

in popular legends of the last century. In the time of the Pythia it was named the Cloven Way. It was a junction of great importance in the emotion-complex of the ancients; perhaps, in another way, it still is for us. Here began the story of Oedipus: the blind Oedipus, the ultimate suppliant, he who answered the Sphinx. The Pythia had given the oracle to his father: 'Laius, you ask for a son from me; I shall give him to you. But it is your fate to lose the light of day at his hands.' Laius was on his way to Delphi. Oedipus was on his way to Thebes. They met at that crossroad, beneath the dense mass of Parnassos. Neither recognized the other. They exchanged angry words. Oedipus killed his father.

We live in what we call a technological age. The Pythia is silent; and from the myth of Oedipus science has evolved symbols and definitions which occupy us more than the oracle of Delphi occupied the ancients. Today, this same myth may provide many with an enjoyable evening's entertainment at the theatre, given that a good actor is playing. But if we no longer have Oedipus himself we have the 'Oedipus-complex' and its consequences. Is it better like this? Maybe it is. The question is not so much what things have come to an end, as what have we, who like everything else live in a world of corruption and change, put in the place of those things we think have come to an end.

I ponder on those great waves in the depths of time which transpose the meanings of words. For instance: the meaning of the word 'oracle': what has happened to it in our age? It has become an archaeological term. Granted. But its significance? Has it imperceptibly taken on this or that scientific or mathematical form? Who knows. But one suspects that in the depths of today's consciousness something of these ancient worn-out expressions must remain. Otherwise how could we feel here such a vibration?

You can also go to Delphi by sea, landing at Itea, the ancient Kirra, where Apollo, changed into a dolphin, guided the Minoan ship. It was thus, if we are to believe the Homeric hymn, that Pytho got the name of Delphi:

*As I first in the dark sea sprang  
in dolphin form onto the swift ship, so*

*pray to me as Delphinus; while this altar  
shall ever be the Delphic altar, seen from far.*

*(Homeric Hymn to Apollo, 493 ff)*

Delightful it is to set out from the shore and walk beneath the silvery foliage of the olive trees of the Krisa plain, deciphering the wrinkles in the thick parchment of their trunks as you go past. And should this shade oppress you, you have only to raise your eyes and you see suddenly before you in the ever-moving blue of the sky the twin peaks of Parnassos, and below them the extension of the western Phaedriades, and still further down the acropolis of Krisa. Somewhere there took place those chariot-races celebrated by Pindar — in that rhythm which with two or three generous voices he breathes over Delphi:

*Neither by ship nor on foot will you find  
the wonderful road to the Hyperboreans' meeting-place.*

*(Pindar, Pythian Odes X, 29–30)*

Apollo, it is said, used to go for three months of the year to the Hyperboreans. Who were the Hyperboreans? They are lost in myth. Once — continues Pindar — Perseus sat at their table; he saw them sacrificing to the god splendid hecatombs of donkeys and Apollo laughed when he beheld the erect shamelessness of the beasts they offered him. The Muse is always with them; neither sickness nor old age afflict their sacred race; they have no struggles, no battles. They have escaped vengeful Nemesis.

Reaching Delphi itself, and following the road through the village till you come to the sanctuary, you have the feeling you have entered somewhere cut off from the rest of the world: an amphitheatre nestling on the first steps of Parnassos, closed to the east and north by the Phaedriades, with Hyampeia descending like the prow of a great ship and cutting the gorge, and northern Rhodini almost embracing the Stadium. To the west is the rocky wall of Hagios Elias and, beyond, the mountains of Locris — Giona — where the sun sets. If you turn to the south you see before you the vigorous lines of Mount Kirphis, and beneath you the gorge of the Pleistos. In summer the Pleistos is waterless and you see its dry bed glinting in the