVF</i> | <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> , coll. H. v. Arnim (Leipzig 1903–24) |
| <i>TAPA</i> | <i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i> |
| <i>TGF</i> | <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> ² , rec. A. Nauck (Leipzig 1889) |
| <i>VS</i> | Diels-Kranz <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> ⁹ (Berlin 1959–60) |
| <i>WS</i> | <i>Wiener Studien</i> |

Publications of German and Austrian learned societies are indicated by:

Abh (= *Abhandlungen*), *Ber* (= *Berichte*) or *SB* (= *Sitzungsberichte*), followed by the city of origin.

INTRODUCTION

SOURCES AND METHODS IN THE STUDY OF ANCIENT *KULTURGESCHICHTE*

Discussions of Greek thought relating to the origins of culture often begin by distinguishing its two main currents, or counter-currents: the myth of the Golden Age and the myth of human progress—Hesiodic fantasy and Ionian science.¹ The dichotomy is fundamental and persistent, but it should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there did emerge, during the course of the fifth century B.C., a clear if limited victory for one of the two points of view. It was possible thereafter to debate the extent and significance of what had happened, or to seek more favorable terms for the defeated party; the victory itself was not called into question. Nowhere, in fact, is the effect of Ionian rationalism on the Greek mind more striking than in the success of its contention that the technological achievements of civilization are of a relatively recent origin, and that man's life was once far simpler and poorer materially than it is now. These opinions went almost unchallenged from the beginning of the fourth century until such time as the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of the Fall began to color ancient conceptions of prehistory.² In 400 B.C. it was still necessary for Thucydides to write a refutation of those who would exaggerate the scale and importance of the Trojan war; there is nothing comparable in what survives of later historical writing. Quite foreign to all serious discussions of the period are both the Hesiodic vision of a Golden Race living at the beginning of man's history and Homer's glorification of a vanished age of heroic power and splendor.³ Primitivists might continue, like Hesiod, to put the apex of human felicity somewhere in the remote past. But their primitivism is closely linked with nostalgia for a simpler way of life; as such it is essentially unlike Hesiod's idealization of an

¹ The distinction was first drawn in L. Preller's article, "Die Vorstellungen der Alten besonders der Griechen von dem Ursprunge und den ältesten Schicksalen des menschlichen Geschlechts," *Philologus* 7 (1852) 35-60. Of subsequent discussions, the most important is that in Havelock, 25-35.

² For the reinterpretation of the life of primitive man in the light of the first chapters of *Genesis* see Ukkull-Gyllenband, 47-48, and G. Boas, *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore 1948) 1-67.

³ Homer's attitude, explicit in sporadic and formulaic references (*Il.* 1.272, 5.304, 12.383, 12.449, 20.287) to feats of strength beyond the capacity of men *οἱοι νῦν βροτοί εἶσιν*, is implied in the whole epic tradition: four centuries after ceasing to exist, the Achaean world continued to supply the principal subjects of heroic narrative.

age which he believed to have been better, though hardly less complicated and sophisticated, than his own.⁴ In similar fashion, proponents of a cyclical view of history might believe, as Homer did, that earlier civilizations were more elaborate and splendid than theirs. But the Atlantis or primeval Athens which they envision is always separated from the present world age by some sort of cataclysm; men are thereby reduced to the level of bare subsistence and must proceed by gradual stages to the modicum of civilization they now enjoy.

Concerning the character of this process and its ultimate worth in terms of human well-being opinions continued, of course, to vary greatly. Civilization could be regarded as an unmixed blessing, an unmitigated evil, or something intermediate between the two. Its creation or recreation was alternately the work of a few favored (or perverse) individuals, or the collective achievement of a whole race; a purposeful progress toward perfection, or a series of somewhat haphazard responses to the promptings of necessity. And the evolutionary perspective went much further with some than it did with others. All could agree that technology, or the bulk of it, was of recent origin. About language there was less unanimity: some maintained that it had come into being in the same fashion as technology; others, however, insisted that it owed its origin to nature alone, not human contrivance. And ethics was still harder to bring within an evolutionary perspective. Society and social norms, so most would have argued, rest on moral feelings which are innate in man from the very beginning; the latter may be subject to refinement or decay but not to essential change.⁵

Such divergences of attitude and approach are significant and will play a prominent role in later portions of our discussion. But it is important at the outset to stress those generic similarities which can be traced through the vast majority of ancient accounts of the origin of culture. For certain purposes it mattered little whether civilization was a monument to divine benevolence, human ingenuity, or the indifferent workings of accident and chance.⁶ As to its monumental and remarkable character there was no

⁴ In the terminology of the authors who have made the most thorough study of the attitudes involved (Lovejoy and Boas, 1-11), Hesiod's "chronological primitivism" is never found in later antiquity apart from "cultural primitivism." An interesting comment on the change is provided by the text tradition of the *Works and Days*. Line 120: ἀφνειοὶ μῆλοισι φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν was considered spurious by the Alexandrians, presumably because the domestication of animals which it implies seemed to them to belong properly to a later stage of development. See T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Hesiod and Historiography," *Hermes* 85 (1957) 282-83, who defends the authenticity of the line.

⁵ Once more in the terminology of Lovejoy and Boas (14-15), a "technological" (or linguistic) "state of nature" was much easier to envision than an "economic," "marital," or "juristic and ethical" one.

⁶ The tragic poet Moschion, in a well known fragment (*TGF* 814.18-22), is either uncertain or indifferent as to the exact character of the civilizing agent: it may have been Promethean intelligence or necessity or nature herself working through τῇ μακρᾷ τριβῇ.

disagreement; and in analyzing individual details of the structure one writer might draw freely on the work of another, of basically different tendency, adapting and modifying only when absolutely necessary.⁷ Moreover, careless and unoriginal writers (and they comprise the majority of those whose statements on the subjects have survived) were quite capable of combining unrelated or even contradictory motifs within a single narrative.⁸

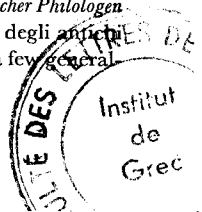
Such borrowing and conflation would be of little importance for the historian if all the divergent attitudes mentioned above were developed consistently and completely in extant texts. Unfortunately they are not. Often their character must be reconstructed, or their existence inferred, from scattered and fragmentary references, imbedded at times in contexts which are completely alien to them. It is thus almost impossible, in studying any one aspect of ancient thought on cultural origins, to isolate a single text or group of texts as having sole relevance to the problem. Whatever their immediate scope, one's investigations must rest in the last analysis on a survey of the whole range of accounts exhibiting a view of culture which is in any sense evolutionary. Since such a view was almost canonical for a thousand years, and the primitive condition of mankind a popular theme with a variety of writers for an even longer period, the accounts are correspondingly numerous. It will be useful, before proceeding further, to review them briefly.⁹

Two texts stand out for the length and systematic character of their presentation. They occur in the fifth book of Lucretius and the third book of Plato's *Laws*. The former is usually, and perhaps wrongly, regarded as the *locus classicus* for ancient *Kulturgeschichte*. The estimate is certainly one which

⁷ Cf. for example the appearance, in both naturalistic and teleological contexts, of arguments drawn from the biological and physiological advantages which distinguish man from other animals (below, pp. 41-42, with note 33).

⁸ The passage of Vitruvius discussed below, p. 42, provides a good example.

⁹ On what follows cf. Uxkull-Gyllenband, Lovejoy and Boas, Mondolfo, *La comprensione del soggetto umano nell'antichità classica* 629-739; Billeter, "Griechische Anschauungen über die Ursprünge der Kultur," *Beilage zum Programm der Kantonschule Zürich* (1901); and F. C. Seeliger's article "Weltalter" in *Roschers Lexicon*, 6.375-417. Of these comprehensive studies Uxkull-Gyllenband's is probably the best and that of Lovejoy and Boas (who reprint in full all passages discussed) the most useful. More selective and topical in their treatment are Sikes, *The Anthropology of the Greeks*, and Guthrie, *In the Beginning*. Havelock, 52-73 and 104-24, offers the best and most complete discussion of the pertinent fifth century texts; Spoerri, 132-63, the most exhaustive examination of all the material which has a bearing on the interpretation of the *Kulturgeschichte* in Diodorus 1.8; and Thraede, 1192-1241, the most recent and most complete discussion of the *heuretês* theme. O. Apelt, "Die Ansichten der griechischen Philosophen über den Anfang der Kultur," *Jahresbericht über das Carl Friedrichs-Gymnasium zu Eisenach* (1900-01) 5-16; F. Dümmler, "Kulturgeschichtliche Forschung im Altertum," *Verhandlungen der 42. Versammlung deutscher Philologen in Wien* (1893) = *Kleine Schriften* 2 (Leipzig 1901) 443-62; and E. Malcovati, "Le idee degli antichi sull'umanità primitiva," *RendIstLomb*, Ser. 2, 50 (1917) 465-76, confine themselves to a few generalities. Preller's article (above, note 1) is now of merely historical interest.



makes too little allowance for the possibility that Lucretius' narrative represents a specifically Epicurean treatment of the subject. But the text is so detailed and comprehensive that it must occupy a prominent, if not necessarily central, place in one's researches. Plato's account (*Laws* 3.676A-83A), longer though less thorough, treats the origin of culture and society as a preface to the political history of the Peloponnesus, Attica, and Persia. Like Lucretius V, it is too much the product of a specific philosophic point of view to be used uncritically and, at the same time, too important to be ignored altogether. It represents the nearest approach, among pre-Hellenistic texts, to a systematic treatment of its subject. It offers, moreover, a combination of technological and social history. The presence of this combination is inferable in many of the portions of ancient *Kulturgeschichte* for which we possess a fragmentary record, but it is only here that its existence and character can be extensively documented.

Cultural history is a subordinate topic both in Lucretius' poem and in Plato's treatise. There existed in antiquity works in which it was the principal or sole topic, and the treatment which it received there must have been more elaborate. No treatises of this sort have survived, but a number of them are known to us by title or through summary references to their contents. The most ambitious may have been the *Life of Greece*, by Aristotle's pupil Dicaearchus of Messene (Fr. 47-66 Wehrli). Besides presenting a history of Greek society, Dicaearchus made an effort to place this history into the larger context of human culture as a whole. His schematization of prehistory according to the dominant form of livelihood—food-gathering, herding, or farming—in each successive stage was probably the most important and influential part of his work. But surviving fragments indicate that the details as well as the general pattern of cultural development received their share of attention.

Writers of universal history could begin, if they wished, with a piece of *Kulturgeschichte* (e.g. Diodorus Siculus 1.8), and so might local historians, if they were dealing with an area whose inhabitants claimed to be autochthonous. The subject appears in several fragments of Philochorus (*FGrH* 328F2, F93-98); the title *Protogonia* (*FGrH*, 323F5a, F7) suggests that it was treated in the *Atthis* of Cleidemus as well; and a passage from Pausanias (8.1.4-6) points to the same conclusion for the local historians of Arcadia. Moreover, to judge from the procedure followed by Diodorus in describing non-Greek lands (e.g. India in 2.38 and Ethiopia in 3.2), prehistory was one of the subjects regularly treated in ethnographical writing.¹⁰ Many of the relevant passages in Diodorus are fairly brief, but the account of early Egypt which appears in 1.10-29 is both extensive and important.

¹⁰ See K. Trüdinger, *Studien zur Geschichte der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie* (Basel 1918) 49-51.

Primarily, though not exclusively, devoted to the technological aspect of culture was a whole body of literature on individual inventors and inventions. The genre enjoyed a long and, to us, somewhat inexplicable popularity. Its beginnings go back to the fifth century;¹¹ Ephorus (*FGrH* 70T33d; F2-5, F104-6), Heraclides Ponticus (Fr. 152 Wehrli), Theophrastus (D.L. 5.47), and Strato of Lampsacus (Fr. 144-47 Wehrli) are all said to have tried their hand at it; and echoes occur as late as Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville.¹² The inventions with which it deals are both the elementary ones (fire, clothing, and the like) which made possible man's original survival as a species, and the more advanced ones on which a complex civilization depends. More rarely, the creation of cities and legal or social usages is included (e.g. in Pliny *NH* 7.194, 200). It is usually assumed that heurmatistic works took the form of simple catalogues. Conceivably, however, this is true only of the sources, all of them summary and derivative, upon which we must rely for our knowledge of the genre.¹³ The originals on which they draw may well have been fuller, perhaps tracing in connected and systematic fashion a succession of stages in the growth of each of the technologies considered.

There were other ancient works devoted exclusively or primarily to the problem of cultural origins, but we know next to nothing about them. Tradition lists a *Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως* among the works of Protagoras (*VS* 80B8b), and if Plato's testimony is correct, *archaiologiai* were among the subjects of the public discourses of Hippias of Elis (*Hipp. mai.* 285D = *VS* 86A11). This indicates that cultural histories were composed by the Sophists; it does not, however, provide any basis for determining their scope and character. Even more problematical is the role of *Kulturgeschichte* in the writings of the pre-Socratics. Its appearance time and again in the surviving fragments (Xenophanes, *VS* 21B4 and 18; Anaxagoras, *VS* 59B4 and 21; Archelaus, *VS* 60A1 and 4.6; Democritus, *VS* 68A75, 151, B144 and 154) suggests that it was one of their principal interests. But whether this interest ever led to the production of a connected and systematic exposition of the subject we do not know.

Direct or indirect information about works specifically concerned with *Kulturgeschichte* is often less important for our knowledge of the subject than

¹¹ *FGrH* 8T1 (Simonides the historian). Isolated references to inventions and inventors appear, of course, much earlier. See Kleingünther for a collection and discussion of the relevant passages down to the end of the fifth century and Thraede for a complete survey of the tradition.

¹² References to the subject are scattered through Cassiodorus' *Variae*; see Kremmer, 90-96. In Isidore, see *Orig.* 3.10.1, 16.1, 22.8, 25.1; 4.3.1; 5.1.1-2; 6.10.1.

¹³ As Kremmer (91, note 1) suggests. Pliny's account is the longest which survives. Less extensive catalogues are found in Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzenus, and Hyginus. See Kremmer, 7-58 and 64-90.

the incidental references, ranging from a few lines to one or two pages in length, which appear in contexts devoted to other topics. The frequency with which such references occur is remarkable, and the casualness with which they are introduced indicates that the theme was familiar. Cicero finds in admirers of Thucydides' style (*Orator* 31) a perversity comparable to that which would be required to make men continue to feed on acorns once grain was discovered—assuming, evidently, that his readers would not miss the reference to the view of those historians of culture who made acorns man's earliest food, only subsequently abandoned with the advent of agriculture:

prima Ceres ferro mortalis vertere terram
instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae
deficerent silvae et victum Dodona negaret.¹⁴

Primitive men, with their beds of leaves, their garments of hides, and their diet of berries and grasses, seem to have been a part of the stock in trade of every rhetorician and philosopher; pitiable or enviable, as the writer's own conviction or the course of his argument might require, they could be introduced into a great diversity of contexts in support of varied and often contradictory conclusions.

In epideictic passages it was common to portray the object of one's praise as somehow intimately associated with the laborious process which led from savagery to civilization. The earliest connected pieces of *Kulturgeschichte* which survive are fairly straightforward examples of this technique. It is man himself, the most marvelous of the world's wonders, who is glorified by reference to his technological and political achievements in the first stasimon of the *Antigone*; and Man the Forethinker receives a similar tribute from Aeschylus in the speeches in which Prometheus tells of his services to the race. In other accounts Palamedes (Gorgias, *VS* 82B11a.30), Orpheus (Aristophanes, *Ranae* 1032),¹⁵ Hephaestus (*Hymn. Hom.* 20.1–7), or an unnamed *theos* (Euripides, *Suppl.* 201–15) takes the place of Prometheus.

Primitivists, especially the Cynics, were later to condemn Prometheus for the same "services" (Dio of Prusa 6.25, 29–30). Others kept the epideictic tone but used the *topos* for a narrower purpose. Not man in general or human *promêtheia*, but a particular class of men or a single *technê* was assigned the place of honor in the development of civilization. Though it is reasonable to assume that this device was developed by the Sophists,¹⁶ it is first docu-

¹⁴ Virgil, *Georgics* 1.147–49. Other appearances of the view are too numerous to require documentation. The Pythia's reference to the Arcadians as *balanêphagoi* (Herodotus 1.66.2) is perhaps the earliest.

¹⁵ On Orpheus as *Kulturbringer* see H. Koller, *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (Bern 1954) 189–92.

¹⁶ See F. Heinemann, "Eine vorplatonische Theorie der *τέχνη*," *MusHelv* 18 (1961) 118–19.

mented in Isocrates. The *Panegyricus* (28-40) and later the *Panathenaicus* (119-48) celebrate Athens as the bringer of technology, culture, and law;¹⁷ and in almost identical passages of the *Nicoles* (5-6) and *Antidosis* (253-54) the same role is assigned to oratory. In his 90th letter Seneca gives a fairly extensive summary (and refutation) of a work in which Posidonius sought to glorify philosophy by making the *sapiens* the moving force in all stages of human progress. Cicero adopts the perspective of Isocrates or Posidonius as occasion demands (cf., for the former, *Inv.* 1.2-3 and *De orat.* 1.35-36; for the latter, *Tusc.* 5.5). Orator and philosopher are replaced by the architect in the passage on the development of culture found in the second book of Vitruvius (2.1.1-7 = 33.14-36.18 Rose). For Horace (*AP* 391-401) it is the art of the *vates* that chiefly contributed to the rise of civilization; for Themistius (349A-51A), Xenophon (*Oec.* 5.17), and Tibullus (2.1.37-66), that of the farmer;¹⁸ for Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 3, pp. 32.23-34.2 Dindorf), sailing and the seafaring way of life; and Ovid, more frivolously, though with better grounds, glorifies his own *ars* by assigning the same role to love (*AA* 2.473-80). In a fragment of the comic poet Athenio preserved in Athenaeus (14.660-61 = Fr. 1 Kock) a cook expounds the view that, because it put an end to the savage diet of raw flesh on which men once fed, his own profession must be considered the principal benefactor of the race. The speech is presumably a parody of the sort of passage which we have just been considering and a striking testimony to the popularity of its theme.¹⁹

Further variations on this epideictic *topos* were, of course, possible. Aristotle glorified philosophy (*Met.* 1.981B13-82A1) and Manilius astronomy (1.66-112) by describing, not a cultural genesis which they made possible, but a cultural development of which they are the final and culminating phase. Moreover, the phenomenon of the rise of culture might provide grounds for exalting, not a particular craft, but new things in general at the expense of old. So Aristotle points out, as a possible argument for the desirability of constitutional change, the fact that civilization would never

¹⁷ For later references see Dittenberger, *Syll.*³ No. 704, p. 324.12-15 (an Amphictyonic inscription of the second century B.C. praising the Athenian *dēmos* for raising men from their animal-like existence); Lucretius 6.1-4; Cicero, *Flacc.* 62; Pliny, *Ep.* 8.24.2; Statius, *Theb.* 12.501-2; Aelian, *VH* 3.38; D.L. 5.17.

¹⁸ It has been plausibly argued that Xenophon and Themistius derive their praise of agriculture from Prodicus; see Nestle, *Hermes* 71.153-60.

¹⁹ Though the humor lies less in the claim itself than in the manner in which it is presented: cf. *De vet. med.* 3, where the practice of cooking food is credited with liberating man from the *thēriodēs diaita* of grass and berries from which he once suffered; and Aristotle *EN* 7.1148B22-23, which cites cannibalism and the eating of raw flesh as comparable examples of the depravity of which human nature is capable. For the position of *De vet. med.* in the general context of ancient *Kulturgeschichte* see H. W. Miller, *TAPA* 80.189-98, and "Technē and Discovery in *On Ancient Medicine*," *TAPA* 86 (1955) 51-52; and Herter, *Maia* 15.469-83.

have arisen had not change been continuously introduced to better the way of life of the first men, an earth-born and foolish lot (*Pol.* 2.1268B30-63A8).²⁰ Over six centuries later, Christian apologists were using the same argument to defend the new religion against the old (Arnobius 2.66; Prudentius, *Contra Symm.* 2.272-317).²¹

Further information about ancient theories of cultural origins comes from passages of an aetiological character. The most important are those which seek to establish the basic character of existing political and social institutions by showing how they came into being out of a primitive "state of nature." Once again, the mode of argumentation seems to have been first used by the Sophists. However one wishes to assess Plato's own share in the creation of the *Protagoras* myth, it is reasonable to assume a Sophistic origin for the basic idea which accounts for its inclusion in the dialogue—that an understanding of how justice and reverence first arose among men can tell us something about the way these concepts operate in contemporary society. A very similar point of view, at any rate, appears in an unquestionably Sophistic work, the treatise of the late fifth or early fourth century writer known as the Anonymus Iamblichi (*VS* II 402.24-30);²² and Sophistic influence has often been suspected in the portion of *Republic* II which, by way of a preface to its discussion of justice, tells how society first came into being through an original division of labor between carpenter, farmer, and cobbler.²³ Plato's later essay in *Kulturgeschichte* (*Laws* III) contains a theory of the familial origin of society and the state which was taken over by Aristotle in the first book of the *Politics* (1.1252A24-B34) and used there and elsewhere (e.g. *Pol.* 1.1259A37-B17; *EN* 8.1160B22-61A9) as an aid in analyzing the different social relationships which existed in the *polis* of his own day; and Polybius composed what is probably the most remarkable of all ancient accounts of social origins in an effort to bring to light forces he believed to be still operative in the rise and fall of political institutions (6.5-9). As might have been expected, the conflict between the idealist ethic of the Stoics and Peripatetics and the utilitarian one of their Epicurean and Sceptic adversaries was accompanied by rival theories of the origin of culture. Traces of these theories are to be found in Epicurus and several of his followers (see below, pp. 71-77), in Horace (*Sat.* 1.3.99-114), and in Cicero, most extensively in Books I (11-14) and II (11-15) of the *De officiis*, which erect a system of practical ethics on the principle, first of *to kalon*, then

²⁰ The idea is doubtless not original with Aristotle; cf. Isocrates, *Euag.* 7.

²¹ Cf. also the *Kulturgeschichte* of Ps.-Lucian, *Am.* 33-35, which is introduced to show that homosexual rather than heterosexual love is to be preferred as being the more recent and less natural.

²² For the parallels see, most recently, Cole, *HSCP* 65.132-33.

²³ See Dickermann, 88-89; Uxkull-Gyllenband, 19-20; Havelock, 96-97.

of *to sympheron*, and support both doctrines by extensive references to *Kulturgeschichte*.²⁴

Linguistic and religious, as well as social, usages came under consideration from the same aetiological perspective. Most surviving accounts of the origin of language appear in conjunction with descriptions of the origin of society or technology, but language is given separate treatment in Epicurus' *Letter to Herodotus* 75-76, as it doubtless was in other works now lost. Two of the most famous ancient explanations of the origin of religion connected it with the conditions of man's primitive existence: Critias' *Sisyphus* fragment (*VS* 88B25) makes the gods a useful expedient devised to cope with the lawlessness in which mankind once lived; and the notion that divine honors were, in origin, the reward conferred on the inventors who raised man out of his primitive helplessness appears in the works of Euhemerus and his precursors and followers.²⁵ The character of religious observances, as well as their existence, could be explained in terms of *Kulturgeschichte*. Theophrastus, in his work *On Piety*, discussed the evolution of the various forms of sacrifice and explained the absence of animal offerings in certain countries as a survival from the time when man was a vegetarian;²⁶ and the tragic poet Moschion appeals in similar fashion to the history of culture to explain the custom of burying the dead (*Fr.* 6, *TGF* 813-14).²⁷

The evolutionary view of culture is even found on occasion where one would least expect it. Its appearance in conjunction with Plato's Atlantis myth (*Timaetus* 22B-25D; *Critias* 109B-10D) has already been noted (above, p. 2). A similar combination of motifs characterizes the myth of the *Politicus*, which, like Hesiod, looks back to a more perfect age in the distant past, but, unlike Hesiod, separates this age from the present one by a cataclysm—the departure of the world's divine steersman—which necessitates a laborious acquisition of the arts necessary for survival (274A-D). In similar fashion, Virgil, though describing in the *Georgics* a Hesiodic golden age, concludes his account in a very un-Hesiodic way; not simple degeneration, but Jupiter's decision to end the indolence bred by a superabundance of blessings brings the Golden Age to an end, and the result is a slow and laborious development of the arts of civilization (I.145-46):²⁸

labor omnia vincit
improbis et duris urgens in rebus egestas.

²⁴ For other pieces of Stoic *Kulturgeschichte* in Cicero cf. *Rep.* 1.39-41; *ND* 2.150-52. The anti-Stoic account in Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 6.10.13-15 may also be Ciceronian in origin.

²⁵ The view may go back to Prodicus. The *testimonia*, contradictory and unclear at times, are collected in *VS* 84B5.

²⁶ *Frs.* 2.20-22, 33-36, 43-47 and 13.36-50 Pötscher.

²⁷ Cf. also Ovid's *aition* for the nudity of the Luperci (*Fasti* 2.289-302).

²⁸ For the background of this idea see "Hésiode et son influence," *Entretiens Hardt* 7 (1960) 258-63, and L. P. Wilkinson, "Virgil's Theodicy," *CQ* 57 (1963) 77-78. *FGH* 134F17, p. 728.23-30 (Onesicritus' conversation with the gymnosophists) gives what is perhaps its earliest appearance.

Elsewhere (*Aen.* 8.314-23), following a tradition known to Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.7.21) and possibly Varro, Virgil makes Saturn the bringer of the blessings of civilization to a rude race which did not know them before.²⁹ Here the method chosen is somewhat different from that of the *Georgics*, but it achieves a similar compromise between the Hesiodic and the later view of prehistory.

So widespread was this later view that it affected even the explicators of Hesiod. The last surviving sample of ancient *Kulturgeschichte* is in the scholia to the *Works and Days* written in the eleventh century by the Byzantine scholar Johannes Tzetzes (reprinted in part in *VS* II 137.36-138.13). Tzetzes attempts—and the attempt was doubtless not original with him (see below, pp. 148-51)—to make Hesiod's account intellectually respectable by allegorizing it. The freedom from labor in the fields which Hesiod had described becomes a grim necessity: the result, not of a superabundance of spontaneous nourishment, but of an ignorance of the techniques of farming. The men of the Golden Race were happy because, though quite wretched by later standards, they knew of nothing better and so did not notice their misery. Old age and death were unknown only because men were too simple as yet to know what death was, hence did not dread it, and because, in an age without doctors or medicine, no one ever lived to old age.

The above survey could doubtless have been made more comprehensive, but it has touched upon almost all the major passages and types of passage in which cultural history appears. Brief as many of these texts are, they are sufficiently numerous to provide both an abundance and an embarrassment of materials for the historian of ancient thought. For certain portions, at any rate, of his researches there is no lack of documentation; at the same time he may well despair of discerning any pattern in what is a heterogeneous and at times bewildering array of ideas and observations. And an examination of the work of his predecessors may only serve to confirm him in his diffidence and scepticism.

During the past century many of the texts mentioned above have been the object of repeated efforts in *Quellenforschung*. The result is a number of studies which seek to group large bodies of material around a single great name. Posidonius and Epicurus figured most prominently in earlier attempts of this sort;³⁰ they were natural choices given the commanding place which Lucretius V occupies among surviving accounts and the vogue enjoyed for several decades by "Panposidonianism." Little attention was paid to the

²⁹ See A. Schmeckel, *De Ovidiana Pythagorae doctrinae adumbratione* (Diss. Greifswald 1885) 27-29; and, for the story in Christian writers, G. Boas, *Primitivism in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore 1948) 195-97.

³⁰ Extreme examples are Norden's article in *NJbb* Suppl. 19.411-25 (Epicurus) and Gerhäuser's *Der Protreptikos des Poseidonios* 16-30.

role which pre-Hellenistic thinkers might have played in shaping the tradition, until the publication, in 1912, of Karl Reinhardt's article, "Hekataios von Abdera und Demokrit" (*Hermes* 47.492-513). Reinhardt attributed the prehistory found in Diodorus 1.8 to Hecataeus of Abdera and, through him, to Democritus. This thesis was accepted by Diels in the fifth edition of his *Vorsokratiker* and has strongly influenced all subsequent investigation.³¹ Reinhardt himself believed (512) that Democritus' treatment of the subject was authoritative for all of antiquity; most of his followers have been less bold,³² but they are inclined to see at least partial or indirect Democritean influence in almost all later phases of the tradition. Epicurus, Posidonius, even Plato and Aristotle, are assumed to be heavily in his debt.

Neither Reinhardt's work nor that of his forerunners and followers is rigorous and thorough enough in its reconstructions to carry much conviction. Too often single motifs, which a wider survey of source material would have shown to be quite commonplace, have been regarded as the specific and identifying property of a single thinker;³³ or minor similarities of detail have been invoked to establish a close connection between authors whose basic conceptions of the evolution of culture are quite different;³⁴ or an author's known or presumed philosophic affinities have been taken as a satisfactory indication of what source he must necessarily have followed.³⁵

This frequent misapplication of source criticism provides some grounds for scepticism about the validity of the whole method. Hence the tendency, evident in several recent treatments of the subject, to eschew *Quellenforschung* altogether in favor of a largely descriptive presentation.³⁶ Here emphasis is placed on the generic similarities which link a great variety of texts, and the tradition as we know it is treated as if it were a body of widely held ideas, mostly of unidentifiable origin. Within this body of material, to be sure, certain basic divergences of attitude may be discerned, but their outlines are

³¹ See the literature cited by Spoerri, 4-5.

³² So, for example, J. Kaerst, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* 2² (Berlin 1926) 373.

³³ So Dyroff, *Zur Quellenfrage bei Lukrez* 11-12, adduces the mention of acorns as man's earliest food as evidence for the Peripatetic origin of the doctrines of Lucretius V; and R. Philippson, "Ciceroniana I. De Inventione," *NJbb* 133 (1886) 417-19, assumes that Cicero, *Inv.* 1.2-3 and *De Orat.* 1.35-36 must be Posidonian because they stress the role of the gifted individual in the cultural process. Against Philippson see H. M. Hubbell, *The Influence of Isocrates on Cicero, Dionysius and Aristides* (Diss. Yale 1913) 29-30.

³⁴ For the application of this method to Vitruvius see Appendix II.

³⁵ This is probably the principal reason for the often repeated attempt to find a Stoic source for the *Kulturgeschichte* of Polybius. On the search, and its generally unsatisfactory results, see von Fritz, *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity* 55-58 and Walbank, 643-45.

³⁶ E.g. in the accounts of Havelock, Guthrie, Mondolfo, Spoerri, and Thraede (cited above, note 9). Except for the studies of Vlastos (*AJP* 67.51-59) and K. Westphalen, *Die Kulturentstehungslehre des Lukrez* (unpubl. diss. Munich 1957, known to me only through the references in Spoerri's *addenda*, 213-21), no piece of *Quellenforschung* in this field has appeared in recent years.

so vague and fragmentary as to be hardly worth studying. This approach doubtless has something to recommend it and has been adopted in the introductory survey just completed. The points of contact between so many accounts, ranging over a millenium and a half in their dates of composition, show quite clearly that we are dealing with what must have been, to some degree, the common property of all educated men. One may well wonder, however, whether this is all that is involved. For there is nothing in principle against the assumption which guided earlier *Quellenforschung*: that portions of surviving accounts of cultural origins are a condensed and fragmentary report of doctrines once developed more elaborately in the works of a single thinker. The evolutionary view of culture with which we are concerned may, conceivably, be comparable to certain contract theories of the origin of society whose popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot be traced to the influence of any one writer. On the other hand, it is just as possible that a better analogy is provided by the views widely current today on the subjects of biological evolution and psychoanalysis, views in which it is possible to recognize, simplified and distorted as they often are, doctrines which go back to Darwin and Freud.

Even if the second analogy is more nearly accurate, it need not follow that, on the basis of the texts which now survive, we can learn anything definite about the ultimate sources of our tradition. But this fact does not constitute a sufficient reason for abandoning altogether the attempt to do so, if the attempt is carried out with more regard than was shown in certain earlier investigations for the complexity of the material under consideration and with, perhaps, a slightly different focus. One should be concerned less with specific details of treatment than with basic attitudes and whole modes of presentation: the divergent approaches whose existence within the tradition has already been indicated (above, p. 2). And one's efforts should not be directed, at least not at the outset, toward identifying a specific source. It is more important to note which parts of the tradition seem, by virtue of closely shared attitudes and modes of treatment, to belong together, and to complete, whenever such juxtapositions allow it, the doctrines which single texts merely hint at or preserve in fragmentary form. Certain details of treatment will seem commonplace as long as they are assigned the lowest common denominator of significance which would allow for their inclusion in any discussion of cultural origins; they may well appear in a different light when viewed along with related material against the background of the particular school of thought to which they belong. In so far as the method outlined succeeds in detecting, in parts of the tradition as it now stands, traces of a more consistent and elaborate theory of cultural history, it will naturally point to the existence of a common source. Whether it succeeds in

identifying this source is of less importance; to have recovered a more sophisticated version of ancient *Kulturgeschichte* than exists in surviving texts will be in itself a service to the history of ancient thought.

One cannot promise that the results achieved by this method will be spectacular, but unless its possibilities are at least put to the test there is a fair chance that the real achievements of the Greeks in the realm of anthropological speculation are being unnecessarily ignored or obscured.³⁷ Hence the present study, the first eight chapters of which are an exercise in *Quellenforschung* along the lines just suggested.

Our starting point will be a group of texts, four Hellenistic and one Byzantine, which seem to present a single doctrine and to provide a basis for its partial reconstruction. All are heavily technological in their emphasis, although, as will become apparent in later stages of the investigation, they seem to derive from a tradition whose perspective was much broader. Stress will be placed throughout on the set of related ideas which these texts contain, rather than on the establishing of doxographical *stemmata*; and if these ideas come to be designated eventually as Democritean, the identification is intended as a supplementary and in some sense subordinate conclusion, not as a basic premise on which the whole investigation must stand or fall. The works chosen for detailed examination represent only one of the approaches to their subject current in antiquity, but the evidence which they present is unique in two ways. Nowhere else, to my knowledge, can similarities so close and so extensive be found; it is here, then, if anywhere, that a comparative study has a chance to remove some of the gaps and uncertainties which mar large portions of the tradition. And the line of thought which these five texts represent is that which seems to have gone furthest in its effort to view all aspects of civilization—technological, linguistic, social—from an evolutionary standpoint. We shall therefore be examining what was probably the most detailed and ambitious, as well as the most nearly recoverable, of all ancient theories of the origin of culture.

³⁷ Cf. Gigon in *Gnomon* 33.776 (in criticism of Spoerri's tendency to find only "allgemeine Bildungsgut" in surviving accounts): "... das Ziel sinnvoller Forschung ist doch die Wüste solcher Allgemeinheiten zurückzudrängen zugunsten der gestalteten und gestaltenden Individualitäten."

