

Rational Systematic Thought: Aristotle and Ancient Cultures

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THERE IS a standard position which can be formulated regarding the history of philosophy and the history of human cognition. This standard position claims that with the advent of classical Greek philosophy, and particularly in Aristotle, human cognitive activity moved into a completely new mode. This paradigm shift¹ moved thought, for the Greeks, from cultural worldviews based upon mythopoeic cognitive relationships with nature to detached and systematic understandings of the universe which are characterized as "rational."²

The standard position does not use this conception of "rational," or "rationalism," in opposition to some other systematic philosophy, as in rationalism vs. empiricism (e.g., Descartes vs. Hume). Rather, it defines as rational any systematization of thought which contains the possibility of "scientific" conclusions. This position claims that only through rational thought, detached from emotional interaction with the

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¹This phrase was originally coined by Thomas S. Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Today it is overused but is appropriate to a discussion of the standard position.

²In this essay I will use the term "rationalism" in a limited sense. While acknowledging the empirical quality of Aristotle's scientific observations, I use "rationalism" as a distinguishing term in the sense of the standard position's insistence that Aristotle represented a departure from an earlier "emotional" cognitive position. See J. O. Urmson 272.

universe, can scientific activities occur. For the examination which follows, I will exclusively refer to this understanding when employing the terms "rational" or "rationalism."

In this essay I will briefly clarify this standard position. Then I will closely read selected groupings from three texts. One text will exemplify mythical thinking, one text will be Hebraic wisdom literature, and one text will be from Aristotle. From my reading of these three texts, I will seek evidence of commonalities of systematic thinking.³ I will argue that the paradigm shift to rationalism did not occur in so radical a fashion as that claimed by the standard position.

The Standard Position

The standard position is foundational to the interpretational positions of modern classicists, as well as for many philosophers. In it, the worldview of "pre-philosophical" cultures is seen as an I/Thou relationship between man and the universe (Frankfort 4). The concept of the universe as a "Thou" is derived from an understanding of all nature (and its phenomena) as living matter, wholly interactional with humans (5). Human understanding of being is "direct, emotional, and inarticulate" (5).⁴ Because of this direct interaction, there is no possibility of systematic observation of the universe, nor of speculative philosophical conclusions (5).

The standard position claims that with the advent of the Greek philosophers, this mythopoeic paradigm of thought shifts radically. By the time of Aristotle, the human worldview sees the relationship between man and nature as an "I/It" relationship (Frankfort 5). This distancing of the subject "I" from the object "It" enables systematic observation of "valid" relationships. This validity is established through what G. W. F. Hegel called "accurate apprehension," which is possible only

³The textual technique I will employ is a hermeneutic one most like the technique explicated by Hugh J. Silverman in *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (9–22, cf. 151–62).

⁴Charles Sanders Peirce (an adherent of the standard position) also has interesting things to say about direct ideas. See "Philosophy and the Conduct of Life" 105–22.

from the perspective of the "rational" (Hegel 335). This claim that only an "It" can be systematically related to other objects limits the cognitive association of objects into groups or into a series to those which are "Its." Therefore, it is only from "Its" that universal concepts can be derived and speculative philosophy be performed (Frankfort 5).

Edmund Husserl refers to this paradigm shift as the "spiritual birthplace" of European culture (158). He claims that the paradigm shift resulted in a new "attitude" which created a cultural structure of "philosophy-science" (159). "Pre-scientific" cultures were without systematic thought (164). He calls the two paradigms "mythical-religious" and "theoretical" (169–78) and hails Greek philosophical rationalism as a "new level" of human existence (179).

Martin Heidegger agrees with the standard position and deplors the historical results of the rationalism of Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 15). He believes that the distancing of humans from the "It" of the universe increases the "disconnectedness" of human thought from being itself (*Metaphysics* 16–19). This disconnectedness from being is the root of the historical social illness which characterizes modern world cultures (*Metaphysics* 37–39, 190ff.):⁵ a fundamental misinterpretation of being which is still distorting philosophical speculation in modern times (*Metaphysics* 9).⁶

Like Heidegger, I suspect that there is a fundamental misinterpretation of philosophy throughout the human historical perspective. This misinterpretation is an overstatement of the claims of the standard position itself. It is possible that the paradigm shift in human cognitive activity which led to Husserl's "new level" of existence was not as radical a change as is claimed. In this essay, I will examine three selected texts for evidences of commonalities of rational activity and purpose.

⁵See also Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* and other works.

⁶In his projects on the pre-Socratic Greeks, Heidegger attempts to subvert the power of rationalism by showing that the actual relationship between *physis* (nature) and *logos* (word) is unconcealment of being. He believes that only through a reconnectedness to being can humans correct the myriad social problems that the obscuring "mist" of rational scientism has caused. In this essay, I will not attempt to evaluate or defend Heidegger's position.

Obviously, a claim of “no difference” between mythical-religious thinking and theoretical thinking would hardly be licit and would surely require an immense study to begin even a groundwork toward substantiation. Therefore, in this short essay I will severely limit the parameters of the cognitive activities for which I shall seek evidence within the texts to two types of systematic thought. The first I will call “descriptive anthropology,” defined as a systematic observational self-expression of cultural activity. The second activity proceeds from the first as systematic speculative conclusions which extend directly from the descriptive anthropologies. I will call this “speculative philosophy.” Where appropriate, I will tie these terms to the minimal definition of rational thought employed by the standard position.

In seeking commonalities of *purpose* I myself will engage in speculative philosophy. I believe that it is possible that the three texts are examples of “justifications” of the cultural value-structures which the descriptive anthropologies depict. I use the term “justification” to mean legitimization of applied valuation, where “valuation” means the imposition of hierarchical structures of comparison.⁷ I will note in advance the complexities inherent in determining motivational intent as regards the imposition of conventional axiologies within the power structures of differing cultures. It is not my intent for this essay to be exhaustive or authoritative. Rather, I will seek evidence for conclusions which are merely suggestive, in the hope of provoking consideration of the possibility that the radical completeness of the paradigm shift as claimed by the standard position is overstated.

Sumerian Text: Inanna and Enki⁸

The first text is Sumerian. For the purposes of this essay I will call it Text *a*. It is inscribed in cuneiform on clay tablets which date from

⁷To further clarify my use of valuation, I oppose it to “evaluation” in the sense that valuation is an *a priori* imposition of constructed or conventional value systems. In this sense evaluation would always be an *a posteriori* designation of value referencing existing comparative structures.

⁸There are a host of interesting speculative pathways associated with the use and functions of myth. I will keep my reading of these text selections

between 2,500 and 2,000 B.C.E. (Kramer 57).⁹ Briefly, it describes a meeting between Inanna (Semitic: Ishtar) and Enki, Sumerian deities (Wolkstein xv).¹⁰ During Inanna's visit to Enki, she succeeds (by getting him drunk) in receiving the *me* from him as gifts.

The *me* consist of ninety-four traits or powers which serve as the models for activity in the universe. As models of activity, they have a functional relationship to reality similar to that of the Platonic forms. My use of the word "formal" will be in this context. The drunken Enki gives the *me* to Inanna in groups of five to nine traits, with each group having some sort of cohesion. I will examine three of the groupings for evidence of the two types of systematic thought specified above.

Each grouping is prefaced by Enki with this formula:

I will give to holy Inanna
to my daughter—
and it will not be disputed: (Kramer 59ff.)

In this formula the descriptive statement unpacked is "I give" ("*ich sie geben*" [Farber-Flügge 97]). The line "and it will not be disputed"

extremely limited in scope. One of the best discussions of the use of myth can be found in G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*. See especially 42ff.

⁹The tablets as translated are written in the scribal High Sumerian.

¹⁰Enki is the Sumerian creator god, whose name means "Lord of the Earth." In this text, named in translation as "Inanna and Enki," Inanna (Queen of Heaven) visits Enki in order to procure from him the cosmic *me*. The *me* are the comprehensive powers and rules which order the universe. There are other Sumerian cosmic principles which interact with the *me*, most notably the *nam* (laws of nature) and the *mu* (noun, proper name). There are precedents established for the examination of the list of the *me* on its own (see Farber-Flügge below), and I shall not examine its interaction with other principles in this essay. Enki is responsible for the safekeeping of the *me*, but he has withheld them from mankind, keeping humans from attaining the benefits of ordered civilization. The most accessible English translation of the text of this myth is found in Kramer 57–68, although much of it is given in paraphrase.

modifies the descriptive into the prescriptive "she must take." Possibly, although the creator god has been manipulated into a drunken state of irresponsibility, the implication of divine command is meant to be taken literally. I will assume this and preface the groupings accordingly.

My first selection from the groupings refers to worldly government:

αA [she must take]

- 1 The noble scepter
- 2 The staff and nose-rope [measuring rod and line]
- 3 The noble dais [high throne]
- 4 Shepherdship
- 5 Kingship (Kramer 60; bracketed text Wolkstein 16)

The devisers of Text *a* have, in selection *αA*, examined the function of the ruler of the city-state and determined that specific attributes constitute the power of the ruler: (1) the symbol of office (scepter), (2) the control of the land (the area) of the city-state (rod and line), (3) the hierarchy upon which one individual assumes supreme position over all others (high throne), (4) the function of leadership over all persons within the city-state (shepherdship), and last (5) the title to be assumed by the ruling individual (kingship). As description, these appear to be clear anthropological statements, logical and definitive.

The placement of the grouping after the prefatory prescriptive imperative connects monarchical authority to divine command. Governmental function included in the *me* also provides justification for this authority through mythic connection to the formal cosmic structure, and then the writer creates a speculative cosmological grounding for the form of the earthly city-state.

The next grouping I examine is incomplete:

αB [she must take]

- 1 Constancy¹¹

¹¹"*ni-gi-na*." Kramer translates this as "truth," while Farber-Flügge translates it as "*Beständigkeit*" (29), which means "constancy" or "faithfulness." "Constancy" seems to fit better than "truth" because it is more consistent with the active nature of the other lines of the grouping.

- 2
- 3¹²
- 4 Descent into the netherworld
- 5 Ascent from the netherworld
- 6 The *kurgarra* priest¹³ (Kramer 60)

This grouping appears unusual in including constancy, an ethical concept, with lines which are believed to refer exclusively to a separate myth in which Inanna journeys to the Sumerian Hades (Wolkstein 51–90).¹⁴ The unintelligibility of the connecting lines (2) and (3) broadens the parameters for my speculative interpretation of this grouping almost beyond the point of acceptability. Nevertheless, it is clear from the lines about the nether-world and the mourning-priest that this grouping has to do with death. It may be possible that a connection from constancy to the lines about descent and ascent to and from the underworld is a reference to a human connection to an afterlife prescribed through the *me*. Sumerian tombs consistently reveal burial goods, and early royal tombs have revealed the sacrificial death of royal retainers and attendants (Finegan 32). If constancy in this context is taken to suggest an enduring spirit, then this grouping can be interpreted as a justification for belief in the continued existence of the soul after death. By connection to the *me*, Sumerian burial practices are cosmically justified. Line (5) could reveal the possibility of some sort of rebirth or reincarnation.¹⁵ It is possible that from anthropological observation of burial practices and temple beliefs (including other goddess myths [Wolkstein 51–90]), the writer has constructed a speculative formal justification for belief in life after death.

¹²The cuneiform symbols on lines 2 and 3 of this grouping have been effaced (Kramer 60 n. 15).

¹³The final line is translated by Farber-Flügge as “*Kurgara-Priester*” (29), a type of Sumerian priest associated with mourning.

¹⁴Wolkstein apparently gets this interpretation from Kramer. I find no definitive evidence for this interpretation in my reading of the translations.

¹⁵My suggestions here are highly speculative. There is virtually no archaeological evidence that Sumerian faith systems went much beyond determinism and materialistic concerns.

The last grouping of Text α that I examine is wholly directed at the activity of human relations and cognitions:

- α C [she must take]
- 1 The kindling of strife
 - 2 Triumph
 - 3 Counseling
 - 4 Heart-soothing
 - 5 Judgement-giving
 - 6 Decision-making (Kramer 63)

Kramer puts forth the interpretation that this grouping probably is a reference only to Inanna (Kramer 63 n. 25). I disagree. Farber-Flügge notes that the cuneiform terms in this grouping are paired, similar to later onomastic lists (Farber-Flügge 113–14).¹⁶

As descriptive anthropology, pairing these concepts is valid. (1) and (2) refer to the impulses of conflict and reconciliation, a “cessation of hostilities.”¹⁷ In this pair are themes of competition and power.¹⁸ Lines (3) and (4) inform the themes of mutual and personal aid. In counseling, humans seek and receive the wisdom of others. Kramer’s “heart-soothing” (4) is translated by Farber-Flügge as “self-counsel” or “taking advice.”¹⁹ From this, it is possible to infer that the line refers to personal wisdom and its application to self. Lines (5) and (6) refer not only to applied wisdom, but to the power of free will.²⁰ In the mythic context, it is upon the receipt of this grouping of *me* that Inanna realizes the power of her own freedom to abscond with them and grant them to humans for their benefit as the arts of civilization (Wolkstein 148).

¹⁶More on the role of the onomasticon (a didactic list of paired concepts) below.

¹⁷“*feindliche Einstellung*” (Farber-Flügge 113).

¹⁸It would be of interest to explore this Sumerian manifestation of these themes from the perspective of Hobbes or Rousseau, or possibly even Hegel.

¹⁹“*das sich Beraten*” (Farber-Flügge 23).

²⁰Once again, archaeological evidence seems to point to determinism as the ruling attitude in Sumerian cultures. Free will was admired only within the ruling stratum of society.

Anthropologically, Text α C describes not only the strife which is claimed as the grounding of human relations, but the power of wisdom combined with free will which enables "civilized" coexistence.²¹

As speculative philosophy, the α C grouping of *me* connects the cosmic forms of the *me* to human psychological activity. Presentations of the *me* are not contained only in this single myth.²² The concept of the *me* as a whole is more than simple mythology or cultural artifact. It describes a comprehensive speculative framework of ideas and activities which are mirrored by human cognition and behavior. The *me* can be understood as universal cosmic laws (forms) connected in a direct fashion to human activity. In Sumerian culture, the fact that these laws are connected to humans through divine intercession neither negates their quality of universal application nor denies their power to justify the cultural norms which they describe.²³ Whatever influence these ideas may have had outside of Sumeria,²⁴ their presentation shows a systematic descriptive anthropological understanding, and a formal speculative philosophy.

Ecclesiastes

The second text I have chosen to examine is from Ecclesiastes, a later Old Testament document.²⁵ I will refer to the selected verses as Text β . Scholars have long considered this biblical book enigmatic and impenetrable. Indeed, some argue that the text of today is the result of a physical jumbling and shuffling of the original pages (Dillon 92). The coherence of the text as a whole will not affect the reading of my selections.

The central question of Text β is a pessimistic search for meaning in human life. The writer concludes that (as far as humans may know) there is no meaning:

²¹It is possible that Heraclitus was informed by these more eastern concepts. See DK22B8 in McKirahan 121.

²²Farber-Flügge 116–27. Kramer, *Myths of Enki* throughout.

²³In Plato it is not the gods who confer knowledge of the forms but the discipline of philosophy.

²⁴Again, see Anaxagoras, DK59B12.6 in McKirahan 198.

²⁵The cited biblical verses are from the New Revised Standard Version.

βA Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. (Eccl. 2:11)

This selection begins with “Then I considered,”²⁶ an indication that the writer is an experienced man who is looking back across a life of pleasures and pains. His conclusion from his reflections goes beyond simple pessimism to a sort of nihilism (Scott 202). This prefatory destruction of purpose works positively for the writer by a metaphorical “wiping the slate clean.” If there is no meaning to be found in self-examination, there are no limits that can be placed upon speculation.²⁷

In the next selections a formal understanding of being is presented within a framework of determinism and the recurrence of time:

βB For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
 a time to be born, and a
 time to die
 a time to plant, and a time
 to pluck up what is
 planted. (Eccl. 3:1–2)

Again an onomastic listing of pairs of theses and antitheses is presented (echoes of the Sumerian *me?*). This passage of the text is thematically linked by its key term “time.” The Hebrew word for “time” used here is *eth*, which holds its meaning in “event” or “occurrence” (Jones 293). This meaning is possibly designed to link the concept of determinism directly to human activity. In the background of this passage is the Hebrew Yahweh, the one God who is pantocrator and participant in human history. This grouping of activities suggests an ordering of nature, connected by the movement of events seasonally through time, to the activity and behavior of humans.

²⁶Literally, “I turned” (Jones 287).

²⁷Expansions of this idea can be found in Nietzsche. For example, see *The Use and Abuse of History* 28ff.

The onomastic groupings are not limited to recurrent seasonal activities, but also refer to human cognitive activity:

- βC** a time to weep, and a time
to laugh
a time to mourn, and a time
to dance (Eccl. 3:4)

This selection presents an ordered connection between a cosmic determination and the activity of the soul. Anthropological observation cannot always explain why humans laugh when they laugh, or cry when they cry. As I will suggest below, in the philosophy of Text β, the reason is not known because the reason cannot be known. Therefore, human activity must occur within limited constraints. The ordered universe of Yahweh compels humans to do these things, and human knowledge of the design is doomed to incompleteness.

- βD** a time to love, and a time to
hate
a time for war, and a time
for peace (Eccl. 3:8)

The human condition of strife and triumph remains constant for the writer of Text β. It is interesting in these verses that the particular impulses of love and hate are juxtaposed with the social conditions of war and peace. Just as the Sumerians linked social government and psychological activity in the *me*, so too they are linked by the Hebrew philosopher. I do not read this linkage as simple cause and effect (Jones 295). In the cosmic ordering, these relationships simply *are* and causality (beyond the *being* of the cosmic order) is unknowable. The patterns of activity are fixed (Bergant 243), continuous, and their full meaning is unknowable. This unknowability is the source of human striving for wisdom, as well as the cause of perpetual frustration.

- βE** He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover He has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. (Eccl. 3:11)

This is the heart of the human dilemma. The term "past and future," translated elsewhere as "eternity" (Revised Standard Version), indicates that human consciousness may have an awareness of the magnitude of being, yet always be frustrated in attempts to extract its meaning. Humans are cursed with the urge to know (Bergant 245). Human inability to satisfy the frustration of unfulfilled understanding prevents reconciliation with the forms of order in creation. Humans cannot get beyond their own cognitive limitations to align daily "reality" with the activity prescribed through connection to the cosmos, so human life remains in a shadow reality (Dillon 110). Time from the human perspective is an endless series of "turning points"; activities and conditions are shrouded in mystery and dread (Rylaarsdam 107).

The portions of Text β that I have examined show evidence of descriptive anthropology in the way in which they display "the way things really are." The human "things" are presented systematically, as an onomasticon. From the evidence of his lifelong observation, the writer speculates on the way in which things are connected: "there is a time . . ." This provides the grounding for the design of the predestined and recurring cosmic patterns responsible for the universe as it can be known. Beyond this, the "why" must always be a mystery, for Yahweh has not given humans the means to see beyond the patterns (Scott 221). The examples from Text β may show that in Hebraic wisdom writings the activities of descriptive anthropology combined with speculative philosophy continue to be performed.

Nicomachean Ethics

The radical nature of the change posited by the standard position impels me to seek a text which will be in clear contrast to the earlier documents. Most of Greek writing which precedes Aristotle is considered transitional by the standard position, with the possible exception of Plato. Even Plato, with his incorporation of myth and his idealism, could be called a transitional writer. It is with Aristotle that those who hold the standard position agree that a truly systematic, rational project is being performed. Clearly, the evidence for this is incontrovertible. I shall not seek for evidence of "irrationality" in my selections. Rather, I will continue to read toward identification of the commonalities with the earlier cultural works.

Aristotle's project extends from his observations of nature and human society. His observations lead to definition and then to classification (McKeon, Introduction xviii). In this context, the process of his project in *Nicomachean Ethics* can be described as having a foundation of what I call descriptive anthropology.²⁸ The third text selections I examine are from *Nicomachean Ethics*, and I will call them Text γ .

γ A Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of ship-building a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity . . . in all of these the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued.²⁹

I read Aristotle as doing two things in this text. First, he gives a clear descriptive anthropology based upon his observations. The importance of his observations lies in the discovery of the end of any particular activity. The activities, and their ends, that he describes are similar to the activities in Texts α and β . For example, Aristotle mentions "strategy" and "victory"; in Text α there is the "kindling of strife" and "triumph." In Text β there is "a time for war, and a time for peace." Also, in the later part of Text γ A, he (like the writers of the earlier texts) moves his thought into the activity of speculative philosophy.

Aristotle uses the terms "to be preferred" and "master arts" in reference to disciplines which coordinate the activities of other disciplines. It is at this point that he begins what I propose is his main project in Text γ , a speculative philosophy in pursuit of a comprehensive valuation of human activity. There may be evidence that he continues to derive valuation from social function in the next selection from Text γ that I have chosen:

²⁸A description with which the standard position would most probably agree.

²⁹*Nicomachean Ethics* I.1 1094a7–10, 14–16. All direct citations of this text will be from the McKeon edition, with further citations abbreviated NE.

γB So among virtuous actions political and military actions are distinguished by nobility and greatness; and these are unpleasurable and aim at an end and are not desirable for their own sake, but the activity of reason, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in serious worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself (and this augments the activity), and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man). . . . It follows that this will be the complete happiness of man. (*NE* X.7 1177b16–24)

In this selection, Aristotle completes his valuative speculation regarding the function of humans in society. He posits military and political activity as the highest unpleasurable goods. But he claims philosophical activity, since it requires more autonomy and less physical application, as the highest functional good of all. In this selection he continues to derive valuative judgements: political and military activities contain virtue in “nobility and greatness”; the pursuit of theoretical knowledge constitutes “the complete happiness of man.”³⁰ I include this selection because I read it as the threshold over which Aristotle crosses from speculative philosophy into the construction of a justification of valuation. From my reading of the next selection, I propose that from a grounding in anthropological observations plus his speculative contribution towards a teleology of function he creates a valued psychology of the human soul (Irwin 41–45).

γC [The soul consists of two elements;] one element in the soul is irrational and one has a rational principle (*NE* I.13 1102a28–29). . . . The irrational element [is] twofold. For the vegetative element in no way shares in a rational principle, but the appetitive, and in general the desiring element in a sense shares in it, in so far as it listens to and obeys it (*NE* 1102b29–32). . . . [The rational element is also] twofold, one

³⁰There is a world of controversy associated with this statement. Some of the clearest exposition regarding the possible conflicts (especially of valuation) are in Cooper 144ff.

subdivision having it in the strict sense and in itself, and the other having a tendency to obey as one does one's father.
(NE I.13 1103a2-3)

In order to impose valuation, a thing must be compared to another thing.³¹ If a thing is a whole, it must be divided into parts if a hierarchy of comparison is to be created. Aristotle discovered through his science that he could create theoretical matrices which can identify parts within things which do not have parts.³² In seeking to construct a hierarchy of valuation applicable to the activity of human cognition (soul), Aristotle has broken this activity into a tiered structure of function, with each tier containing its own value, one greater than the next. The lowest tier is the vegetative, next highest are desire and appetites. These comprise the irrational part. The rational part begins from the appetites and desires, continues in practical calculation, and culminates in the pure reason: the highest in value, the seat of theoretical knowledge. The best person would be the one who utilizes the best functions of the soul in the best way towards activity. The highest expression of this would be the person who brings to every judgement "the greatest number of genuinely pertinent concerns and genuinely relevant considerations" (Wiggins 234).

I will now put forth a hypothetical speculation regarding the activities which Aristotle is performing in text γ . First, in γA , he gives a descriptive anthropology of the Greek city-state. He goes on, in γB , to create (as philosophical speculation) a hierarchy of valuation which is tied to social function. From his observations, and from his definitive (and artificial) partitioning of the soul in *De anima*, he further speculatively imposes a hierarchy of valuation upon the parts of the soul (γC). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I read Aristotle as using his valuated hierarchy of the functions of the soul as a metaphorical mirror, reflecting value back onto his valuated functional hierarchy of the *polis*. By extending the teleology of function (through this process of mirroring)

³¹Hence the popularity of the onomasticon as used in value hierarchy justifications.

³²To find where Aristotle has done this in regard to the soul look for "distinguishable by definition" in *De anima* (henceforth *DA*) II.2 413b29.

from the "natural" valuation of soul to the cultural valuation of *polis*, he creates a justification of the hierarchy of social structure within the city-state. This justification, to my reading, appears to be intentional, and derived from his speculative conclusions based upon his descriptive anthropology.

The controversy over Aristotle's commitment to a priority of valuation of either *phronesis* or *theoretikon* may add support to my speculation.³³ Theoretical reasoning (as depicted in text γC as "reason in the strict sense") has claim to the highest valuation because it is self-contained and most wide reaching in its effects (Rorty 386). This part is most complete in its realization of human potentialities (NE X.7 1178a 1-10). It is this most highly valued part of the soul which must inform and extend its value to the most highly valued parts of the *polis*: a "mixed life" of *theore* and *phronesis* which results in the most highly valued function of the politician (Cooper 152). In NE X (from which I have selected text γB), Aristotle ascribes the most happiness to the purely theoretical, contemplative life. But I do not believe that the disclosure of happiness is Aristotle's sole aim in this text. Rather, I believe that it is possible that his design of the valuation of function serves as a justification of the social caste structure of the Greek *polis*. Hence his controversial reservations regarding the theoretical ideal which he puts forth in Book X (Cooper 179).

Commonalities and Conclusions

There is evidence of a descriptive anthropology in all three texts. These anthropologies describe each particular human social function as it relates to its connection to its structure. In Text α , the functions of the monarch, the relational activity, and the human soul are structurally underpinned by their connection through the formal laws of the *me*. Text β connects the shifting patterns of human life structurally to Yahweh's impenetrable design. Aristotle, in Text γ , constructs from his observations a structured functionality of parts which results in a formal and complete social design. It is possible that there is a fundamental reason why the ensuing philosophical

³³See note 30 above.

speculation in the case of each text required a grounding in a systematic, descriptive anthropology.

These speculative philosophies are founded upon particular social structures because it is possible that they serve to justify and legitimize the structures as described (Burkert 95). As the writers begin to speculate on the structural conclusions of their observations, they complete the sense of necessity which the patterning of structure provides. In Text *a*, human cognition and will is tied through the formal structure of the *me* to the universal pattern of the cosmos. The participation of the goddess Inanna, who imparts the *me* to humans through an act of free will, justifies the connection of universal law to particular human concerns. The social structures reflect the hierarchy of valuation which is imbedded in the validity of the *me*. The descriptions of the social structures appear to be systematic, as do the valuative connections. Thus submission to the sovereignty of the king receives systematic cosmic justification (Burkert 95–96).

Text *β*, while making the divine connection to Yahweh, stresses the unfathomability of the universal structure. Its speculation provides a pessimistic justification: the why cannot be known; simply observe and accept. Valuation is derived from systematic onomastic comparisons which convey a logical basis for legitimacy. In other words, since determination of overall meaning is beyond human comprehension, hierarchical values must be constructed from comparative evaluation of pleasures and pain.³⁴ Adherence to the cosmic order of time is justified through acceptance of the impenetrable. In the case of this text, the mechanism for the justification differs, but the activity of justification occurs just the same.

For Aristotle, the hierarchy of valuation of the social structure as described is justified through the connection to a systematic valuation of the soul. The order of the soul, broken down into comparable components of rational and irrational, can be valued according to excellence of function. This speculative representation of the soul reflects back through the behavior of the individual humans, creating a mirroring of value onto the hierarchical functionality of the polis. Rather than

³⁴Interesting comparative work could be done with this text and not only the Stoics, but also modern utilitarianism.

justifying the social structural hierarchy through an extrinsic cosmic connection, he creates an intrinsic valuation connected through being to nature. Once again the mechanism of justification differs from the first two texts. Nevertheless, it appears from my reading that this systematic justification does occur and that his conclusions in Text γ are as fully speculative as those in Texts α and β .

I believe that there is evidence in all three of these texts of speculative philosophy which intends to justify existing social structures of power. The stable Sumerian authorities of king and priest, the unstable precariousness of the Hebrew culture, and the self-regarding pride of the elite of the Greek city-states are given legitimizing connection to the processes of nature and human cognition. The similarities of the systematic processes by which these speculations are defined (i.e., descriptive anthropology and speculative philosophy) do not display in my reading strong evidence that a radical cognitive shift occurred between the creation of the first two and the creation of the third. Instead, as my reading of the texts has shown, all three show evidence of a systematic basis of descriptive anthropology upon which each writer imposed systematic speculative philosophical constructs, possibly in order to provide justification for a system of social valuation. I can derive from my perspective no criteria with which to establish a justifiable hierarchy of valuation as to the rationality of one text relative to another. Insofar as there is evidence of systematic thinking within the composition of each text, they all display evidence of what the standard position describes as rationalism. Clearly, there are real differences between a mythical-religious worldview and a theoretical-scientific worldview. However, it is possible that the standard position describing a paradigm shift in human cognition towards rationalism at the time of Aristotle is an overstatement and that such a shift did not occur in as radical or complete a fashion as the standard position claims.

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