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AN ESSAY ON ANAXAGORAS

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An essay on Anaxagoras

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For Elizabeth

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PREFACE

In the writing of this small book I have incurred many debts of gratitude. First I am glad of an opportunity to express deeply felt thanks to the Master and Fellows of Balliol, who by electing me to the Dyson Research Fellowship in Greek Culture gave me the time and the stimulus to write - among other things - first drafts of much of the material of Chapters 1, 2 and 4 in 1970-2. Versions of Chapter 1 were read to several learned societies in Oxford and Cambridge. An invitation to address the Triennial Meeting of the Roman and Hellenic Societies in Oxford in 1975 prompted a first version of some of the matter in Chapter 3, and resulted in many enjoyable conversations about Anaxagoras.

I am grateful to my College, Faculty and University for two terms' leave in 1976-7 which enabled me to write a penultimate draft, read subsequently by a number of friends. I thank for their criticism and encouragement Myles Burnyeat, Edward Hussey, Tony Long, Colin Macleod, David Sedley, and especially Geoffrey Lloyd, who wrote and discussed with me detailed comments on the whole manuscript. John Ackrill made me a loan (later converted into a gift) of his copy of Jöhrens. Others kindly let me see unpublished work of their own: David Sider, Michael Gagarin, Jonathan Barnes, whose sections on Anaxagoras in his now published new book were a constant stimulus and pleasure, and once again Geoffrey Lloyd, who has been pursuing researches much more broadly based than mine on dogmatism and argument in early Greek philosophy and science. The limitations of this book will all too readily be perceived to be my own: if it has virtues, they reflect those of my friends.

I have also had the good fortune to find in Jan Chapman the ideal typist. There cannot be many people who combine her command of Greek with the exemplary speed, accuracy and elegance of her typing. I thank her for her work on two successive drafts of the manuscript.

It seems fitting to conclude with a word or two in homage to

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Preface

x

the *genius loci*. In the grounds of St John's College, Cambridge (in whose library I am writing these words) there stands an ancient stone building, until recently the property of Merton College, Oxford, which rejoices in the name of the School of Pythagoras. It may once have been called after another Presocratic:

'In the earliest deeds belonging to Merton College the house is merely described as a messuage. In the deeds relating to the transfer of the property in 1270 from the Dunnings to that college it is referred to as "the stone house in which Eustace, father of Richard Dunning, formerly dwelt". The masons' contract of 1375 describes the house as being "commonly called Mertonhall". The same name was given to it in a lease of 1503. In the reign of Henry VIII, Leland called it the Schola de Merton, thus suggesting a transitional stage in the change to its modern appellation of the "School of Pythagoras". The last name first appears on Richard Lyne's plan of Cambridge made in 1574, but I do not think he is responsible for this change of name. The reason for the adoption of the present name takes us back to what Professor Maitland called "the oldest of all the inter-university sports", to wit, the "lying match" regarding the relative antiquity of the rival universities. In 1464 a certain doctor of medicine named John Herrison, who was Chancellor of Cambridge University from 1465 to 1468, made a transcript of a chronicle attributed to Nicholas Cantelupe and entitled *Cronica Fundacionis Destruccionis et Renouacionis Universitatis et Civitatis Cantabrigg*. At the end of his transcript Herrison added a few notes of his own regarding former eminent persons who had flourished at Cambridge. Amongst the alumni thus claimed by him was Anaxagoras, who according to him was buried at Cambridge. Herrison was sufficient authority for subsequent writers to accept the connection of Anaxagoras with Cambridge as undisputed. In 1535 John Lidgate wrote of the days

When Cantebro, as it well knoweth,
At Athenes scholed in his yought,
All his wyttes gratelye did applie,
To have acquayntance by great affection
With folke experte in Philosophie.

From Atheines he brought with hym downe
 Philosophers most soveraigne of renowne
 Vnto Cambridge, playniye this is the case,
 Anaxamander and Anaxagoras.

The "lying match" reached its climax in 1568 when John Caius took up the cudgels against Key of Oxford. Herrison's manuscript was in Caius's own college and was drawn upon for the *De Antiquitate Cantabrigiensis Academiae*. Caius cited Herrison in the following passage in that work:

If John Herrison, a grave and learned author, is to be believed, Anaxagoras was buried in Cambridge. This I neither affirm nor deny. I only say this - that it is as possible that Anaxagoras died at Cambridge in the houses, which are called by the name of Anaxagoras (*in aedibus quae nomine Anaxagorae appellantur*) as that your University was sprung from Alfred or born of the Greeks, as your history boasts.

In 1568, therefore, when *De Antiquitate* was written, there was a building in Cambridge which was known to Caius as the "House of Anaxagoras" and it can hardly be doubted that this was the same building as that which Lyne described in 1574 as "Domus Pythagorae". The change to the better known name of Pythagoras was an easy matter. The appellation received official recognition in the reign of Charles I, who in his confirmatory grant to Merton of their manor at Cambridge describes it by the title "Pythagoras's Farm".' (J.M. Gray, *The School of Pythagoras*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Quarto Publications, N.S.4 (Cambridge 1932), 37-8)

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ABBREVIATIONS

References to ancient authors are given in standard forms of abbreviation, mostly those adopted in the latest edition of Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*. Modern authors are cited by name and (if more than one of their writings is mentioned) a number, which corresponds with that assigned to the work in question in the bibliography, where full particulars of all secondary literatures are given. In addition note the following acronyms:

- DK H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, sixth edition, Berlin 1951-2
- FGH *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, by F. Jacoby, Berlin 1923-30 and Leiden 1940-58
- LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, revised by H.S. Jones (with Supplement 1968), Oxford 1968
- OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, second edition by N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, Oxford 1970
- RE *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, edited by G. Wissowa, W. Kroll and K. Mittelhaus, Stuttgart 1893-1972
- SVF *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, collected by H. von Arnim, Leipzig 1903-5