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The Golden Age of Athenian Democracy and the Origins of the Demagogue-Tyrant Paradigm

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Abstract

A long-standing belief among classical scholars is that antidemocratic thinking was a relatively "late birth" as it emerged only during the Peloponnesian War in the aftermath of the disastrous Athenian military fiascos. This paper contests that perspective. One of the most well-known criticisms of popular rule in the Classical period was that it enabled power-hungry demagogues to undermine established norms and laws, incite the masses against the upper classes, provoke civil war, and ultimately establish a tyrannical rule. The article seeks to elucidate how the foundations of this demagogue-tyrant paradigm were paradoxically established during the Golden Age of Athenian democracy. Furthermore, it will argue that intra-democratic discussions on the nature of desirable and undesirable political leadership significantly shaped this development.

Keywords: demagogue-tyrant paradigm; demagogue; Old Comedy; Herodotus; Thucydides; Plato; Plutarch; Cleon; Pericles

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For a long time, the prevailing position among scholars was that antidemocratic thought emerged due to aristocratic resentment toward the rule of the people. Walter Eder has demonstrated the necessity for a more nuanced approach. He has convincingly argued that the aristocrats, in their rivalry for influence and power, unintentionally assisted the rise of democracy (Eder 1998, 105–137; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989, 177, 205–230, 234; Hölkeskamp 1998, 6–10). Thus, one of the critical ingredients of the concept of class conflict as a driving force for the rise of antidemocratic thinking is called into question. Yet, the view that the Athenian demos' failures during the Peloponnesian War turned an innate sense of superiority of many members of the Athenian elite into outright enmity is still prevalent. According to this standpoint, a new type of politician arrived at the Athenian political scene after Pericles's death. These politicians were not up to the task and ultimately discredited popular rule through their actions (Mann 2007, 75 n. 1). However, Christian Mann has persuasively argued against the idea that Pericles's demise marks a watershed moment in the culture of Athenian political leadership (Mann 2007).

One of the most prominent elements of ancient Greek critique of democracy is the idea of the power-hungry demagogue who amasses political power by subverting established norms of political conduct and inciting the masses against the upper classes through emotionally charged rhetoric that appeals to ingrained prejudices and basic instincts. In certain instances, this can escalate into civil discord and may culminate in the establishment of tyrannical rule. Given that long-standing assumptions about the emergence of antidemocratic thinking are being questioned, it seems appropriate to examine the genesis of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm beyond initial perceptions. The principal argument of this paper is that its origins can be traced back to the Periclean Age and emerged as a reaction to processes that exposed contradictions specific to Athenian democracy. The reconstruction of these circumstances is structured into five sections. The first section elucidates the essential components of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm. The next segment focuses on whether there is a connection between this concept and the evolution of the term demagogue. The third section engages with Plato's rationale for conceiving the demagogue-tyrant model, drawing connections to Aristophanes' critique of Cleon and Thucydides' idealisation of Pericles. The following segment investigates the criticism of Pericles found in the Old Comedy and other sources, examining how these critiques contributed to the formation of the demagogue-tyrant concept. Finally, the fifth and last section explores how Herodotus foreshadowed significant aspects of this paradigm, his motivation for doing so, and how this relates to Pericles. The outlined sections identify four categories of ancient sources for analysis. The first includes philosophical texts that offer a comprehensive explication of the elements underpinning the demagogue-tyrant concept. The second category features speeches that illustrate how the term dem-

agogue retained positive, neutral, and negative connotations during the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE. This body of evidence substantiates the assertion that Plato was the first to conceptualise the demagogue-tyrant paradigm. The third group consists of dramatic works from Old Comedy, which capture the prevailing sentiments, opinions, and political divisions of the time that precipitated the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm. The fourth category is mainly made up of historical writings that not only resonate with the political, cultural, and intellectual currents of the Periclean and post-Periclean eras but also shed light on how these currents shaped views, ideas, and concepts pivotal to the subsequent formulation of the demagogue-tyrant concept. An inevitable, albeit unwelcome, consequence of engaging with such a substantial corpus of ancient sources is that the scope of this inquiry exceeds the typical length of an article.

1 The Demagogue-Tyrant Concept

Every constitution is, in essence, a great promise because its ideals can never be entirely implemented in the actual practice of politics. A gap between aspiration and reality remains because human errors, misjudgements, and misuse are characteristic of every political system. Herodotus' *Constitutional Debate* is the first Greek discussion on the nature of different forms of government. It is telling that this debate tacitly acknowledges the failure of each political system to fulfil its promise by comparing its strengths with its weaknesses. Democracy is the political system that probably gives the most powerful promise. Herodotus shows how it assures not only its proponents but all citizens that they will freely enjoy equal political rights, be included in political decision-making and that any monopolisation of power like in a monarchy is avoided (Hdt. 3.80.6; trans. A. D. Godley with minor changes):

> But the rule of the multitude has in the first place the loveliest name of all, equality (*isonomia*), and does in the second place none of the things that a monarch does. It determines offices by lot, and holds power accountable, and conducts all deliberating publicly. Therefore, I give my opinion that we make an end of monarchy and exalt the multitude, for all things are contained within the multitude.

Even Plato notes in his *Statesman* that democracy inherently opposes the concentration of political power and that if all forms of government are dominated by licentiousness,

it offers the most desirable life (Plat. Plt. 303a–b; trans. H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb):[1]

[1] Scholarly discourse frequently centres on the complexities surrounding Plato's stance on democracy, specifically questioning whether he can be characterised as an antidemocrat or if he demonstrated an awareness and acknowledgment of the constructive elements inherent in democratic governance. This debate is driven by the fact that Plato's understanding of democracy has important implications for discussions of democratic practice, both ancient and modern, in contemporary political thought. Nonetheless, this discussion hinges upon a false dilemma. In the initial segment of the *Republic*, Thrasymachus contends that justice is essentially the advantage of the stronger. He claims that every form of government enacts laws that benefit those in power, at the expense of those who are governed. This pattern is observable across all types of government. The debate over Thrasymachus's definition in Book 1 establishes the thematic framework for the entire *Republic*. It transitions into the arguments presented by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2, which allow a profound exploration of the concepts of Callipolis, the philosopher-king and the city-soul analogy (Plat. Rep. 338c–339c, 343b–d, 357a–358e, 362d–e, 367a, 545a). Plato invests considerable effort to counter Thrasymachus' conception of justice. Nevertheless, he intriguingly refrains from directly contesting a critical argument put forward by the sophist: that in conventional constitutions, those wielding power craft legislation that serves their interests, disregarding the detrimental implications for the common good. Instead, Plato focuses on disputing the notion that those in positions of authority act in their own best interest. He introduces a distinction between *dokein-einai* and *doxa-alētheia*, arguing that these rulers in reality act based on what they believe is in their best interest. Conversely, in a city of good men (*polis andrōn agathōn*), the true ruler (*alēthinos archōn*) would not seek his own advantage but that of his subjects (Plat. Rep. 339b–341a, 341c–342e, 343b–348a). In Book 7, it becomes particularly evident that this difference in perspective is deliberate. The philosopher-kings, having grasped the truth about fine, just, and good things, will know each simulacrum (*eidōla*) for what it truly is and also of what it is a simulacrum. Therefore, the Callipolis will be governed differently from traditional poleis. The latter are ruled by individuals who fight over shadows (*skiamachein*) and struggle (*stasiazein*) against one another in order to rule (*archein*). In contrast, the Callipolis will be led by those who are awake rather than dreaming, and since the philosopher-kings are reluctant to rule, it will be free from internal strife (*astasiastos*) that plagues the other forms of government (Plat. Rep. 520a–d). The downfall of the just city will not spring from socio-political degradation but from the mathematically expressed law of procreation, which affects all living beings – humans, animals, and plants alike. On the other hand, the decline of imperfect regimes – from timocracy, oligarchy, democracy to tyranny – is driven by internal degeneration. Just as the Callipolis is determined by the disposition (*ēthos*) of its citizens, so too are these imperfect regimes shaped by the corresponding arrangements of the soul (*psychē*). The crucial distinction resides in the fact that the *ēthē* of the imperfect regimes are not oriented toward the common good; instead, they demand the satisfaction of specific appetites. Consequently, in every regime, the ruling group tends to pursue only its own interests. This self-serving inclination fosters the development of a new, unchecked appetite in successive generations, leading to internal fragmentation. Such discord (stasis) invariably precipitates a regime change (Plat. Rep. 543c–573c; esp. 543c–547c). Plato introduces the notion of true statesmanship in his treatment of the traditional division of constitutions in the *Politicus*. Using this criterion, he calls into question the standard classifications of political systems. He argues that all traditional constitutions are mere imitations of the constitution, in which the true statesman governs. Those who participate in these conventional constitutions should not be considered statesmen but rather experts in faction (*stasiastikoi*). As they preside (*prostatēs*) over the greatest simulacra (*eidōla*), their nature aligns with the constructs they govern. Consequently, as the greatest imitators (*mimetai*) and magicians (*goētes*), they turn out to be the most proficient sophists among sophists (Plat. Plt. 258b–c, 291a–292d, 293c–e, 300c–303d). In the *Laws*, Plato reiterates the view that the traditional political systems are not true constitutions. Instead, they are methods of running a state that relegate some citizens to live in subjugation (*despozein*) to others, much like slaves (*douleuein*). These systems are named after the ruling classes that dominate them. Within these systems, there is a lack of proper laws aimed at promoting the common good (*koinon*), as existing laws primarily serve the interests of the ruling group. Plato denounces these ruling groups as partisans (*stasiōtai*) and asserts that they do not qualify as true citizens (Plat. Leg. 712e–713a, 714e–715c). In light of the aforementioned statements, it would be misleading to label Plato as pro-monarchic, pro-oligarchic, or pro-democratic,

> But the government of the multitude is weak in all respects and able to do nothing great, either good or bad, when compared with the other forms of government, because in this the powers of government are distributed in small shares among many men; therefore of all these governments when they are lawful, this is the worst, and when they are all lawless it is the best; and if they are all without restraint, life is most desirable in a democracy, but if they are orderly, that is the worst to live in;

This paper argues that these promises of democracy have paradoxically contributed to the emergence of antidemocratic thought.

In the Athenian political system, demagogues, as leaders of the people in a neutral sense of the word, are a structural and indispensable building block (Finley 1962, 19; Mann 2007, 16–32, esp. 21–23, 26–30).[2] Direct democracy precludes the existence of political parties and organisations with which citizens could affiliate and identify themselves. This absence fosters the formation of an abstract entity referred to as "the people" and promotes a strong bond between it and its individual members. Since the demos relies on individual politicians to articulate and deliberate on political issues publicly, its members can also identify with a specific public figure to relate to their collective political power. This form of association enables a political leader to consolidate considerable power through his accomplishments and the emotions he evokes in his followers. The lack of a party structure intensifies this phenomenon, as politicians are not obliged to conform to the identity of a political party and their personal popularity is not tied to the appeal of this particular political organisation, as is commonly observed in representative democracies (Hölkeskamp 1998, 23–24; Rhodes 2016, 263–264). Consequently, it is not surprising that the characteristics of direct democracy contributed to the development of the concept of the demagogue-tyrant.

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just as it would be inappropriate to designate him as anti-monarchic, anti-oligarchic, or anti-democratic. Thinking in these constitutional categories and viewing them in binary terms is emblematic of conventional political discourse. Herodotus's *Constitutional Debate* is representative of this tendency. In it, the pro-democratic Otanes criticises autocratic rule, while the pro-oligarchic Megabyzus disapproves of democracy and monarchy. The pro-monarchic Darius dismisses both democracy and oligarchy (Hdt. 3.80–82). However, Plato expressly rebuts the standard classification of constitutions, along with the associated political thinking, arguing that they are all rooted in factionalism and self-interest rather than in genuine knowledge and a commitment to the common good. Because his political philosophy operates outside the traditional framework, it allows him to conduct a critical assessment of various practices and institutions associated with conventional constitutions while concurrently appreciating some aspects within them. Therefore, Plato can integrate monarchic, oligarchic, and democratic elements into his political theory without necessarily endorsing any of these types of government.

[2] For the origins and different usage of the notion of the demagogue see Finley 1962, 4–5; Connor 1971, 109–119; Zoepffel 1974, 75–88.

According to this paradigm, a demagogue driven by a thirst for power exploits social animosities, manipulates the lower classes, accumulates political power, foments civil strife and, ultimately, establishes a tyrannical rule. The *communis opinio* is that this concept emerged only in the fourth century BCE and was first articulated by Plato. It represents one of the core elements of his model of the transformation of democratic into tyrannical man in Book 8 of the Republic (Plat. Rep. 565e–566e, 568c–569c). Aristotle provides us with the most detailed account of the demagogue-tyrant concept (Arist. Pol. 1292a 4–26; trans. H. Rackham):[3]

> Another kind of democracy is where all the other regulations are the same, but the multitude (*plēthos*) is sovereign (*kryrios*) and not the law (*nomos*); and this comes about when the decrees of the assembly (*psēphismata*) override the law. This state of things is brought about by the demagogues; for in the states under democratic government guided by law a demagogue does not arise, but the best classes of citizens are in the most prominent position; but where the laws are not sovereign, then demagogues arise; for the common people become a single composite monarch (*monarchos*), since the many are sovereign not as individuals but collectively. Yet what kind of democracy Homer means by the words 'no blessing is the lordship of the many' – whether he means this kind or when those who rule as individuals are more numerous, is not clear. However, a people of this sort, as being monarch, seeks to exercise monarchic rule through not being ruled by the law, and becomes despotic (*despotikos*), so that flatterers (*kolakes*) are held in honor. And a democracy of this nature is comparable to the tyrannical form of monarchy, because their spirit is the same, and both exercise despotic control over the better classes, and the decrees voted by the assembly are like the commands issued in a tyranny, and the demagogues (*dēmagōgos*) and the flatterers (*kolax*) are the same people or a corresponding class, and either set has the very strongest influence with the respective ruling power, the flatterers (*kolakes*) with the tyrants and the demagogues with democracies of this kind. And these men cause the resolutions of the assembly to be supreme and not the laws, by referring all things to the people; for they owe their rise to greatness to the fact that the people is sovereign over all things while they are sovereign over the opinion of the people, for the multitude believes them.

[3] See also 1304b19–25; 1305a7–27; 1310a2–6; 1310b12–17; 1320a5–16; cf. Zoepffel 1974, 71–72; Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 293. Alfred Heuss (1971, 15–16) points out that Aristotle never questions Plato's thesis on the close relationship between tyranny and democracy; see also Kamp 1985, 17–18.

This passage shows that this concept consists of the following elements:[4] Firstly, it is a symptom of radical democracy, in which the state's entire power is concentrated in the hands of the people. The term *plēthos*, alongside the evident disregard for established laws, magistrates, and the upper classes, shows that *dēmos* stands for partisanship and particularism rather than the entire citizenry.[5] Secondly, the people wield tyrant-like authority because the decrees of the assembly take precedence over the laws, and the magistrates are completely subservient to the courts which are under the control of the demos.[6] Since the people command the executive, legislative and judicial branches, there is no separation of power and, therefore, no checks and balances. Thirdly, the true holders of supreme authority in democracy are the popular leaders, who have mastery over the people's opinion.[7] Demagogues become its sole interpreters by employing flattery and posing as the strongest advocates of the general will. This leads to an even greater consolidation of state power, which now de facto rests in the hands of the popular leaders. Fourthly, the ascent of demagogues leads to profound political division as they seize the top position in political life previously held by the members of the traditional elite.[8] From all these points, it can be inferred that demagogues are major catalysts of *stasis*.

The prominence of the demagogue-tyrant concept in Plato's and Aristotle's political thought has contributed to its widespread acceptance in modern studies. Scholars commonly presume that Pisistratus and Dionysius I form the historical basis of this concept.[9]

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[4] Rosalind Thomas (2024, 275) lists the main elements of modern 'populism', which exhibits notable parallels with Aristotle's understanding of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm.

[5] Arist. Pol. 1292a 11, 16, 18 (*monarchos*), 13, 26 (*kirios*); 16, 19 (*despotikos*); 18, 23 (*tyrannis*); see also 1292b7–9; 1296a2–5; 1298a31–33; 1308a21–24; 1311a8–9, 16–19; 1312b5–6, 34–37; 1313b32–1314a6; 1319b27–33; 1320b30–34; see Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 293; Tsouni 2024, 352, 356–358.

[6] Arist. Pol. 1292a5–6, 10, 19–20, 24–38; see also 1293a1–10; 1298b13–16; 1305a31–33; 1310a2–6; see also Isoc. 7.20; Plat. Rep. 562d–563e; see Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 290–293; Tsouni 2024, 357–358.

[7] Arist. Pol. 1292a7–11, 21–31; see also 1304b20–1305a35; 1310a2–7; 1313b38–1314a6; 1320a5–7, 29–33; Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 293.

[8] Arist. Pol. 1292a8–10; see also 1304b20–25; 1310a2–6; 1320a5–9; see Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 293, 477–479. The term *traditional elite* refers to individuals and groups distinguished by wealth (*ploutos*), noble birth (*eugeneia*), virtue (*aretē*), cultural education (*paideia*), and leisure (*scholē*) as defined by Aristotle (Arist. Pol. 1291b26–30). For a thorough discussion of the notion of elite in Athens, see Ober 1989, 11–17. The demagogues were also part of the Athenian elite. However, in public life, they often downplayed the attributes typically associated with the upper classes to project an image of closeness and loyalty to the common people. As a consequence, many critics of the demagogues tended to perceive and depict them as *nouveau riche*; see Mann 2007, 170–190.

[9] Cf. Adam 1902, 257–261; Stroheker 1958, 4, 37, 39–43, 53, 150–153; Berve 1967, 216, 222–226, 353; Heuss 1971, 29, 33–38; Frolov 1973, 90–91, 96–108, 106; Finley 1979, 89, 102–103; Lintott 1982, 185–186, 199–200, 240, 246, 249, 260–261; Austin & Vidal-Naquet 1984, 117–119; Gehrke 1985a, 150; Sanders 1987, 133–134; Berger 1992, 41–43, 57–58, 64; Sordi 1992, 20; Deininger 1993, 58–62; O'Neil 1995, 44, 54, 73, 75, esp. 81; Demandt Berlin 1995, 173; Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 486–487; Zahrnt 1997, 162–163; Monoson 2000, 126; Hofer 2000, 215; Schofield 2006, 103, 119–120.

While it is undeniable that Dionysius I utilised demagogic methods to seize power, it is important to note that he did not capitalise on social animosities but rather on the patriotic sentiments and profound anxieties of his fellow citizens, who were troubled by the seemingly unstoppable advance of the Carthaginians (Jordović 2005, 255–262). Furthermore, predating the rise of Dionysius I, Herodotus devised the initial framework for the demagogue-tyrant concept. He envisioned a model of a benevolent leader who looks out for the welfare of the populace and positions himself not in opposition to the elite but rather against self-interested and corrupt individuals (as delineated below). Finally, it is pertinent to note that various studies have stressed the anachronistic nature of the demagogue-tyrant concept in the context of archaic tyranny, particularly in relation to Pisistratus.[10] Considering these facts, it can be deduced that the impetus driving the development of the patron-tyrant model and, consequently, the concept of the demagogue-tyrant must have originated from a different historical occurrence.

2 The Term Demagogue and the Demagogue-Tyrant Concept

Cleon is the name that first comes to mind when one thinks of a notorious demagogue. Aristophanes' *Knights*, enacted in 424 BCE, is a lasting "memorial" to this infamous political figure. The plot revolves around a political setting reminiscent of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm. In it, the state's power is vested in the people, personified by the character Demōs of the Pnyx. He is the master (*despotēs*) of the household (Athens). Meanwhile, the politicians are depicted as his slaves (*oiketēs*, *doulos*).[11] The well-being of these slaves is subject to the whims of their master; those in his favour govern the household as they see please, while those who fall out of grace face his wrath.[12] The character of the slave Paphlagon is a satirical representation of Cleon.[13] His leading position within the

[10] See Spahn 1977, 79–83; Stahl 1987, 60–73, 105, 134–135; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989, 141–153; Barceló 1993, 84; Schütrumpf & Gehrke 1996, 485, 549; de Libero 1996, 393–394, 400–402; see also Nippel 1980, 120–121; Gehrke 1985b, 309–339, 352; Hölkeskamp 1998, 12–14; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000, 8–15; Wees 2002, 76–77, 81.

[11] For the state – household analogy, see Brock 2013, 25–35. Demos: *despotēs* (Aristoph. Equ. 20, 40, 47, 53, 58, 960). The expressions used for politicians are: *oiketēs* (5, 65); *doulos* (44); *rhētōr* (60, 325, 358, 425, 880, 1350); *prostatēs* (1128); *stratēgos* (166, 288, 742, 1313); *dēmēgorein* (957); *tamieuein* (948, 959); *epitrepein* (1098, 1259); *epitropeuein ton demon* (212, 426, 494); *hos prôtos hexei tēs poleōs ta pragmata* (130); see Riedweg 2024, 228–230.

[12] Aristoph. Equ. 1–5, 40–72, 744–751, 803–809, 943–959, 1106–1108, 1111–1150, 1259–1260; see Sommerstein 1981, 2–3, Riedweg 2024, 215–217.

[13] Aristoph. Equ. 44–59; 128–138; 195–202, 739–740; see Sommerstein 1981, 2–3, 146–147; Riedweg 2024, 216–219; Tsoumpra 2024, 108–109. Cleon is explicitly mentioned in the lines 974–995. The Sausage Seller explicitly acknowledges using Paphlagon's methods to defeat him (Aristoph. Equ. 887–890). Therefore, the despicable aspects of his behaviour can also be seen as a reflection of Cleon's conduct; see Tsoumpra 2024, 109.

household is founded on a close bond with Master Demōs and the systematic elimination of any competition. Both are achieved through a perfidious strategy of exploiting inherent weaknesses in human nature, particularly egotism (Aristoph. Equ. 40–75; see Riedweg 2024, 235–236). Firstly, Paphlagon positions himself as a servile steward of his master's interest, taking advantage of his avarice by frequently alluding to salary raises for jurors or the prospect of further increases. Furthermore, he repeatedly appropriates credit for foreign policy successes, such as the capture of Pylos. Aristophanes' analogy with serving delectable food to an individual underscores how, in his view, this tactic appeals to basic human appetites.[14] Unabashed flattery is yet another modus operandi of Paphlagon, expressed through a demonstrative display of love and friendship for Master Dēmos, as well as an explicit glorification of his omnipotence, notably in relation to Athenian imperialism.[15] The third technique generates agitation through merciless verbal abuse of rivals and leveraging Master Dēmos' fears of disloyalty and betrayal. As a result, the master becomes alienated from other slaves while they are left isolated and intimidated.[16] The last practice is that Paphlagon "discovers" new oracles or interprets existing ones to support his policies. Alan Sommerstein points out that heightened interest in prophecies and oracles is a common side effect of war (Thuc. 2.21.3; 2.54; 5.26.3–4; see Gomme 1945, 275), and Cleon took advantage of this craze.[17] Interestingly, this tactic differs from the previous in a crucial manner. While the rest are characterised by overt displays of subservience, in this case, Paphlagon implicitly asserts superiority on the basis of possessing "superior knowledge".

The insignias of Paphlagon's sway over Master Dēmos are a garland and a ring. Magistrates, councillors and orators wore garlands in the Assembly, symbolising their official capacity and public role.[18] Conversely, the ring with the master seal confers upon the slave the authority to autonomously conduct transactions on behalf of his master. Despite being a symbol derived from the private sphere, it effectively epitomises Paphlagon's

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[14] Aristoph. Equ. 50–59, 215, 255–256, 391–396, 643–682, 716–718, 741–744, 755, 773–780, 796–809, 814–816, 845–846, 858–926, 954, 1005, 1019, 1050–1059, 1065–1066, 1078–1079, 1091–1106, 1152–1120, 1350–1361; see also 781–794 (comfortable lifestyle); see Brock 2013, 28; Tsoumpra 2024, 110.

[15] *Erastēs*, *erōmenos*, *eran*, *philtatos*, *philos*, *philein*, *philodēmos* etc. (Aristoph. Equ. 724–740, 769–773, 779, 787, 793, 821, 861, 945–946, 1340–1345); *Hellēnōn arksē pantōn*; *arksai se dei chōras hapasēs*; *aietos*; *pasēs gēs basileueis*; etc. (Aristoph. Equ. 797, 965–969, 1013–1015, 1086–1089; see also 1111–1120, 1330–1333).

[16] Aristoph. Equ. 1–5, 59–75, 210, 214–215, 222–223, 235–239, 255–263, 276–314, 343, 359–374, 429–431, 441–489, 511, 625–638, 691–731, 773–780, 828–829, 864–867, 1017–1024, 1397–1408.

[17] Aristoph. Equ. 61–62, 797–809, 818, 960–972, 997–1089, 1229–1248; see Sommerstein 1981, 148.

[18] Aristoph. Equ. 1227–1228, 1250; see also 968; see Dem. 26.5; 58.27; Lycurg. Leoc. 122; cf. Sommerstein 1981, 208; Riedweg 2024, 231.

remarkable consolidation of power.[19] Aristophanes vividly illustrates in several ways how Paphlagon not only wields comprehensive authority over Athenian foreign and domestic policy, but also surpasses the institutions of the polis: he oversees everything by observing everything and stands with one foot in Pylos and the other in the Assembly;[20] he commands over the people, the agora, the harbours, the Pnyx, and all islands (allies); and he can make the demos expand and contract at his pleasure, trample on the Council, trim back the *strategoi*, abuse the audit of magistrates, and openly intimidate the wealthy with fabricated charges.[21] The revelation that Paphlagon secretly wears another ring with a distinct seal from the one bestowed upon him by Master Dēmos is the ultimate evidence of his usurpation of state power and his blatant flouting of the established institutional framework.[22]

A key consequence of Cleon's demagoguery and monopolisation of power is that the traditional political elite is pushed out of the highest echelons of political life. The title and opening of the play underline that a socio-political division in Athens accompanies this shift. A new breed of politicians with a commercial background (sheep-monger, hemp-monger, leather-monger, and sausage-monger) have overtaken the political leadership, marginalising the traditional landed and military elite who had previously served the people well. Aristophanes articulates the concerns of this sidelined elite through the chorus, comprised of the Knights, who traditionally represent the finest segment of society in terms of birth, education, wealth, and vigour.[23] The animosity between the Knights and Paphlagon in the play is palpable and intense. The Knights remind the audience of their unwavering devotion to Athens, steadfastness in past battles, and willingness to defend the city selflessly. This, in conjunction with the scathing criticism of Cleon and similar political figures, suggests that the political leadership of Athens should be drawn from this elite stratum. Simultaneously, it becomes evident that Paphlagon attacked the Knights for disloyalty to popular rule and that the people resented the philolaconism and taste for the luxury exhibited by some elite members.[24]

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[19] Aristoph. Equ. 947, 952; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 44.1 (the *epistatēs* of the prytanes was the keeper of the state seal); cf. Sommerstein 1981, 194; Rhodes 1981, 531–532; Riedweg 2024, 230–231.

[20] Aristoph. Equ. 74–78; see also Eup. frg. 316 K.-A.; Hom. *Od.* 11.109; cf. Sommerstein 1981, 148–149.

[21] Aristoph. Equ. 63–70, 164–174, 255–263, 274, 353–357, 363, 714–720; see Sommerstein 1981, 148, 156–157, 162.

[22] Aristoph. Equ. 947–961; see Riedweg 2024, 257–264.

[23] Aristoph. Equ. 1–5, 128–149, 191–193, 217–219; see Sommerstein 1981, 150–151; Henderson 2019, 244–245; Tsoumpra 2024, 116–118.

[24] Aristoph. Equ. 223–234, 242–273, 324–334, 565–630, 734–740, 1111–1130, 1329–1334; see also Ach. 6–8, 299–302; cf. Sommerstein 1981, 3–4, 153–154.

Aristophanes devotes significant attention to demonstrating that Paphlagon's moral depravity extends beyond his political demeanour. At the root of his relationship to politics lies excessive selfishness, which puts personal gain above everything else. He readily and unashamedly appropriates the public good and the assets of private citizens to gratify his insatiable avarice. Bereft of any sense of responsibility toward the polis and his fellow citizens, he resorts to bribery, larceny, robbery, deceit and extortion.[25] The same motive drives Paphlagon's aggressive warmongering. He fears that if peace is restored, his manipulative tactics will lose their effectiveness, and people will finally recognise the deleterious impact of his political agenda and the crimes he has perpetrated. Paphlagon justifies his belligerence by invoking Athenian imperialism, claiming that the people will rule over all Greeks and reap material benefits.[26] His moral corruption and contempt for the mores manifests also in sexual licentiousness. The playwright frequently mentions that Paphlagon and persons like him are debauchers and catamites (*laikazein, katapygōn*).[27]

Considering that Paphlagon embodies many of the defining traits of a demagogue, it is unsurprising that the earliest attested instance of the *dēmagōgos* family of words appears in the *Knights*. Initially, the term demagogue did not carry the pejorative connotations it does in contemporary usage, simply connoting leadership of the people in Greek.[28] Aristophanes' play marks the term's transition to the modern, derogatory meaning. In lines 191–193, *dēmagōgia* is mentioned as "no longer a job for a man of education and good character". Some scholars have observed that this indicates that initially, it had a neutral meaning, referring to "leadership of the people". The disparaging comment reveals a gradual shift to a new unfavourable connotation. Line 217 supports this interpretation by associating *dēmagōgikos* with traits such as "repulsive voice, low birth, (and) marketplace morals".[29] Hence, the play indicates that the word demagogue pre-dates

[25] Aristoph. Equ. 65–66, 103–104, 137, 203–204, 248, 280–300, 314–318, 353–354, 361, 391–394, 438, 465–469, 705–709, 716–718, 766, 801–803, 821–835, 839–840, 929–940, 956, 985–996, 1030–1034, 1080–1083, 1218–1226, 1239–1252.

[26] Aristoph. Equ. 792–820, 1388–1396; see also 174, 965–966, 1086–1087, 1300–1305, 1330–1333; Thuc. 5.16.1; cf. Sommerstein 1981, 186–187; Riedweg 2024, 256.

[27] Aristoph. Equ. 167, 423–428, 635–640, 877–880, 1242; see Dover 1978, 141–142 with n. 12; Sommerstein 1981, 151–152, 166, 178, 191; Davidson 1998, 161, 168–173; Tsoumpra 2024, 112, 118–120. One of Paphlagon's key character traits is shamelessness (Aristoph. Equ. 277, 324–331, 385, 398, 409, 638, 1206).

[28] The term *dēmagōgos* and its cognates derives from *dēmos* (the people) and *agein* (to lead), while the *dēmēgoria* family of words stems from *dēmos* and *agoreuein* (to speak in the Assembly); see Connor 1971, 109–110; Ostwald 1986, 201–203; Ober 1989, 106 with n. 7; Lane 2012, 180–181.

[29] Translation from J. Henderson; see also Aristoph. Ran. 416–425; cf. Sommerstein 1981, 153; Dover 1991, 69 with n. 1; Lane 2012, 184–186; Henderson 2019, 244; Riedweg 2024, 229–230; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 26.1; 27.1; cf. Rhodes 1981, 323–324, 335. Aristophanes invents the term *Dēmologokleōn* in the *Wasps* (Aristoph. Vesp. 342); see Macdowell 1971, 180; Biles & Olson 2015, 198.

Cleon, suggesting a linguistic metamorphosis in the 420s BCE towards a negative connotation.

In deriding Paphlagon's vulgarity, shameless flattery, and divisive tactics, Aristophanes makes it evident that Cleon's role as a political leader has shifted to that of an agent of the interests of the common people rather than the entire community. This transition allowed him to usurp and effectively monopolise political power in Athens. Although there are undeniable similarities to the demagogue-tyrant concept, Aristophanes refrains from explicitly labelling Cleon as a tyrant or insinuating that he aspires to become one. This deliberate omission is noteworthy due to two circumstances. Firstly, the playwright is cognisant that the accusation of striving for tyrannical rule was a common tactic used to discredit political opponents, which Cleon readily utilised.[30] Secondly, the Chorus employs vivid language and expressions to emphasise the extraordinary power of a demagogue (Aristoph. Equ. 836–840; trans. J. Henderson):[31]

> I envy you your ready tongue! Keep thrusting forward this way
> and you'll be the greatest man in Greece, hold sole power in the city,
> and rule over the allies, in your hand a trident for shaking them and
> quaking them and making lots of money.

Paphlagon's fake prophecy about himself is equally intriguing:

> There is a woman who shall bear a lion in holy Athens
> Who will fight for Demos against a swarm of gnats
> As stalwartly as for his cubs: keep him safe,
> Building a wooden wall and iron towers.

Herodotus says a comparable oracle was purportedly given before the birth of the famous tyrant Cypselus of Corinth. He also recounts that Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, had a dream on the eve of his assassination at the Panathenaea. In this vision, he received a message predicting the impending punishment of the lion. Paphlagon's reference to the wooden wall signals that Aristophanes alludes to well-known prophecies.[32] From all this follows, Cleon and the contemporary reaction to his politics have influenced the

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[30] Aristoph. Equ. 445–452; Vesp. 417, 463–507; Av. 1074; Lys. 618–619, 630–635; Thesm. 335–338, 1136–1145; see also Equ. 255–257, 475–478, 628, 860–863; Vesp. 345, 953; Eup. frg. 193 K.-A; And. 1.36; Thuc. 6.15.4; 27.3, 28.2; 53.3; 60.1; cf. Macdowell 1971, 108; Sommerstein 1981, 167–169; Biles & Olson 2015, 199, 239–240.

[31] See also *hypermegas* (158); *tagos* (159); *archelaos* (164); *anēr megistos* (179); *ischyein mega* (182); *beltistos anēr* (765); *genesth'* [...] *en tēi polei megas* (981–982); [...] *paradōsō tēs pyknos tas hēnias* (1108).

[32] Aristoph. Equ. 1037–1040 (trans. J. Henderson); Hdt. 5.56.1; 5.92.β3; 7.141.3; see Sommerstein 1981, 199–200.

term demagogue to become tantamount to poor political leadership, akin to that of a mob leader. Yet, they are not the primary driving force behind the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant concept.

Thucydides supports this conclusion. Unlike Aristophanes, he labels Cleon explicitly a demagogue. While he criticises Cleon as "the most violent (*biaiotatos*) man in Athens" in the Mytilenian Debate, Thucydides avoids using the term "demagogue" in a pejorative way in the Pylos Debate at 4.21.3. Instead, he only mentions Cleon's great persuasiveness in this context (Lane 2012, 186–187; Harris 2024, 30–31). Still, the historian depicts Cleon as a politician who systematically fuels hostility and fear (Lane 2012, 187–188; Harris 2024, 31). The only other occurrence of the word *dēmagōgos* in Thucydides reinforces the impression that it stands for a politician who advances the separate interests of a specific socio-political faction. In the lead-up to the oligarchic coup of 411 BCE, Androcles, the foremost champion of the people (*tou dēmou malista proestōta*), was assassinated by a group of young pro-oligarchic conspirators. Thucydides explains that Androcles was targeted because of his role as a *dēmagōgos*. The context suggests that the word demagogue now conveys partisan alignment, albeit without a disparaging connotation.

Throughout the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the term demagogue retained a certain level of ambiguity, encompassing positive, neutral, and negative connotations while also conveying partisanship. Apart from Aristotle, the term was primarily utilised by rhetors within a public context.[33] It is notable that there are several instances where the term is used in connection with the notion of tyranny. Particularly intriguing is the

[33] For instance, in a speech about 399 BCE, Lysias mentions how Phrynichus, Peisander, and other *dēmagōgoi* established the first oligarchy due to fear of retribution for their numerous transgressions against the people (Lys. 25.9). Similarly, in another speech dated around 390 BCE, Lysias states that the responsibility of good leaders (*agathoi dēmagōgoi*) is not to enrich themselves at the expense of the public (Lys. 27.10). In *To Nicocles*, Isocrates advises the ruler of Cyprus to govern his people justly by preventing them from committing or suffering acts of hybris, using the verb *dēmagōgein* to convey this (Isoc. 2.16). In this context, the term demagogue holds a positive connotation within the Mirror of Princes literature. In *On Peace*, Isocrates employs demagogue in both positive and negative contexts. While he lauds Pericles as a *dēmagōgos* for his integrity and exemplary leadership, he criticises his successors for advancing personal gain at the cost of the common good, ultimately leading to the downfall of Athens (Isoc. 8.122, 125–126, 129). Xenophon also uses the term demagogue in the *Hellenica*, specifically in the context of stasis, to refer to a partisan leader of the people who opposes oligarchy. Remarkably, he also equates it with *prostates tou dēmou* (Xen. Hell. 2.3.27; 5.2.6–7). Demosthenes employs the verb *dēmagōgein* in 341 BCE to describe politicians (*politeuomenoi*) who cater to the whims of the people (*charizomenoi*), spoiling them (*tryphan*) and easily flattering them (*kolakeuesthai*) by listening to everything according to their own pleasure (*hēdonē*) (Dem. 8.33–34). Nonetheless, he also uses the term in the neutral sense to denote a political leader (Dem. 26.4). Aeschines asserts in 330 BCE that a person who displays wickedness in his private relations is not trustworthy in public affairs and could never become a good *dēmagōgos*. He also argues that there are bad demagogues who harm their polis (Aeschin. 3.78, 134–135, 226). Dinarchus uses *dēmagōgos* as a terminus technicus and synonym for *hēgemōn*. Despite the original neutral connotation, the word is associated with a popular leader who is accused of corruption and acting against the interests of the people (Din. 1.1, 10, 31, 53, 99). Hyperides states in 323 BCE that the good demagogue is the protector of his country, not a traitor, and lists *dēmagōgoi* alongside *stratēgoi* and the guardians of

case of the speech *Against Alcibiades*. It is important to note that it was not composed by Andocides; rather, it was presumably written in early fourth century BCE as a literary exercise by an individual attempting to envision what a speech on Athenian ostracism might have been like (Heftner 1995, 75–82; Gribble 1997, 367–388; Gagarin & MacDowell 1998, 160–161). In this work, Alcibiades is accused of discrediting democracy by speaking (*logos*) like a *dēmagōgos* and acting (*ergon*) like a *tyrannos*. The juxtaposition posits that the demagogue and the tyrant are two antipodes. It is also emphasised that Alcibiades' tyrannical conduct was not limited to a specific social segment of society but rather extended to all Athenians. He does not treat his fellow citizens as equals and mistreats them verbally, physically and financially.[34]

Isocrates uses the traditional mythical narratives in *Helen* to present Theseus as an ideal ruler. His character and approach to rule (*archein*) are defined by *andreia*, *epistēmē*, *eusebeia* and *sōphrosynē*. Theseus believed that those who oppress their fellow citizens are "not rulers, but pests, of their cities" (*ouk archontas all noēmata tōn poleōn*). Thus, he opted not to rule by force and fear but chose to exercise supreme rule (*tyrannein*) in consonance with the will of the people, the common good, equality and merit. This approach earned him affection and goodwill from the citizens, who preferred his authority over their democracy. Isocrates's line of reasoning not only exalts Theseus but also redefines the notion of tyranny. Therefore, he employs the term *dēmagōgos* in a highly favourable manner when he states that Theseus, by his omnipotence (*exousia*), was a tyrant but, by his good deeds (*euergesiai*), a champion of the people.[35] Isocrates expounds in the *Panathenaicus* that the Athenians eventually embraced Theseus' proposal and instituted a moderate democracy. They did not confuse licentiousness (*akolasia*) with freedom (*eleutheria*) and *licence to do what one pleases* (*exousia*) with happiness (*eudaimonia*). Instead, they entrusted the helm of the state to the best and wisest citizens who led exemplary lives. This form of government endured for a millennium until the rise of Pisistratus. When he became the champion of the people (*dēmagōgos*), he expelled the best citizens under the guise of being partisans of oligarchy, dissolved the democracy and set himself up as a tyrant.[36] Considering that the *Panathenaicus* was composed between 342 and 339 BCE, it could not have contributed to the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant concept. The notions that Theseus founded the Athenian democracy and that class conflict played a role in Pisistratus's ascension to power existed in Athenian politi-

public affairs (Hyp. 5.4–5). Renate Zoepffel (1974, 80–85) and Edward Harris (2024, 30–34) give an instructive overview of the different meanings and connotations of the term demagogue.

[34] Andoc. 4.26–27; see also Thuc. 6.16.2; Isoc. 16.33–34; Plut. Alc. 11; see Heftner 1995, 81–82.

[35] Isoc. 10.31–37; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 41.2; cf. Roth 2003, 156–161; Atack 2019, 78–82, 127.

[36] Isoc. 12.130–148; see Roth 2003: 158–187; Atack 2019, 83–84.

cal thought as early as the fifth century BCE.[37] These undeniable anachronisms strongly imply Isocrates' anachronistic application of the demagogue-tyrant concept.

3 Plato and the Demagogue-Tyrant Concept

Based on the preceding considerations, it is apparent that the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant concept cannot be traced back to Cleon's political activity or associated with the evolution of the term demagogue. Hence, it is necessary to redirect the focus to Plato, who formulated the demagogue-tyrant concept. The first circumstance that attracts attention is that he refrains from employing the word *dēmagōgos* opting instead for *hēgemōn*, *stasiazōn*, but above all *prostatēs* and its cognates.[38] Apart from this the correlations with Aristophanes and Aristotle prevail. Plato postulates that the significant accumulation of power in the hands of a popular leader is not merely an incidental historical occurrence, but rather a fundamental structural component of democracy, a viewpoint also voiced in the *Knights* and Aristotle's *Politics*:[39]

> Now, aren't the people always in the habit of setting up one man as their special champion, nurturing him and making him great? / They are. / And it's clear that, when a tyrant arises, this special leadership (*prostatikos*) is the sole root from which he sprouts.

The whole process is propelled by self-interest and greed. A parasitical sloth, known as the drones (*kēphēnes*), shapes public life in a democracy.[40] These individuals galvanise the masses to become politically active by extracting wealth from the well-off and redistributing it among the people while keeping the lion's share for themselves. When the wealthy resist by addressing the demos and employing other tactics, the drones retaliate by vilifying the affluent for allegedly plotting against popular rule. The people, driven by ignorance, succumb to these slanders, turning the wealthy into actual oligarchs. This triggers lawfare, during which one of these drones becomes the champion of the masses. He

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[37] Eur. *Supp*. 349–353, 399–456; Hdt. 1.59.3–60, 62.1, 63.2–64.1; Dem. 59.75; 60.28; Arist. Ath. pol. 13.3–14.3; *Epit. Heracl.* frg 4; see Rhodes 1981, 2, 65, 74–79, 484–485; Roth 2003, 160–162; Atack 2019, 48–49, 81.

[38] *Prostatēs* (Plat. Rep. 565d, 566c, 566d); *proistēmi* (564d, 565a, 565c, 565e, 569a), *prostatikos* (565d); *boēthos* (566b); *hēgemōn* (566e); *stasiazōn* (566a), see also *stasiastikoi* (and not *politikoi*) in the *Statesman* (Plt. 303c).

[39] Plat. Rep. 565c–d; Aristoph. Vesp. 1121–1130; see also Plat. Rep. 564b–e (trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve)

[40] Plat. Rep. 564b–e, 565b–c; see also 552c–d, 559c–e, 567d–e, 573a; Hes. Thg. 594–599; *Op*. 302–306; Aristoph. Vesp. 1114–1119; Xen. *Cyr*. 2.2.25; *Oec*. 17.14–15; see also Hippoc. *Praec*. 12; cf. Macdowell 1971, 275–276; West 1978, 233; Biles & Olson 2015, 413.

intentionally deepens the divisions by proceeding as a leader of a faction (*ho stasiazōn*) and systematically targeting the wealthy (Plat. Rep. 565a–c). His violence provokes his victims to retaliate against him violently. This causes the people to grant personal protection to their leader, who transforms into a tyrant after disposing of all who opposed him. Once in power, he secures his position by making various promises, feigning kindness, redistributing land, abolishing debts, inciting wars, making peace with some of his enemies, eliminating any citizen who might threaten him and surrounding himself with like-minded individuals.

It seems pretty evident that Plato carefully read Aristophanes' *Knights*. Moreover, Aristotle's *Politics* suggests that many of the mentioned strategies and measures were commonly linked to tyrannical conduct, whether justified or not (Jordović 2011, 36–64). Nonetheless, there remains a lack of explicit correlations to the underlying rationale behind the metamorphosis of a popular leader into a tyrant. Plato's *Gorgias* addresses this question by mounting a vigorous critique of the rhetorical art and the sophists (Zoepffel 1974, 87). I have detailed elsewhere that it also serves as a scathing critique of democratic ideology and leadership (Jordović 2019, 23–138). The dialogue is divided into three smaller discourses. Throughout these discussions, the standpoints of Socrates' interlocutors (Gorgias, Polus, Callicles) become increasingly focused on unscrupulous individualism and reflections on categories of power.[41] In a structure analogous to the dialogue, the sophist Gorgias presents three definitions of traditional oratory during his dialogue with Socrates. These definitions draw attention to the foundational resemblances between oratory and demagoguery in Plato's estimation. The first is quite broad and delineates rhetoric as a craft that achieves everything through speech (Plat. Grg. 450b–d, 451d).

The second definition declares rhetoric as the greatest good, the source of freedom for humankind itself, and the means for each person to rule over others in one's city. It is the ability to persuade by speech the judges in the law courts, councillors in the council chamber, assembly members in the Assembly, and any other political gathering. This power (*dynamis*) to persuade the multitude (*plēthos*) enables the rhetor to turn any expert into his slave (*doulos*). The definition carries profound implications on multiple levels. It implies a strong connection with the Athenian ideology of freedom as the notions of *eleutheria* and *archē* were its central tenets and marked as the 'greatest'.[42] Gorgias' assertion that rhetoric is the fount of power and freedom addresses one of the fundamental questions of the democratic system: the complex interdependency between the orator

[41] Cf. Hentschke 1971, 38; Ostwald 1986, 244; Rutherford 1995, 142; Stauffer 2006, 15; Doyle 2006, 599–600.

[42] Cf. Plat. Rep. 562b–c; Thuc. 2.62–63.2, 64.3; 3.45.6 (greatest good); 6.82–83.4, 87.2, 89.6; 7.69.2; Xen. Ath. pol. 1.8; Eur. *Supp*. 352–353; see also Hdt. 1.170.1–2; Lys. 2.18, 33, 55, 61–63. Concerning this topic see Dodds 1959, 202; Raaflaub 1994, 118–126, esp. 122–124.

and the demos. The rhetor exercises dominion over the people to ensure their freedom while simultaneously relying on their endorsement to sustain influence.[43] This delicate balance can be easily disrupted because both sides concentrate the power of the state in their hands. According to this definition, institutions such as courts, councils, and assemblies are not independent political factors but rather conduits for the interaction between the political leader and the public. As a result, both the rhetor and the people must restrain and fortify each other, depending on the circumstances. Ideally, both sides, and at the very least one side, should resist the temptations of power, as otherwise, there can be no checks and balances. Thucydides' famous judgment of Pericles reflects this way of thinking:[44]

> His power was in his distinguished reputation and his intellect, and he was patently incorruptible. He controlled the mass of the people in a free manner, without restricting their freedom, leading them rather than letting them lead him. He had no need to seek improper means of influence by telling them what they wanted to hear (*hēdonē*): he already had the influence of his standing, and was even prepared to anger them by speaking against their mood. For example, whenever he saw them dangerously overconfident, he would make a speech which shocked them into a state of apprehension, and likewise he could return them from irrational fear to confidence. What was happening was democracy in name, but in fact the domination of the leading man (*prōtou andros archē*). Pericles' successors were more on a level with one another, and because each was striving for first position they were inclined to indulge popular whim (*hēdonē*) even in matters of state policy. The result — inevitable in a great city with an empire to rule — was a series of mistakes, most notably the Sicilian expedition.

As will be shown, Gorgias' third definition confirms that his second definition presupposes strong-minded, competent, and self-controlled political leaders who, like Pericles, are committed to the common good. Still, the second definition contains one of the key elements of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm: the power transfer from the people to the demagogue. It is made clear that this power is immense as the rhetor governs the city and can reduce others to the status of slaves. Various renowned scholars have pointed out that this introduction of the theme of 'power and rule' sets the stage for the argu-

[43] Plat. Grg. 452d2–8; see Cooper 1999, 33 with n. 5; cf. Dalfen 2004, 19; Jordović 2019, 30–31.

[44] Thuc. 2.65.8–11 (trans. M. Hammond with changes); see also Arist. Ath. pol. 28; cf. Classen & Steup [4]1897, 123; cf. also Parry 1989, 143–146; Raaflaub 1989, 55; Hornblower 2004, 80–81; Azoulay 2014, 43; Mann 2024: 180–182. For a more detailed discussion see Jordović 2019, 30–21.

ments put forward by Polus and Callicles.[45] This nexus is noteworthy as the latter two express a rationale that converges with the demagogue-tyrant concept when discussing the power of oratory and orators. Polus explicitly draws a parallel between the power of the rhetor and that of a tyrant, asserting that both enjoy *the freedom to act as they please* (*exousia*).[46] Callicles advocates the right of the stronger, glorifies tyranny and openly displays contempt for the common people, while also wanting to assume a leadership position within a democratic framework (Plat. Grg. 482e–484e, 485d–486d, 511a–c, 512e–514a, 515a–b). His two-faced approach reveals a mindset that outwardly conforms to democratic norms but clandestinely seeks absolute power. Consequently, Callicles is willing to imitate (*mimēsis*) the demos, as his well-being is contingent upon the goodwill of his master (*despotēs*, *tyrannos*). He is even prepared to become a friend of the people, though the price of this friendship (*philia*) is his complete submission. However, Callicles' love for the Athenian demos is that of the bad *erōs*.[47] He staunchly opposes the philosophical way of life and prefers a traditional political life. He argues shamelessly that all pleasures (*hēdonai*) and desires (*epithymiai*) should be given free rein, and one must exercise exceptional power (*basileia*, *dynasteia* and *tyrannis*) to serve them. Callicles' desires essentially enslave him as this behaviour is compulsory and dictated by *physis*.[48] Hence, Socrates characterises the life celebrated by the young Athenian as the life of a *kinaidos*.[49] The unsaid but powerful corollary is that Callicles is incapable of true friendship due to his slavish nature. His desire to dominate mirrors his internal unfreedom.[50] The *Phaedrus* elucidates how individuals in the grip of this kind of *erōs* reject genuine friendship in favour of a relationship founded on dominance and subservience. Their friendship (*philia*) arises devoid of any goodwill, and they befriend (*philein*) their lovers like wolves love lambs.[51] The *Republic* postulates that the tyrannical man, who

[45] See Irwin 1979, 116; Rutherford 1995, 147–148; Rowe 1998, 248; Dalfen 2004, 188–189; Sørensen 2016, 43.

[46] Plat. Grg. 466b–c. For the concept of *freedom to do what one pleases*, see Morawetz 2000; Jordović 2019, 58–73; Collette-Dučić 2019, 417–442; Filonik 2019, 1–24; Stemmer 2023, 167–205, esp. 177–182, 185.

[47] Plat. Grg. 509e–511b, 512e–513d; see also 466b–c, 481d–482a. Josiah Ober (1998, 208) points out that the terms despotēs and tyrannos refer to the Athenian demos.

[48] Plat. Grg. 491d–492e, 493b–495a; esp. 491e–b, 492a, 492d, 493e–494a; see Jordović 2019, 85–89, 96–97.

[49] Plat. Grg. 494e; see also Aristoph. Equ. 1242; Nub. 1023, 1085; cf. Ludwig 2002, 190; Davidson 2004, 78–118; Jordović 2019, 96–97.

[50] Plat. Grg. 491d, 507d–508a, see also Prt. 353c, 358b–c, Rep. 329c–d, 430e–432a; Phdr. 256a, 258e; Alc. 122a; Gorgias DK 82 B 11a, 15; Xen. Mem. 1.5.4–5; 2.1.17–20; 6.1; 4.2.36–39; Isoc. 1.21; 2.29 see Dodds 1959, 293; Irwin 1979, 224–225; Johnson 1996, 202–203; Denyer 2001, 180–181; Ludwig 2002, 190–191; Dalfen 2004, 360–361, 430–432; Dorion 2007, 126–135; Jordović 2019, 97.

[51] Plat. Phdr. 237e–241d, 253c–254e, 255b; see Jordović 2019, 91–95.

evolves out of the democratic nature, is plagued by the tyranny of his own *erōs*. His constantly expanding and varied cravings drive him to relentlessly seek more political power in order to gather enough resources to appease the insatiable bad *erōs*.[52] Plato's intention to portray Callicles as someone who could have embarked upon a career as a demagogue becomes apparent against this backdrop. In this scenario, the young Athenian epitomises the kind of *prostatēs* and *erastēs* of the demos who aspires to wield tyrant-like power. [53]

Gorgias' third definition confirms that the delicate symbiotic relationship between the political leader and the demos is advantageous for all parties as long as the orators use the significant power inherent in rhetoric for the good of the people. According to it, the orator uses his rhetorical expertise to effectively persuade the masses in the assembly to favour him over a genuine expert on the subject under discussion (e.g., physician). The logical implication of this claim is that the rhetors are masters of deception, from which, in turn, the conclusion might be derived that demagoguery is a natural progression of traditional oratory. Gorgias is keenly aware of the potential for abuse in rhetoric. He, therefore, insists that rhetorical proficiency should be wielded justly, similar to any other competitive craft and that the teacher should not be held accountable for his pupils' misuse of this *technē*. To support his thesis about the rhetor's power, Gorgias cites a historical example that also illustrates the responsible use of rhetoric. He points out that the material foundations of the Athenian *archē* (shipyards, docks and Long Walls) were established based on the counsel of Pericles and Themistocles rather than on the advice of the experts.[54] Kurt Raaflaub has shown that these edifices stimulated the development of the ideas of absolute sovereignty and absolute self-sufficiency. These concepts, in turn, form the two pillars of the concept of freedom through power.[55] Thus, Themistocles and Pericles have indeed expanded and consolidated the demos' freedom through their mastery of public speaking, particularly when considered within the framework of Gorgias' second definition.

Both the argument on the teacher's innocence for his pupil's conduct and the reference to Themistocles and Pericles directly intertwine Gorgias' explanations of the nature of rhetoric with Socrates' stern criticism of the preeminent Athenian statesmen in his debate with Callicles. Gorgias' stance on the two statesmen aligns closely with Thucydides'

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[52] Plat. Rep. 561a–562a, 573a–b, 574b–576a, 578e–580c; see also Eur. fr. 850 (Nauck); cf. Dorion 2007, 132–135; Ludwig 2002, 191; Jordović 2019, 103–104; Arruzza 2019, 139–142, 149–152, 181–183.

[53] For a comprehensive examination of the similarities between Callicles and the demagogic mindset, see Jordović 2019, 173–179, esp. 177–178.

[54] Plat. Grg. 455d–e; see also Thuc. 1.90.3, 93.3; 107.1; Plut. Per. 13.5; see Dodds 1959, 209–210, 325; Stadter 1989, 171–172; Hornblower Oxford 1991, 138–140, 167.

[55] Thuc. 3.45.6, 6.89.6, 7.69.2; Hdt. 1.21; see Raaflaub 2004, 181–187; Jordović 2019, 46–48.

views. The historian lauds Themistocles as an exceptional statesman.[56] As shown above, he also asserts that Pericles exemplifies the intricate symbiosis between the political leader and the citizens more than any Athenian politician because he did not resort to flattery (*pros hēdonēn ti legein*). At the same time, his successors were responsible for Athens' decline, as they indulged the demos' whim (*hēdonē*). Interestingly, Plato's Socrates directly and unequivocally contradicts this perspective during his exchange with Callicles. While he does censure Themistocles, Miltiades, and Cimon, his primary criticism is directed at Pericles.[57] Plato mentions twice Socrates' first-hand witness of Pericles' rhetori-

[56] Thuc. 1.74.1, 90.3–91.7, 93, 138.3. For Thucydides' portrayal of Themistocles as equal to Pericles in terms of his statesman-like qualities; see Leppin 1999, 143–167, esp. 147–148, 154, 162–163, 167–168; Rood 2004, 138; 227 n. 7; Rhodes 2006, 533; Foster 2010, 112 n. 67, 129–131. For Pericles see note 94.

[57] See Jordović 2019: 24–32. It is worth noting that among all the famous Athenian statesmen, Plato consistently singles out Pericles as the preeminent orator in Greece of the Classical Age. The renowned statesman is compared only to Nestor, Antenor, and Adrastus, mythical figures most noted for their eloquence (Plat. Symp. 221c; Phdr. 269a, 269e; Menex. 235e). At the same time, Plato's criticism of Pericles' rhetorical art in these dialogues resonates on many levels with the critique of traditional rhetoric in the *Gorgias*; cf. Heitsch 1993, 132; Yunis 2011, 11–12, 173, 180–181, 184; Sansone 2020, 18–20.

In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades praises Pericles' eloquence. Still, only Socrates' words affect him so profoundly that he realises his life is not better than the most miserable slave and that his political career is a waste of time (Plat. Symp. 215a–216c, esp. 215e). In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates clearly distinguishes his psychagogic rhetoric from the conventional art of speaking. He views traditional rhetoric as a form of deception (*pseudein*, *apatan*), enabling individuals to argue for the opposing side of any case (*antilogikos*) and make a persuasive case for virtually any proposition, thereby generating unstable ideas about good and bad, right and wrong. This tendency manifests itself markedly in public speeches (*dēmēgoria*). In the case of the traditional oratory, the speakers are ignorant of the subject of their discussion but schooled in appealing to the beliefs of the masses (*plēthos*). This allows them to persuade the masses to accept something that they are already inclined to believe (Phdr. 259e–262e; see Heitsch 1993, 126–135, 138–139; Yunis 2011, 10–14, 178–188). Thus, the techniques of traditional rhetoric, as noted by Phaedrus, can be a mighty force (*dynamis*), particularly in mass assemblies. While acknowledging this impact, Socrates argues that sophistic rhetoric is a practice rather than a *technē* and that rhetors lack the necessary knowledge to impart the true art of speaking to others. He supports this argument by comparing the rhetoricians to genuine experts such as physicians. Socrates also contends that traditional rhetoric is incompatible with dialectic, which he views almost identical to philosophy and the appropriate medium for transmitting knowledge. At this point, Socrates invokes Pericles, suggesting that the famous great statesman would advise forbearance towards the sophistic teachers of rhetoric, given that their ignorance of dialectic prevents them from even defining rhetoric. It is important to note that Socrates does not claim that Pericles was proficient in dialectic. Instead, he explains that the renowned statesman was the "most accomplished rhetorician of all" because Anaxagoras taught him to be well-versed in endless talk and ethereal speculation (*meterologia*) about nature (Phdr. 265d–270a; see Heitsch 1993, 147–168; Yunis 2011, 13–14, 196–206). This shows that Socrates' appraisal of Pericles is actually meant ironically. It is worth remembering that in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates is ridiculed for his purported "meteorology", and Strepsiades seeks his assistance in educating Phidippides in the art of argumentation, i.e. rhetoric. Moreover, in the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, Socrates strongly distances himself from Anaxagoras' teachings (Aristoph. Nub. 94–118, 218–424, esp. 224–228, 239, 317, 333, 360, 1248, 1480, 1485; Plat. Ap. 18b–d; 19b–c, 26d–e; *Phd.* 96a–98c; Alc. I 118b–c; see also Xen. Mem. 4.7.4–7; Gorg. DK 82 B 11,13; Eur. fr. 913 (Nauck)); cf. Dover 1968, XX, 92, 96–98, 107, 110; Heitsch 1993, 164–166 with n. 337 and 351; Yunis 2011, 206–207). It is also significant that in *Phaedrus*, Socrates lists Gorgias and Polos among the most distinguished teachers of traditional rhetoric, drawing a parallel between Gorgias and the legendary Nestor (Phdr. 261b–c, 267a–b; see Heitsch 1993, 130 with n. 251, 152–153, 155;

cal prowess and underscores that it was he who precipitated the moral and ethical corruption of the Athenians by introducing the *misthophoria*, which led to idleness (*argos*), cowardice (*deilos*), loquaciousness (*lalos*), and avarice (*philargyros*) among the citizenry.[58] Hence, the argument can be made that Pericles was a precursor of Paphlagon's demagogic tactic of raising jurors' salaries to portray himself as a committed protector of the demos. Moreover, Plato emphasises that Pericles and the other distinguished statesmen did not engage in true rhetoric; instead, they employed flattering rhetoric to gratify the Athenian desires (*epithymia*). Rather than redirecting the citizens' aspirations toward self-improvement, they catered to the city's longings, providing ships, fortifications, arsenals, and other resources buttressing Athenian imperialism. By pursuing such policy, these statesmen imitated the actions of bakers, cooks, weavers, shoemakers, and tanners – the trades from which, according to Aristophanes, the new breed of demagogues is recruited. Thus, they acted as servants (*diakonos*), skilled in slavish (*douloprepēs*) and menial (*diakonikos*) arts unworthy of a free person (*aneleutheros*). By tending to the corporeal needs and desires (clothing, food, wine, etc.), they filled and overfed the Athenian bodies, ultimately undermining even their physical health.[59] These parallels are evocative of the scenario in the Knights, where the slave Paphlagon manipulates the elderly and ailing master Dēmos through flattery, pandering to his greed and basic desires, and fervently supporting Athenian expansionism. This infers that Plato draws upon Aristophanes' and Thucydides' condemnation of the "new" demagogues to construe his criticism of the "old" demagogues, blurring the distinction between the two in this way. Emphasising the significance of this perspective, Plato's Socrates expressly proclaims that the advisers of the Athenian people, both the current (Alcibiades and other post-Periclean politicians, including Callicles) and former (Miltiades, Themistocles, Cimon, and Peri-

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Yunis 2011, 184–185, 202–203). This is insofar remarkable as Pericles is associated with Nestor in the *Symposium*. These two comparisons imply that Plato correlates Gorgias' rhetorical prowess with that of Pericles.

Socrates includes in the *Protagoras* Pericles among the *dēmēgoroi*, arguing that the esteemed statesman never passed on his *politikē technē* to anyone. Socrates affirms this claim by elaborating how Pericles failed to instil this *aretē* in his sons and ward Alcibiades. This suggests that the responsibility for corrupting Alcibiades, the foremost figure in the generation of Athenian politicians after Pericles, rests with the famous statesman rather than with Socrates. As a result, it can be concluded that there is a causal link between Pericles and the subsequent generation of politicians (Plat. Prt. 315a, 319a–b, 319e–320a, 329a; see also Ap. 26b; Alc. I 118c–119b; Men. 94a–b; Xen. Mem. 1.1.1; 2.12; cf. Manuwald 1999, 164–168, 241; Denyer 2008, 80–81, 95, 98–99).

For Plato's critique of Pericles in the *Menexenus* see below.

[58] Plat. Grg. 455e, 503c, 515d–516d; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 27.3; Pol. 1274a8; cf. Dodds 1959, 356–357.

[59] Plat. Grg. 502d–503d, 517b–518d; see also 464b–466a; see Dodds 1959, 325; Dalfen 2004, 460, 464–466; Jordović 2019, 44–47; Sansone 2020, 19.

cles), concentrated on gratifying the citizens, sacrificing the common weal for the sake of their own interest. The only difference was that the latter were more adept at giving the people what they wanted. Therefore, when the crisis of debility comes, the Athenians will blame their current advisers and extol the previous even though the latter are actually responsible for Athens' downfall.[60]

Considering Plato's perspective that the Athenian leadership following Pericles did not experience a "revolution" but instead underwent an evolutionary development, it is understandable that he avoids employing the term *dēmagōgia* and its cognates.[61] Given that the connotation of this concept acquired a new negative meaning during the 420s BCE, its inclusion in his writings would directly contradict his intended message. For the same reason, Cleon, Hyperbolus, Androcles, Cleophon and similar popular leaders are conspicuously absent from his list of culprits for Athens' decline. Plato's subtle play with terminology is particularly evident in the case of *dēmēgoria* and its associated terms, which in the Knights functions as a synonym for demagoguery (Aristoph. Equ. 956). On the one hand, *dēmēgoria* is employed "against" Socrates to underline that it is the exact opposite of the *elenchus*. When the philosopher exposes the inconsistencies in his interlocutors' arguments, Callicles initially disparages him for speaking like a *dēmēgoros*, only to eventually disengage de facto from the conversation. This prompts Socrates to engage in an extensive dialogue with himself, during which he argues, among other things, that Athens' decline commenced under the leadership of its foremost statesmen. Concluding his speech, Socrates ironically concedes that Callicles compelled him to deliver a populist speech (*dēmēgorein*); (Plat. Grg. 482c, 494d, 505c–506c, 510a, 519d). On the other hand, Socrates denounces the traditional rhetoric as flattery (*kolakeia*) and shameful populistic speech (*aischra dēmēgoria*) and reserves the term *dēmēgorein* exclusively for the great Athenian statesmen of the past. Unsurprisingly, he asserts that the *dēmēgoroi* and *sophistai* are actually the only ones who are not in a position to complain when those whom they have educated behave badly towards them, directly disputing Gorgias' claim that the teacher should not be held accountable for his pupils' misuse of *rhētorikē technē* (Plat. Grg. 503a, 503b, 520b; see also Prt. 329a; Phdr. 260c–d, 261a–e, 269a, 269e). In the *Republic*, there is no distinction between the old and new politicians in the context of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm. Accordingly, the term *dēmēgoria* is also missing. Unsurprisingly, it occurs only once in the dialogue after Socrates refutes Thrasymachus' arguments and the sophist ceases to participate actively in the discussion. The philoso-

[60] Plat. Grg. 503c–d, 516d–517c, 518d–519d; see Dodds 1959, 325–326, 359–360, 364; Dalfen 2004, 466–468.

[61] Plato uses the terms *rhētōr* (Plat. Grg. 449a, 449d, 455a, 455c, 456a, 457a, 459a, 459b, 459c, 460d, 460e, 465c, 466a, 446b, 446d, 446e, 467a, 468d, 479a, 502e, 503b, 504d, 517a, 520a); *politikos* (473e, 484e, 513c, 515c, 519b, 519c; see also 516d, 517a); *prostatēs* (519b); *prostatein* (519c); *proistēmi* (520a).

pher is left to continue alone and acknowledges that Thrasymachus can accuse him of delivering a populistic speech (*dēmogorein*; Plat. Rep. 350e; see also Ap. 36b).

The notion that the political culture of the Athenian leadership in the fifth century BCE is marked by continuity rather than discontinuity helps to explain why there is no mention of any animosity between the lower and the upper classes in the *Gorgias*. If this issue had been explicitly addressed, Plato would have been forced to acknowledge a significant divergence between Pericles and some of his successors. In contrast, the demagogue-tyrant concept is painted with a broad brush in the *Republic* and lacks references to specific historical figures. This approach allows the incorporation of the topic of the social struggle within the theoretical framework.

The preceding analysis suggests that Plato drew on Aristophanes and Thucydides when developing his demagogue-tyrant theory. Therefore, it is imperative to explore additional factors and ancient sources that contributed to this paradigm. This is particularly important given Plato's argument that the origins of demagoguery can be traced back to the time of Athens' pinnacle of power, with Pericles playing a pivotal role in its ascent. There are indications that the origins of this paradigm date back to the Age of Pericles and are linked to the rise of antidemocratic sentiment in Athens.

4 Stasis and the "Tyranny" of Pericles

It is indeed remarkable to note that the first leader of the demos who was denounced as a tyrant was no other than the great Pericles. These invectives are, for three reasons, perplexing: the period during which Pericles was at the helm of Athens is remembered as the Golden Age of democracy; the main source of these attacks is the Old Comedy, which cannot be assigned to the antidemocratic camp; and lastly, the famous statesman exhibited no signs of *paranomia* in his private or public life.

The defamations against Pericles went along five lines. The first is the association with tyrannical power. His rhetorical talent is malevolently compared to Pisistratus' demagogic skills:[62]

> As a young man, Pericles was exceedingly reluctant to face the people, since it was thought that in feature he was like the tyrant Peisistratus; and when men well on in years remarked also that his voice was sweet, and his tongue glib and speedy in discourse, they were struck with amazement at the resemblance.

[62] Plut. Per. 7.1 (trans. B. Perrin); see also Cic. Brut. 27; Val. Max. 8.9. ext. 2; cf. Stadter 1989, 89, 103.

The comedians pejoratively labelled not only Pericles but also his associates as the "new Pisistratids", urging him to take a solemn oath not to make himself a tyrant (Plut. Per. 16.1; trans. B. Perrin; see Stadter 1989, 193–194):

> Of his power there can be no doubt, since Thucydides gives so clear an exposition of it, and the comic poets unwittingly reveal it even in their malicious gibes, calling him and his associates 'new Peisistratidae,' and urging him to take solemn oath not to make himself a tyrant, on the plea, forsooth, that his preeminence was incommensurate with a democracy and too oppressive.

In Cratinus' *Ploutoi*, probably produced in 429 BCE, the verse "now that the rule of tyranny <is over> and the people have the power" likely refers to the removal of Pericles from office in 430 BCE.[63]

The Old Comedy's half-mocking, half-respectful allusions to Pericles as Zeus and the Olympian further illustrate his exceptional standing.[64] Extraordinary eloquence formed the cornerstone of this quasi-divine omnipotence, as evidenced by Plutarch's remark that the comic poets spoke of Pericles as "'thundering' and 'lightning' when haranguing his audience, and as 'wielding a dread thunderbolt in his tongue'".[65] The playwright Eupolis shares this sentiment. He does not simply acknowledge that Pericles outperformed all other orators by a substantial margin but further reiterates this by commenting on his ability to bewitch (*kēlein*) his audience, comparing his persuasiveness to a sting:[66]

> (A) This man [Pericles] was the very best at speaking.
> Whenever he came forward, like the best runners, he'd beat the
> others at speaking, from more than ten feet back.
> (B) You're saying he spoke quickly?
> (A) Yes, but in addition to his speed a Persuasion of sorts
> perched upon his lips. That's how he could cast a spell, and he
> alone of the speakers left a sting in his audience.

A comment of the playwright Telecleides shows that Pericles wielded this "tyrannical power" through the decrees of the Athenian Assembly, as they ultimately determined the *phoros*, treaties, and the well-being of the allies (Tecl. fr. 45 K.-A; Plut. Per. 16.2; trans. B. Perrin; see Stadter 1989, 194):

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[63] Cratin. fr. 171.22–23 (trans. I. C. Storey); see Schwarze 1971, 43–45; Henderson 2019, 986.

[64] Cratin. frr. 73; 118; 258 K.-A; Hermipp. 42 K.-A; Telecl. fr. 18 K.-A; see Ehrenberg 1956, 105–106; Schwarze 1971, 28–40, 44–45, 59–60, 66, 96–97, 171; Podlecki 1998, 169.

[65] Plut. Per. 8.3; see also Aristoph. Ach. 530–531; cf. Stadter 1989, 103; Azoulay 2014, 43–44.

[66] Eup. fr. 102 K.-A. (trans. I. C. Storey); see also Plut. Mor. 802c; cf. Azoulay 2014, 43–44.

> Telecleides says that the Athenians had handed over to him
> With the cities' assessments the cities themselves, to bind or release as he pleases,
> Their ramparts of stone to build up if he likes, and then to pull down again straightway,
> Their treaties, their forces, their might, peace, and riches, and all the fair gifts of good fortune.

Pericles' dominance and popularity caused not only discontentment among some Athenians but also significant political division (*stasis*), as shown in the following lines of the comic poet Cratinus:[67]

> Political strife (*stasis*) and ancient-born Time [Cronus?]
> came together and produced the greatest ruler, whom the
> gods in fact call "the Head-Gatherer"

A recurring theme in the second and third line of invectives against Pericles is his beloved Aspasia. As Vincent Azoulay observes: "The figure of Aspasia confused them all: a foreigner in the city, she was nevertheless connected with an Athenian family very much in the public eye; so when she was taken for Pericles' concubine or even his legitimate wife, her very existence defied classification within the pre-established categories of Athenian males" (Azoulay 2014, 106). In other words, her public position was characterised by significant disparity. As a foreigner, she held a lower status than all Athenian citizens, irrespective of age and sex. Additionally, as a woman, she was socially and politically subordinate to the males. Nevertheless, Aspasia also became the partner of the foremost Athenian politician around the time when he introduced his citizenship law. The circumstance that Pericles' and Aspasia's relationship went against the spirit (not the letter) of this law and that their children could not become Athenian citizens by birth demonstrates that the acclaimed statesman must have been guided by deep affection rather than socio-political calculation.[68] The bond between Pericles and Aspasia must have appeared exceptional to the contemporaries. Thus, the discrepancy in Aspasia's social standing (foreigner, women and "first-lady") could explain the conflicting strategies used to belittle her relationship with Pericles (Azoulay 2014, 105–106). On the one hand, she is denigrated as a concubine, prostitute, and madam, insinuating that she seduced Pericles with

[67] Cratin. fr. 258 K.-A (Plut. Per. 3.4; trans. I. C. Storey); see Stadter 1989, 66.

[68] Plut. Per. 24.5; Heraclid. Pont. fr. 59 Wehrli (= Athenaeus 12.553c); cf. Azoulay 2014, 101; Loraux 2021, 21–24.

her sexual charms.[69] On the other, Aspasia is elevated as the instructor of the Olympian, implying that she gained influence over Pericles through her superior intellect.

Pericles' unorthodox association with Aspasia certainly contributed to the second line of slander. The comic poets lampooned Pericles for leading a promiscuous lifestyle and involving himself in extramarital affairs with married women. Phidias purportedly arranged rendezvous for Pericles with free-born women under the guise of them seeing the statues of the goddess Athena on the Acropolis. Pyrilampes, Pericles' political ally and Plato's stepfather, allegedly enticed women with peacocks to consort with the revered statesman. The comic poets also disseminated the rumour that Pericles had a romantic entanglement with the wife of Menippus, his friend and fellow *strategos*.[70] The playwright Hermippus besmirched Aspasia and Pericles by claiming she procured free-born Athenian women for her husband and received them into her house.[71] Teleclides in Hesiods says that Pericles the Olympian was in love with a certain Chrysilla of Corinth.[72] Stesimbrotus of Thasos accused Pericles even of seducing the wife of his own son, Xanthippus.[73] These derogatory and manifestly ill-founded jokes present Pericles as wholly driven by sexual desire and dismissive of fundamental moral and social boundaries. This is significant because a defining characteristic of the typology of tyrants is the belief that sexual urges and cravings control the tyrant.[74] The branding of Aspasia as a prostitute, courtesan, and procuress is founded on a similar rationale, suggesting that only a thoroughly debauched and lecherous politician would openly affiliate with such a woman. Therefore, the character assassination of Aspasia functions as an instrument to damage Pericles' reputation.

The third line of invectives is centred around the claim that Pericles' exceptional political abilities were primarily attributable to the expertise of his wife, Aspasia. This accusation was particularly malicious in a patriarchal society, as it sought to diminish Pericles' political achievements by reversing the gender roles (Azoulay 2014, 102). There is substantial evidence suggesting that Aspasia's foreign background, education, and independence formed the basis for these and other attacks.[75] The earliest preserved testimony can be found in a fragment from the comic poet Callias. In his play *Men-in-Chains*, dated

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[69] Crat. fr. 241 K.-A. (*pallakē*); Eup. fr. 110 K.-A. (*pornē*); Plut. Per. 24.3 (*paidiskas hetairousas*); FGrHist 372 F 40 (wife); see also Plut. Per. 24.6 (new Omphale, Deianeira); cf. Stadter 1989, 235–237; Podlecki 1998, 173; Azoulay 2014, 105; Loraux 2021, 24.

[70] Plut. Per. 13.15; see Schwarze 1971, 110–111; Stadter 1989, 177–179.

[71] Plut. Per. 32.1; see Stadter 1989, LXVIII, 297, 298.

[72] Telecl. Fr. 18 K.-A.; see Schwarze 1971, 94; Podlecki 1998, 111.

[73] Plut. Per. 13.16; FGrHist 107 F 10; see Stadter 1989, 180.

[74] See Loraux 2021, 24–25.

[75] See Schwarze 1971, 92; 169–170; Podlecki 1998, 112–117; Kagan 1991, 182.

to the late 430s BCE, Callias states that Aspasia taught Pericles how to speak in public (*dēmēgorein*).[76] This defamatory claim gained significant traction, as shown by Plutarch and the Socratics.[77] It seems that *Menexenus* was conceived and written around the same time as *Gorgias*, the mid to late 380s BCE.[78] Plato's Socrates asserts in this dialogue that Aspasia instructed Pericles, the most distinguished orator among the Greeks. Furthermore, Socrates implies that she composed Pericles' renowned *Funeral Speech*, recorded in Thucydides.[79] However, at the same time, Socrates subtly but decisively distances himself from traditional rhetoric.[80] He discredits the whole funeral oration genre when he ironically remarks that dying in war looks like a splendid fate in many ways, considering the magnificent funeral and beautiful eulogy that fallen soldiers receive. The philosopher unequivocally acknowledges the disorienting effect of funeral speeches on the audience, stating how they are so beguiled (*goētein*, *kēlein*) by the speaker's speech and voice ring in their ears for several days, leaving a sense of superiority. Yet, he diminishes this virtuosity of the rhetor by noting that it is not difficult to tell the audience only what it is happy to hear. Another way of showing the affinity of traditional rhetoric with flattery is Plato's association of the mastery of rhetoric with instruction by a foreign woman popularly spoken of as a courtesan and madam. As David Sansone observes "By doing so Plato seems to be hinting that sexual gratification may be as good an analogy for rhetoric as gourmandise".[81] Therefore, at first glance, it seems astonishing that Socrates admits to being a devoted and compliant pupil of Pericles' intellectually gifted spouse. However,

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[76] Call. fr. 21 K.-A. (Sch. Menex. 235e); see Tsitsiridis 1998, 163–164.

[77] Plut. Per. 24.3; see Podlecki 1998, 112–117. Both Antisthenes and Aeschines authored dialogues titled *Aspasia*. Much like the representatives of the Old Comedy, Antisthenes utilises Aspasia to tarnish the reputation of Pericles and his descendants. The revered statesman is portrayed as deeply infatuated with Aspasia, and both he and his sons are shown as lacking self-control in matters of sexuality (t. 41A, 142–143). In the extant fragments of Aeschines, Socrates recommends Aspasia as a teacher and is depicted as her pupil (fr. 17, 19, 29, see also 33 D[ittmar]). Strikingly, Aspasia instructed Pericles not only in rhetoric but, more specifically, the Gorgianic art of speaking (fr. 23, 24, see also 22, 26 D). Socrates further recounts that Aspasia has provided marital guidance to Xenophon and his wife (fr. 31 D). In Xenophon's writings, Socrates mentions Aspasia as an authority in matchmaking and the education of wives (Xen. Mem. 2.6.36; Oec. 3.14); see Stadter 1989, LXXVIII–LXXX, 237–238; Pomeroy 1995, 233–234; Tsitsiridis 1998, 163–165; Prince 2015, 417–421; Sansone 2020, 27–28; Loraux 2021, 15–18.

[78] See Dodds 1959, 24–25; Tsitsiridis 1998, 40–41, 49–52; Sansone 2020, 15, 19–20.

[79] Plat. Menex. 235e, 236b; see Tsitsiridis 1998, 163–164, 172; Sansone 2020, 30–31.

[80] Other instances of Plato's criticism of Pericles' character or personal life are also directly linked to the political realm. The philosopher admonishes the statesman's failure to impart political virtue (*politikē aretē/technē*) to his sons. The underlying idea behind this critique is Plato's advocacy for a new notion of politics (Plat. Prt. 319e–320; Men. 93e–94e; 99b–2; see also Alc. I 118c–119a; Virt. 377a–378c; Grg. 515c–516e; Thg. 126a–d).

[81] Plat. Menex. 234b–235e; see Tsitsiridis 1998, 142–159, esp. 149–150, 152, 158–159; Sansone 2020, 28, 67–82.

his confession that he is a rather poor student of rhetorical art gives every reason for scepticism. Socrates is incapable of delivering a eulogy on his own, has struggled to memorise Aspasia's lessons and narrowly escaped beatings each time he failed. The fine irony is further expressed in Socrates' comparison of his recitation of Aspasia's *Funeral Speech* to a child's game (*paizein*).[82]

The fourth line of defamation is that Pericles is a self-serving warmonger. According to Plutarch, the Samian War (440/439 BCE) began when Pericles sided against the Samians in a territorial dispute with Miletus. His decision was influenced by Aspasia, who was of Milesian origin.[83] Cratinus apparently made the same allegations in the *Dionysalexander*, where many scholars believe Dionysus stands for Pericles. In the play, Dionysus, as impersonator of Paris/Alexander, takes Helen away and brings war upon Troy. Interestingly, the parody of the well-known Judgement of Goddesses in the *Dionysalexander* encapsulates some of the key lines of criticisms against Pericles: Hera pledges unwavering tyranny, Athena assures success in war, and Aphrodite promises unparalleled beauty and sexual allure. In the end, Dionysus (Pericles) chooses the most ignoble gift and proclaims Aphrodite as the winner.[84] The comic poet Hermippus lambasts Pericles, "the king of the satyrs", for his fearsome speeches about the war.[85] In the *Acharnians*, the Olympian Pericles, with lightning and thunder, stirred up Greece and unleashed the Peloponnesian War because the Megarians abducted a couple of Aspasia's prostitutes.[86] In the *Peace*, however, Aristophanes maliciously gibes Pericles for initiating the war with Sparta to avoid facing a fate similar to that of his close associate Phidias, who was accused of misappropriating public funds.[87]

Plutarch documented that comic poets referred to Pericles' *hetairoi* as the new Pisistratids (Plut. Per. 16.1; see Azoulay 2014, 92). This labelling highlights the fifth line of defamation. It alleged that members of Pericles' inner circle were morally or financially corrupt. The ancient tradition gives the impression of an orchestrated effort to bring legal action against individuals closest to Pericles. However, upon close examination, this

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[82] Plat. Menex. 235e–236c; see Tsitsiridis 1998, 162–168; Sansone 2020, 24–25; cf. also Loraux 2021, 13–14.

[83] FGrHist 76 F65; Plut. Per. 24.1–2, 25.1; see Stadter 1989, 233, 243.

[84] P. Oxy. 663; see Schwarze 1971, 6–24, esp. 13–14; Podlecki 1998, 171; Storey 2011, 284–291, esp. 284–285; Bakola 2010, 181–208; Greenwood 2019, 537. Eupolis' *Prospaltioi* refer to Aspasia as Helen (Eup. fr. 267 K.-A.); see Azoulay 2014, 103–104.

[85] Hermipp. 47 K.-A.; Plut. Per. 33.7; see Schwarze 1971, 101–109, 172; Stadter 1989, LXVIII, 312.

[86] Aristoph. Ach. 515–539; see also Plut. Per. 30.4; Hdt. 1.1–5; see Romilly 1963, 17; Schwarze 1971, 135–139; Raaflaub 2000, 101–102; Olson 2002, XLII, 210–211.

[87] Aristoph. Pax 605–611; see also Diod. 12.38.2–41.1; cf. de Romilly 1963: 17; Schwarze 1971: 139–155; Olson 1998, 196–197; Raaflaub 2000, 102–103.

narrative does not entirely withstand scrutiny. Substantial evidence indicates that Aspasia and Anaxagoras never underwent trial (Raaflaub 2000, 96–113). Nonetheless, both instances offer valuable insight into the genesis of this tradition. Plutarch's account of Aspasia being indicted of impiety by none other than the playwright Hermippus suggests that later biographers may have confused comedic accusations with actual events.[88] The philosopher Anaxagoras, reportedly Pericles' friend and teacher, was also said to have been prosecuted for *asebeia*. Yet, the evidence surrounding this event is highly questionable (Dover 1975, 31; Azoulay 2014, 125–126). There is conflicting news about the accuser (Thucydides, son of Melesias, Cleon and Diopithes), while Ephorus places the trial in the context of the attacks against Phidias.[89] Furthermore, the comic poets cast aspersion on the seer Diopithes as a dubious oracular expert, a religious zealot, and mentally unstable.[90] The historicity of the decree that he allegedly proposed as the legal basis for prosecuting those who did not believe in gods or taught celestial phenomena is heavily contested by modern scholars (Dover 1975, 39–41; Azoulay 2014, 125). Lastly, as Kurt Raaflaub points out, Plato never mentions a trial, although he does refer to Anaxagoras, his teachings and his relationship with Pericles on several occasions (Raaflaub 2000, 107). Though the tradition of Anaxagoras's prosecution seems untrustworthy, Plutarch's explanation of the motivation behind this event is quite revealing. According to him, the philosopher was summoned to court in an attempt to direct the people's suspicions towards Pericles. Cratinus' *Ploutoi* echoes this sentiment well. The extant fragments of the play condemn the unjust acquisition of wealth under Pericles' tyranny and Hagnon, a staunch ally of the great statesman, is put on trial for ill-gotten wealth.[91] A confidant of Pericles who was taken to court was the celebrated sculptor Phidias. He was accused of embezzling materials intended for his chryselephantine statue of Athena. Pericles' political enemies engineered the trial as he was overseeing the project. They motioned for the trial to be held on the Acropolis, on the goddess' sacred ground. However, Hagnon successfully countered this by proposing a regular *ethyna* procedure that avoided religious controversies. The outcome of this legal battle is uncertain. Nevertheless, Pericles was

[88] Plut. Per. 32.1; see Raaflaub 2000, 104–104; Lehmann 2008, 202–203; Azoulay 2014, 102, 125; *contra* Stadter 1989, 297–298.

[89] Plut. Per. 32.1, 5; Diog. Laert. 2.12–14; FGrHist 70 F196; Diod. 12.39.2; see Stadter 1989, 289–299.

[90] Aristoph. Equ. 1085; Vesp. 380; Av. 988; Amips. fr. 10 K.-A.; Phryn. Com. fr. 9. K.-A.; Telecl. fr. 7 K.-A.; see Stadter 1989, 298; Azoulay 2014, 125–126; Sommerstein 2019, 282.

[91] Cratin. fr. 171.22–23, 46, 66–76; see also Thuc. 1.117; 2.58; 95.3; 4.102.3; 5.11.1; Plut. Per. 32.2; see Gomme 1956, 188–189; Stadter 1989, 302; Bakola 2010, 208–219.

re-elected in the following years as *strategos*, and Phidias went to Olympia, where he was commissioned to produce the statue of Zeus.[92]

Given the fierce criticism against Pericles, the enduring image of the Golden Age of Athenian democracy owes much to a more balanced depiction of his political legacy. Plutarch and Thucydides provide this favourable portrayal, idealising the renowned statesman in various ways. In the same chapters, which echo some of the attacks of the Old Comedy, Plutarch offers a starkly different picture of Pericles. Moreover, he explicitly states that the venerated statesman intentionally adopted a modest and quiet way of life to pre-empt any accusation of aspiring tyrannical rule. He was observed walking exclusively along a single street, the one leading to the marketplace and the council. As the most influential figure in Athens, Pericles had many friends and allies who supported and implemented his policies. Nonetheless, he avoided invitations to dinner and all such friendly and familiar interactions to publicly demonstrate that he set the friendship of the people before his personal relationships. He also deliberately refrained from overly participating in daily political affairs to cultivate an aura of enigma and uniqueness around himself:[93]

> But he feared, as it would seem, to encounter a suspicion of aiming at tyranny, and when he saw that Cimon was very aristocratic in his sympathies, and was held in extraordinary affection by the party of the 'Good and True', he began to court the favour of the multitude, thereby securing safety for himself, and power to wield against his rival. Straightway, too, he made a different ordering in his way of life. On one street only in the city was he to be seen walking, – the one which took him to the market-place and the council-chamber. Invitations to dinner, and all such friendly and familiar intercourse, he declined, so that during the long period that elapsed while he was at the head of the state, there was not a single friend to whose house he went to dine, except that when his kinsman Euryptolemus gave a wedding feast, he attended until the libations were made, and then straightway rose up and departed. Conviviality is prone to break down and overpower the haughtiest reserve, and in familiar intercourse the dignity which is assumed for appearance's sake is very hard to maintain. Whereas, in the case of true and genuine virtue, 'fairest appears what most appears,' and nothing

[92] Aristoph. Pax 605–611; Plut. Per. 31.2–5; Diod. 12.39; FGrH 70 F196; FGrHist 328 F121; see Ostwald 1986, 192–194; Raaflaub 2000, 104–107; Lehmann 2008, 200–202; Bakola 2010, 214–219, 305–312; Azoulay 2014, 92, 124.

[93] Plut. Per. 7.4–7 (trans. B. Perrin); see also Aeschin. 3.220; cf. Stadter 1989, 95–99; Azoulay 2014, 49–50. Christian Mann (2007, 104–123; Id. 2024, 186–187) argues that giving up friendships mainly acts as a symbolic gesture.

> in the conduct of good men is so admirable in the eyes of strangers, as their daily walk and conversation is in the eyes of those who share it. And so it was that Pericles, seeking to avoid the satiety which springs from continual intercourse, made his approaches to the people by intervals, as it were, not speaking on every question, nor addressing the people on every occasion, but offering himself like the Salaminian trireme, as Critolaus says, for great emergencies. The rest of his policy he carried out by commissioning his friends and other public speakers.

Plutarch also emphasises that Pericles was careful and frugal in personal financial matters and enjoyed a reputation for being indifferent to bribery (Plut. Per. 15.5, 16.3–5. 36.1–2).

Thucydides strongly influenced Plutarch's positive portrayal of Pericles as an exemplary statesman (Plut. Per. 16.1; cf. Stadter 1989, LX–LXI, 193). The verdict of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* is that Pericles guided Athens to its greatest heights through his exceptional intellect and moral strength. He is credited with providing stability to Athens during both times of peace and war by carefully assessing situations, devising the right policies, clearly communicating with his fellow citizens, exerting a moderating influence on the demos, and prioritising the common good over his ambitions and interests. Thucydides also reveals that Pericles was an imperialist who believed Athens must uphold its empire at all costs. This position ultimately made the confrontation with Sparta inevitable. Additionally, Pericles demanded that the Athenians subordinate themselves to Athens' *archē* by urging them to become lovers (*erastai*) of the city and arguing that aligning personal interests with the common good was paramount. This is why sacrificing one's life for the greatness of Athens is not in vain. The historian also shows that the revered statesman deliberately projected a public image by professing his love for Athens (*philopolis*), integrity in financial matters, steadfastness, and foresight. Thucydides further attributes great importance to accentuate that with Pericles' demise a profound change in the nature of Athenian leadership took place. Unlike the revered statesman, his epigones were led by their private interests and resorted to flattery.[94] Therefore,

[94] Preeminent leader (Thuc. 1.127.3, 139.4, 2.65.9); superior in thought, word and deed (1.139.4; 2.34.6, 60.5–7, 65.8); strategic forethought (1.141.1–144.1; 2.60.5–7, 62.4–5, 64.1, 65.5–7, 11–13); uncompromising and belligerent towards Sparta (127.3, 140.1–141.1, 144.3–4; 2.59.2, 60.4, 6–61.1, 62.3–4, 63, 64.6, 65.2, 13); outstanding reputation, *philopolis*, above corruption (2.60.5-6, 65.7–8, 11); imperialist (2.36.2–4, 38.2, 39.2–4, 40.2–3, 41.2–42.1, 43.1, 62.2–3, 63, 64.3–6); steadfast attitude in war and moderating influence on the demos (1.140.1, 143.5–144.1; 2.21–22.1, 43.4, 59.1–60.1, 61.4–62, 64.1–3, 65.1–4, 8–11); subordination to the common good (2.41.5–43.6, 60.2–4, 61.4, 62.3, 63.1); refrains from flattery (2.60.1; 61.2; 64.1–2; 65.8–9); comparison with the post-Periclean politicians (2.65.10–11); see Pouncey 1980, 71–74; de Romilly 1979, 290–311; Westlake 1968, 23–42; Schubert 1994, 11–16; Leppin 1999, 152–154; Mann 2007, 75–93, 173–175; Rhodes 2016, 256–257.

it is no coincidence that the historian avoids using the notions *prostatēs tou dēmou or prostasia tou plēthos* when referring to Pericles. Instead, he chooses the expression *proustē tēs polis*, which signifies a type of leadership that is incompatible with factionalism.[95]

The massive dissonance in evaluation between the Old Comedy, Plutarch, and Thucydides regarding Pericles may suggest that he exhibited qualities reminiscent of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Alternatively, these conflicting images could be two sides of the same coin. This duality is particularly evident in Plutarch's biography of Pericles, where he directly addresses the accusations of the comic poets. Thucydides, however, adopts a strategy of silence concerning these accusations and counters them by painting a portrait of an impeccable statesman. It is worth noting that critique, slander, and caricatures are most effective when they contain elements of truth or at least resonate with contentious issues. A juxtaposition of the different narratives reveals that the comic dramatists besmirched the points Pericles valued as the most important for his relationship with the demos (Hölkeskamp 1998, 26). He projected himself as a strong-minded and self-controlled leader. Playwrights reacted by denouncing him for being under the thumb of a foreign courtesan. The venerated statesman presented himself as having prioritised his friendship with the Athenian people over personal relationships. In response, he was censured not only for breaching sexual norms but also for involving fundamental social relationships (such as friendship, family and marriage) in these transgressions. The underlying message was that Athenians should be sceptical of his professed love for Athens. Pericles cultivated the image of being careful in money matters and immune to corruption. However, his political adversaries and playwrights accused his associates of embezzling money, indirectly casting the shadow of corruption on him.[96] Pericles fervently supported the Athenian empire and argued that military conflicts are inherent to imperialism. The Old Comedy replied by denouncing him for initiating the wars out of entirely selfish and ignoble reasons.

In light of these contrasting viewpoints, it is even more remarkable that the Old Comedy, Thucydides, Plutarch and Plato concur on one aspect: the extraordinary consolidation of power in the hands of Pericles. As previously elucidated, the Old Comedy attacked Pericles for wielding tyrannical power within the framework of the democratic political order. Viewed from this perspective, Thucydides essentially reframes this censure into an acknowledgement by stating: "And so Athens, though in name (*logos*) a democ-

[95] Thuc. 2.65.5; see Reverdin 1945, 204–205 (with a list of all relevant text passages); Connor 1971, 111–112.

[96] Plato's allusion to this trial in the *Gorgias* is emblematic. Socrates supports his view that the earlier generation of statesmen is fundamentally no different from the present-day politicians also by citing that Pericles, towards the end of his life, was put to trial for misappropriation, narrowly avoiding a death sentence (Plat. Grg. 515e–516a); see HCT II, 182–183; Ostwald 1986, 102.

racy, gradually became in fact (*ergon*) a government ruled by its foremost citizen (*tou prōtou andros archē*)."[97] Thucydides supports this reframing not only by what he says but also by what he chooses to leave unmentioned. While the Old Comedy and Plutarch refer to his friends and political associates, Thucydides fails to do so. It is as if Pericles was the sole architect of all his political triumphs. Equally notable is the historian's omission of Pericles' political opponents. There is a conspicuous absence of any reference to Thucydides, son of Melesias and his ostracism, or Cleon's attacks on Pericles for pursuing an insufficiently resolute and aggressive war policy.[98] Lastly, of all Athenian politicians, the venerated statesman delivers the largest number of speeches in Thucydides. Still, none of these speeches have their counterparts presenting the arguments of Pericles' adversaries.[99] Thucydides' message is that no one, neither his friends nor enemies, was equal to Pericles.

Plutarch, much like Thucydides, attributes Pericles' pre-eminence to his personal qualities. However, he also delves into why some Athenians perceived this dominance as deeply unsettling. Pericles not only accumulated immense power but also retained it for an unusually lengthy period. He occupied a prominent position for twenty-five years alongside other notable figures such as Ephialtes, Leocrates, Myronides, Cimon, Tolmides, and Thucydides. Furthermore, following the ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias, Pericles maintained supreme rule for fifteen years by continuously holding the office of the *strategos*. It is symptomatic that Plutarch uses the term *dynasteia* to characterise this outstanding position, a notion that may carry a tyrannical connotation.[100]

Plato recognised that within the Athenian collective memory and the conventional political framework, Pericles was revered as one of the foremost Athenian figures, if not the preeminent one, credited with guiding the city to its zenith by effectively managing its military and financial resources. He devoted significant effort to deconstructing this widely held view, contending instead that Pericles is merely a part of a larger phenomenon that caused Athens' decline. Plato furthermore disputes that rhetors are all-powerful through their ability to sway the opinion of the Assembly. However, the foundation of Plato's argumentation is deeply rooted in his understanding of politics, which deviates fundamentally from the traditional consensus. Following this rationale, Plato actually

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[97] Thuc. 2.65.9 (trans. Ch. F. Smith). Hartmut Leppin (1999, 153) notes that Pericles' dominance is reminiscent of Pisistratus' tyranny when viewed in this light. Still, it was not Thucydides' intention to suggest that the Athenian democracy under Pericles was not a true democracy; see also Lehmann 2008, 20–22.

[98] Thuc. 2.65.3–4; Plut. Per. 11.1–3; 14; 33.7–8; 35.4–5; Diod. 12.45.4; Arist. Ath. pol. 28.2; see Andrewes 1978, 1–8; Ostwald 1986, 185–187, 191–192; Stadter 1989, 130–135, 181–186, 312–313, 323–324.

[99] Thuc. 1.140–144 (Athens decision to go to war with Sparta); 2.35–46 (Funeral Oration); 2.60–64 (the need to remain resolute in war).

[100] Plut. Per. 15.3–16.3; see Stadter 1989, 192–197; Jordović 2006, 17–33.

never negates that, in conventional terms, the rhetors, like tyrants, have *the licence to do as they please*. Instead, he redefines the true meanings of power and freedom (Plat. Grg. 473e; 507a–b, 521d–522a, 526a–b, 527d; see Jordović 2019, 113). For the same reason, Plato concedes that Pericles is the most distinguished rhetor in Greece and claims that conventional rhetoric essentially amounts to flattery. From this logic, one can derive that the philosopher never contests that Pericles, according to traditional standards, has concentrated exceptional power in his hands. On the contrary, this is why he is more focused on Pericles than on other Athenian politicians.

Herodotus and Pericles

The question of whether early forms of the tyrant-demagogue paradigm precede Plato is now worth revisiting. Herodotus offers clues in this regard, recounting the tale of how Pericles' mother, Agariste, dreamt of giving birth to a lion. This narrative is noteworthy for its lack of irony and the lion's symbolic representation of tyrannical authority, as elucidated by another dream and oracle in the *Histories*. The 'father of history' thus subtly insinuates that Pericles amassed tyrant-like power later in his life. Charles Fornara's comment aptly encapsulates what many Athenians must have felt upon encountering this passage: "there is something ominous and terrible in the dream precisely because it concerns a man whose power was great. It does not 'mean' that Pericles was predictively a monster but it suggests, … , that he was something more and less than human, something to be feared, a terrific phenomenon in the strict sense of the word."[101]

The *Constitutional Debate* in the *Histories* represents the first theoretical debate on the best system of government. Within this fictional discussion, three Persian noblemen deliberate upon the merits and drawbacks of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy (tyranny) and place them for the first time in opposition.[102] Although the anecdote is evidently ahistorical, it is not devoid of historical context. To all appearances, it is the product of Athenian political experience.[103]

Otanes, the proponent of the rule of the people, initiates the discussion. He resents monarchy for *the licence to do what one pleases* corrupts even the best of men (*aristos anēr*).

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[101] Hdt. 5.56.1; 92.β3; 6.131.2; see also Aristoph. Equ. 1043; Ran. 1427–1433; Plat. Grg. 483e; Rep. 341c; see Fornara 1971, 52–54; cf. also Schubert 1994, 7–8; Spahn 2000, 25; Scott 2005, 29–30, 430–431; Strasburger 2013, 311–313.

This segment of the study builds upon the ideas presented in the article Jordović 2010, 1–15.

[102] Cf. Bleicken 1979, 151; Meier [3]1995, 489–490. Herodotus predominantly used the terms *tyrannos*, *basileus* and *despotēs* as synonyms; see Berve 1967, 195, 627; Flory 1987, 120; Hartog 1988, 334.

[103] See Bringmann 1976, 266–279, esp. 269–275; Bleicken 1979, 148–172, esp. 148, 151, 153, 156–157, 160, 165–167; Alonso-Núñez 1998, 19–29, esp. 19, 25, 28; Pelling 2002, 123–158, esp. 123–130, 147.

This unlimited power generates hubris in him and transforms him into a wilful tyrant. Instead, he believes the rule should be entrusted to the masses as he believes 'in the many is everything'. Moreover, popular rule brings *isonomia*, the selection of offices by lot, accountability of the officeholder and public deliberation. Otanes' argument suggests that the demos indeed holds an all-powerful position and that laws and institutions serve as safeguards against its degeneration into a tyrannical rule. A critique of democracy may, however, infer from this line of reasoning that if the collective bodies of the people (the assembly and courts) supersede the laws and magistrates, then the demos will wield tyrant-like authority (Hdt. 3.80; see Raaflaub 1989, 41–42). This is precisely the point that the advocate of the rule of the few makes in the debate.

Megabyzus focuses more on critiquing popular rule than on reiterating well-known platitudes about the advantages of oligarchy, the form of government he recommends. He emphasises that the demos, like the tyrant, is afflicted by hubris, albeit originating from a different source. While the tyrant's excessive arrogance is rooted in the moral degradation induced by the corrupting effect of power, the hubris of the demos stems from a fundamental deficiency in knowledge. The logical deduction drawn from this conjunction of arrogance and ignorance is that the people cannot differentiate between genuine and apparent knowledge. The unspoken message is that they are unable to discern what is in their best interest and identify the best politicians to represent it.[104] Pseudo-Xenophon shows that many opponents of democracy held this view.[105] Megabyzus also compares the people to a swollen river with melted snow that rushes headlong and sweeps things before it (*cheimarrous*).[106] This vivid analogy suggests that the power of the demos is so overwhelming that no social group, institution, or law could effectively constrain it. Another implication which derives from this combination of irresistible vehemence and lack of knowledge is that coercion is a fundamental aspect of the power of the people.

The speeches of Otanes and Megabyzus explicitly or implicitly refer to several key elements of the demagogue-tyrant concept: the concentration of power, the tyrant-like authority, and the problem of (self-)deception. The remaining aspects appear in the speech of the final participant in the discussion, though in an unexpectedly twisted manner. It is expected that the future ruler of Persia would extol monarchy as a form of government. What is entirely unanticipated is Darius' explanation of how autocratic rule arises. It evolves either out of oligarchy or democracy, and in both cases, it is the result of internal

[104] Hdt. 3.81; see Bringmann 1976, 271; Raaflaub 1989, 43; Alonso-Núñez 1998, 24, 26; Pelling 2002, 141–142; Linderborg 2019, 22.

[105] Xen. Ath. pol. 1.5–7; see Raaflaub 1989, 47, 65; Marr & Rhodes 2008, 70; Weber 2010, 77–79.

[106] Hdt. 3.81; Hom. *Il.* 4.446–456; 5.84–94; 11.485–497; 13.136–149; *Thgn.* 341–350; Soph. *Ant.* 710–717; Isoc. 15.172; see Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 475.

division. Darius specifically mentions civil strife (*stasis*) in the context of oligarchy, but it is apparent that in a democracy, the internal discord must also be profound (Hdt. 3.82.3; see Linderborg 2019, 24–26). Otherwise, a constitutional transition would never occur. Darius contends that popular rule engenders wickedness (*kakotēs*), causing the 'wicked' individuals (*kakos*) to form strong friendships (*philios*) and dominate to the detriment of the commonwealth. This situation continues until one man becomes the leader of the people (*prostas tou dēmou*), putting an end to such wrongdoing. The people admire him, eventually electing him as their monarch (Hdt. 3.82.4; trans. A. D. Godley):

> Then again, when the people rule it is impossible that wickedness (*kakotēs*) will not occur; and when wickedness towards the state occurs, hatred does not result among the wicked (*kakiones*), but strong alliances; for those that want to do the state harm conspire to do it together. This goes on until one of the people rises (*prostatēs tou dēmou*) to stop such men. He therefore becomes the people's idol, and being their idol is made their monarch; and thus he also proves that monarchy is best.

Darius' line of argumentation is a negative image of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm.[107] It is not the champion of the people who is morally depraved but his opponents. He protects the common good, while the 'wicked' individuals harm it out of self-interest. Hence, there is no doubt that the *prostatēs tou dēmou* is genuinely committed to the welfare of the people, and they willingly transfer their power to him for this reason. Consequently, Darius maintains that an autocrat provides the best for his people and that monarchy has brought freedom to the Persians without contradicting himself.[108] Interestingly, Darius never explicitly frames this shift in constitutions in terms of class conflict. Still, the 'wicked' individuals had to be men of substance to pose a threat to the community. Darius conveys this message by contrasting the motivation behind the downfall of oligarchy and democracy. In an oligarchy, internal discord arises out of hatred between the members of the ruling elite, whereas in a democracy, 'wicked' individuals do not hate each other but instead become firm friends. This juxtaposition contradicts the assumption that Darius had influential actors in mind only in the context of the rule of the few but not in the case of popular rule. Through these means, Darius implies that the leader of the people is not at odds with the elite as a whole but only with its morally corrupt and self-serving members.

Otanes' and Megabyzus' speeches reflect certain aspects of the demagogue-tyrant concept without distortion, while Darius' speech presents a near-perfect negative image of

[107] Cf. Zoepffel 1974, 76; Bringmann 1976, 274–275 (Pericles); Pelling 2002, 147 (Pericles).

[108] Hdt. 1.126.5–127.1, 129.3–4; see Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 356.

the remaining aspects. This mismatch indicates that Herodotus is intentionally echoing and responding to contemporary controversies in the *Constitutional Debate*.[109] Nevertheless, the question of Herodotus' motive for this intriguing narrative choice and the message he intended to deliver by foreshadowing elements of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm remains unanswered. As the *Constitutional Debate* takes place in a Persian context, it seems reasonable to search for an answer in Herodotus's *logos of Deioces*. Two considerations support this approach. Firstly, this story, like the *Constitutional Debate*, represents a serious engagement in political discourse characterised by abstractness, rationality and the absence of divine influence.[110] Secondly, it highlights the strong connections between the Medes and Persians, particularly regarding their dynasties: the Medes conquered Asia with the assistance of the Persians; Deioces is an ancestor of Cyrus the Great, as the royal houses of these two peoples are linked through marriage; and, lastly, the rise of the Persians is staged as an inter-dynastic conflict, wherein the grandson triumphs over his grandfather.[111]

The rise of Deioces to the throne of the Medes closely resembles Darius' account of the transition from democracy to monarchical rule.[112] Herodotus describes him as an *anēr sophos* who secretly desired to seize absolute power *(erastheis tyrannidos*) from an early stage.[113] At that time, Media suffered from widespread lawlessness. Deioces sought prominence by eagerly supporting righteousness and opposing injustice. Initially elected as a judge in his village, he became widely renowned throughout Media for his integrity and fair verdicts. Before long, Medes from other villages stopped accepting unfair rulings and turned to Deioces for justice. Eventually, all of Media relied on him for fair judgements. After the people became dependent on him, he publicly announced that he no longer wanted to serve as judge, as it led him to neglect his personal affairs without any benefit in return. Subsequently, lawlessness resurged on a far larger scale than before. When the Medes conferred about their situation, Deioces' friends (*philoi*) proposed to appoint a king, arguing that his leadership would effectively govern the country. The choice fell on Deioces since everyone spoke highly of him. After his inauguration, Deioces initiated a major building program, founded Ecbatana, and successfully united all the Medes. Throughout his reign, he remained steadfast in his commitment to upholding justice (Hdt. 1.98.3–101; see Bichler 2000, 235).

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[109] Cf. Connor 1971, 114–115; Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 475.

[110] See Barceló 1993, 167; Dewald 2003, 27; Walter 2004, 79.

[111] Hdt. 1.102, 107–130, 134.2–3; see also Aesch. Pers. 763–769; cf. Bichler 2000, 255–261; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 325–326, 336–337, 368–369.

[112] Hdt. 1.95.2–101; cf. Stroheker 1953, 386; Gammie 1986, 178; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000, 1–5.

[113] Hdt. 1.96.1–2; see Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 324.

Deioces bears a striking resemblance to Darius' champion of the people, who turns into a monarch. He gained power through the will of the people, as he protected them and continued to govern with integrity even after assuming sole rulership. The primary disparity lies in Deioces' early and active pursuit of tyrannical power, which was attained through the intentional deception of the people. Nevertheless, this difference can be considered superficial, as Darius also harboured an appetite for absolute power and employed deceptive tactics to secure the position of the Great King.[114] There is another apparent difference that underscores the underlying commonalities. The price of the *eunomiē* implemented by Deioces is the freedom (*eleutheriē*) and autonomy (*autonomiē*) that the Medes attained following their emancipation from the Assyrian rule:[115]

> Assyrian dominance of inland Asia had lasted for 520 years when the Medes first rebelled against them. In fact, their war of independence against the Assyrians improved them; they cast off the yoke of slavery and became free men (*andres agathoi*). [...] After gaining their independence, however, the mainland peoples all returned to a state of tyranny. There was a clever Mede called Deioces

These words imply that the establishment of monarchical rule transformed the ethos of the Medes, leading them to cease being valiant men (*andres agathoi*), unlike the Greeks. Thus, when Darius asserts that kingship has brought freedom to the Persians, he thinks of freedom from external dominion, not internal oppression.

Remarkably, there are also three interesting parallels between Deioces and Pericles. Firstly, the king of the Medes reigned for an impressive 53 years (Hdt. 1.102.1). The opponents and critics of the venerated Athenian statesman found his dominance suffocating, not only due to its intensity but also because of its exceptional duration (Plut. Per. 16.3; see Stadter 1989, 195–196). When compared with other illustrious statesmen, it becomes apparent that the length of Pericles' involvement in the highest levels of Athenian political life was a striking anomaly. Themistocles and Cimon shaped Athenian politics for over two decades, Aristides for less than twenty years, and Miltiades only for several years. Secondly, Deioces embarked upon an extensive building project as a critical step in fortifying his power. He founded Ecbatana, the capital of Media, "whose longest wall was about the length of the wall that surrounded the city of Athens."[116] Plutarch's

[114] Hdt. 3.82.1; 85; see Bringmann 1976, 267, 276, 278–279; Reinhardt 1989, 163; Dewald 2003, 30.

[115] Hdt. 1.95.2–96.1 (trans. R. Waterfield); see also 2.147.2; cf. Walter 2004, 83; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 269, 323.

[116] Hdt. 1.98.2–6; see Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 326–327. The comparison is significant because it illustrates that Herodotus consciously avoids using the term polis for Ecbatana. This is not surprising

biography of Pericles characterises his ambitious building program as "the greatest source of pleasure" (*pleistēn men hēdonen*) for Athens while also reporting that his critics were particularly irritated by it. The clash over the funding of this building program culminated in the ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias, after which Pericles emerged as the unrivalled and most influential figure in the political life of Athens.[117] Thirdly, Deioces aimed to solidify his authority by imposing ceremonial etiquette to create a sublime and mysterious atmosphere around him. He proscribed undignified conduct, such as spitting and laughing, in his presence. Moreover, he restricted access to himself, mandating that all communications be done rather than through messengers. By creating a distance between himself and his peers, Deioces intended to make them view him as distinct from themselves and accept his supremacy willingly (Hdt. 1.99; see also Xen. *Cyr*. 1.2.16; 7.5.37–54; 8.1.40–42). Pericles achieved a similar effect by imposing a specific lifestyle and approach to politics. Aware that conviviality impedes the projection of authority and gravitas, he left his house only for business-related reasons, whether public or private and is reduced to a minimum of close social intercourse (e.g., dinners and celebrations). Apart from leading a secluded life, the respected statesman also avoided getting overly involved in day-to-day political matters. Instead, he made only public appearances on the most important issues. The unspoken implication is that this political strategy was sustainable only if Pericles relied on trusted friends to manage the daily political affairs according to his instructions. In the words of Herodotus, Pericles' political allies functioned as his intermediaries.[118]

The parallels between the demagogue-tyrant concept and Herodotus' *Constitutional Debate* and the *logos of Deioces*, alongside the similarities between the king of the Medes and Pericles, might give the impression that Herodotus is either praising monarchical rule or criticising the most famous Athenian statesman. However, when considering the pervasive Greek-Persian polarities throughout the *Histories* – particularly the contrast between Oriental despotism and the Greek ideal of freedom – neither interpretation is tenable. It is imperative to examine alternative possibilities. One potential avenue for exploration is the placement of the *logos of Deioces* within the *Histories*. It is situated between the pivotal events of the first book: the downfall of Croesus and the rise of Cyrus the Great. While the connection to Persia has been the subject of prior discussion, it is now necessary to pay attention to the *logos of Croesus*.

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because Ecbatana was not a Greek city, and an autocrat ruled it; see Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 149–150.

[117] Plut. Per. 12–15; see Schubert 1994, 92–94; Hölkeskamp 1998, 1–3; Lehmann 2008, 139–144, 154–158.

[118] Plut. Per. 7.4–7; see Mann 2007, 104–123; Azoulay 2014, 49–50.

A defining feature of the *Lydian logos* is the stark contrast between the mindset of the "Barbarians" and the Greeks. Croesus stands as a paradigm for Persian rulers,[119] who are considered archetypal tyrants.[120] He initiated the conflict between Asia and Europe, and he was the first Asian despot to act unjustly against the Greeks, subjugating a number of them. Moreover, it is with him that oriental (tyrannical) arrogance and Greek *sōphrosynē* are first juxtaposed.[121] Like a genuine tyrant, Croesus is consumed by hubris and *pleonexia*, ultimately succumbing to absolute power despite warnings.[122] Herodotus places the *Lydian logos* in an Athenian context, when he contrasts Croesus persona with that of Solon (Erbse 1992, 14, 21; Bichler & Rollinger 2001, 86). Though Herodotus only cursory mentions Solon's political and legislative activities, it becomes clear that his conduct and attitude during the conversation with the Lydian ruler mirrors the values and thoughts expressed in his elegies (Chiasson 1986, 249–262; Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 98). The father of history recognises the Athenian lawgiver as one of the seven wise men (*sophistai*), and reports that Solon went into a de facto self-imposed exile for ten years to prevent the Athenians from overturning his laws.[123] This act exemplifies Solon's profound commitment to the common good and the rule of law, as he subordinates his interests to them. Solon dismisses the idea that tyrannical power and wealth are happiness and warns from the fatal consequences of such an delusion.[124] He instead reveres ordinary people that epitomise traditional values such as the well-being of the polis, self-sacrifice for the higher good, bravery, family and piety.[125]

A passage at the end of the Lydian account confirms that the paradigmatic character of the juxtaposition of Croesus with Solon extends beyond this narrative. Following his decisive defeat by the Persians and facing imminent execution by burning at the pyre,

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[119] See Pohlenz 1937, 11–12; Regenbogen 1961, 123–124; Raaflaub 1987, 241–246; Long 1987, 64–65; Erbse 1992, 10, 12, 29–30; Heuss 1995, 387–388, 414; Bichler 2000, 244; Dewald 2003, 33–35, 43; Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 66.

[120] See, for example, Plat. Grg. 470d–e, 472d, 492c, 507c; see Lateiner 2013, 203.

[121] See Regenbogen 1961, 123; Erbse 1992, 12–13; Heuss 1995, 394; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 224–225.

[122] Hdt. 1.30.1–3; 31.1; 32.1; 32.4–34.1; 86.6; esp. 32.1; 86.6; see Raaflaub 1987, 243–244; Gammie 1986, 176–177; Bichler 2000, 244–245, 248–250.

[123] Hdt. 1.29–30.1; see Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 99–100; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 224–225.

[124] Sol. fr. 33W (29a G.-Pr.); Hdt. 1.32, 86.3–5; see also Parker 1998, 155–156. In his rejection of the notion that tyrannical power is a blessing, Herodotus' Solon establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between action and inevitable punishment, as evidenced in the historical elegies of Solon; see Mülke 2002, 338–340.

[125] Hdt. 1.30.3–4; 31.2–5; 32; Sol. 4b–c (5 G.-Pr.); 13 (1 G.-Pr.); 32 (29a G.-Pr.), 36W (24 G.-Pr.); cf. Immerwahr [3]1982, 531–532; Parker 1998, 155–160; Scanlon 1994, 146–147; Shapiro 1996, 351–352; Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 100–102; Dewald & Vignolo 2022, 227–230.

Croesus experiences a moment of enlightenment. He recollects his earlier exchange with Solon and, with remorse, admits to the Persian king Cyrus the Great: "He was a man who ought to have talked with every king in the world. I would give a fortune to have had it so".[126] When viewed from this perspective, comparing Solon and Deioces becomes pertinent. Both figures exhibit notable parallels that paradoxically underline their distinct differences. Herodotus characterises both of them as wise.[127] Deioces also reveals traits commonly associated with notable Greek legislators (Hölkeskamp 1999, 42, 48–49; Irwin 2005, 224), particularly the ability to overcome the "pre-political state" of deleterious lawlessness.[128] Herodotus employs the term *anomiē* to refer to the situation in Media before Deioces began to administer justice as well as during the brief period when he stepped away from this role. Furthermore, when Deioces' friends propose establishing the monarchical rule, they argue that a king will govern the country well (*eunomeomai*) and end lawlessness (Hdt. 1.96.2; 97.2–3). In a similar vein, Solon interrelates *dysnomiē* and *anomiē* in his poem *Eunomia*, placing both terms in opposition to *eunomiē*.[129] Deioces' rise to power is intricately linked to terms derived from the stem *dik-*. In parallel, Solon's elegies emphasise the paramount role of justice for the well-being of the polis.[130] Both Deioces and Solon were elected to leadership positions within their communities by broad public consensus because of their exceptional reputation. In both cases, a small group of powerful men caused a tense socio-political environment. In Athens, those were the *hēgemones*, whereas, in Media, these were the judges who dispensed unjust rulings. The *logos of Deioces* and Solon's poems argue that such conditions create a fertile ground for tyranny (Stroheker 1954, 392; Berve 1967, 196; Walter 2004, 83–84). Ordinary people, driven by ignorance and dissatisfaction with their circumstances, yearn for a champion to protect their interests, which they conflate with the common good.

The similarities end here, while the differences begin. Although the differences are far fewer, they stand out. From the onset, Deioces aspired to establish himself as the supreme

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[126] Hdt. 1.86.3–5 (trans. A. de Sélincourt & J. M. Marincola); see Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 141–143; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 304–306.

[127] Hdt. 1.30.2; 86.3–4; 96.1; see Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 323.

[128] This motive can be found in Sisyphus' fragment, credited to Critias, Anonymus Iamblichi and Isocrates (DK 88 B25, 89,6,1ff.; Isoc. 4.39); cf. Hölkeskamp 1999, 49. The same motive is also attributed to Lycurgus (Hdt. 1.65.2, 4; Thuc. 1.18.1; Plut. Lyc. 2.5); see Hölkeskamp 1999, 49; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 325.

[129] Sol. fr. 4 W 31 (3 G.-Pr. 31); cf. Stahl 1992, 396–398; Mülke 2002, 145, 148–155; Raaflaub 2004, 55, 94, 252; Irwin 2005, 188; Lewis 2006, 56–57.

[130] Hdt. 1.96.1–97.1; Sol. fr. 4W (3 G.-Pr.); 13 W (1 G.-Pr.); cf. Flory 1987, 124; Lateiner 1989, 276 n. 32; Walter 2004, 83; Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 149; Mülke 2002, 121, 251–255; Irwin 2005, 224; Lewis 2006, 74–80; see also Stahl 1987, 229–230.

sovereign of Media, a goal he eventually realised. He skilfully navigated his responsibilities as a judge, employing manipulation to obfuscate his true motives and thereby secure popular support. In contrast, Solon never desired tyrannical power before or after he was elected mediator. Even when presented with the opportunity to seize it with the backing of the people, Solon refrained from doing so, not wishing to harm his polis. His moral integrity was so strong that he calmly endured scorn for not longing for tyranny, a situation echoed in the *Lydian logos*. (Sol. 33 W (29a G.-Pr.); Hdt. 1.33). The fundamental distinction between Deioces and Solon becomes even more apparent when we consider how they achieved their respective objectives. Tradition holds that Solon voluntarily departed Athens to ensure the inviolability of his laws, while Deioces retreated from public life to pave the way for his election as monarch (Hdt. 1.30.1; 97.1–2).

The explicit juxtaposition of Solon and Croesus by Herodotus, along with an implicit comparison to Deioces, serves to illuminate that the difference between the Greeks (Athenians) and the barbarians (Persians) runs deeper than it may initially appear. It transcends divergences in government structures because it is rooted in contrasting mentalities and values. Herodotus' *Constitutional Debate* and the *logos of Deioces* suggest that the Medes, like the Persians, once enjoyed freedom of choice. However, unlike the Greeks, they ultimately opted for despotism instead of embracing freedom.[131] Otanes, the proponent of popular rule, highlights this point in Herodotus' message. When he realised that his fellow Persians had decided in favour of a monarchic system and that the only remaining question was who would be elected to be king, he declared that he would not compete for the throne. He explained his decision that he had little desire to be either a ruler or to be ruled. Otanes' only condition was that any future monarch did not rule over him or his descendants. The other Persian grandees agreed to this demand. As Herodotus noted: "And to this day the house of Otanes is the only house in Persia which remains free and, while obeying the laws of the Persians, is subject to the king only to the extent that it wishes to be."[132]

Confronted with the same challenge, the Athenians responded markedly differently, though their path was not straightforward. The most comprehensive analyses of how a specific type of government emerged in the *Histories* are those of Deioces' and Pisistra-

[131] Hdt. 3.142; 5.78; 92α; 6.43.3;109.3; 7.102–104; see also 8.3; 143.1–144.3; cf. Pelling 2002, 152–154; Walter 2004, 84.

[132] Hdt. 3.83 (trans. R. Waterfield); see also Thuc. 2.37.2; cf. Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 476. The prevailing consensus within scholarly discourse is that the *Constitutional Debate* is inherently fictional, reflecting contemporary Greek political thought. This perspective implies that the comments made by Otanes, Megabyzus, and Darius should not be considered as mere personal opinions. Instead, these statements should be interpreted as representations of broader societal attitudes towards these political systems. Consequently, Otanes exemplifies behaviour that is quintessentially representative of a true democrat.

tus' rise to power (Waters 1985, 131; Walter 2004, 78, 89–90). Both accounts centre on tyrannical rule and share elements such as rationality, abstract reasoning, and the lack of divine intervention or novelistic embellishments. Other factors also deserve consideration. The story of Pisistratus' usurpation of power in Athens splits the *Lydian logos* into two phases: the period leading up to the downfall and the downfall itself, along with its aftermath. It is equally pertinent to recall that Pericles and his associates were compared to Pisistratus. Additionally, there is a tradition that Solon lived to witness Pisistratus' rule, which he opposed on principle.[133]

Herodotus' account of Pisistratus becoming a tyrant offers valuable insights. Similar to the case of Pericles, an omen heralds Pisistratus' ascent. It was received by Pisistratus' father but interpreted by Chilon, a Spartan who, like Solon, was regarded as one of the Seven Sages. Chilon unsuccessfully advised Hippocrates not to marry or to disown any son he might have.[134] The narrative also exhibits several parallels with the demagogue-tyrant concept and *logos of Deioces*. The tyranny in Athens arose from a factional dispute (*stasiazein*) involving three factions: the people of the coast, the plain, and the hill.[135] According to Herodotus, manipulating the demos was pivotal in each of Pisistratus' three coups d'états, serving as the primary or supporting factor. In his initial coup, Pisistratus tricked the people of Athenians by staging an assignation attempt on him. As a result, the demos granted him bodyguards, which allowed him to capture the Acropolis and establish his rule.[136] During his second bid for power, Pisistratus secured popular support by creating the impression that the goddess Athena accompanies his return to Athens, suggesting divine approval of his reinstatement.[137] In his third and final attempt, after defeating the Athenian army, Pisistratus devised a cunning plan that prevented the Athenians from regrouping their forces, enabling him to take control of the city.[138] Herodotus also makes it very clear that Pisistratus' rule differed substantially from that of a typical tyrant. He did not interfere with the existing structure of offices or alter the laws; instead, he governed the polis according to its established constitution

[133] Arist. Ath. pol. 14.2; Diog. Laert. 1.44, 49–50, 53–54, 66–67, 93, 113; Diod. 9.4.1–4, 9.20.1–4; Plut. Sol. 29.1–3; 30.1–31.2; 32.3.

[134] Hdt. 1.59.1–3; cf. also 60.1–2; FGrHist 105.1; see Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 120; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 262.

[135] Hdt. 1.59.3; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 13–15; Plut. Sol. 13.1–3; 29.1; cf. Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 121; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 263.

[136] Hdt. 1.59.3–5; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 14.1–2; cf. Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 121–122; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 264.

[137] Hdt. 1.60.2–5; see also Arist. Ath. pol. 14.4; cf. Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007, 121–122; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 264.

[138] Hdt. 1.63–64.1; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 270.

and organised the state's affairs effectively and fairly.[139] In the context of Pisistratus' final takeover, Herodotus notes that the Athenians faced the same choice between freedom and tyranny as the Medes and the Persians did. He observes that when Pisistratus landed by Marathon, many men from the rural demes willingly joined him, finding the rule of a tyrant more appealing than freedom.[140]

At first glance, it may seem paradoxical, but all these parallels underscore the main difference between Herodotus' narrative on the rule of the Pisistratids and the praise of monarchical rule in the *logos of Deioces* and the *Constitutional Debate*. Ultimately, the Athenians cast off the tyrants. Herodotus mentions that Harmodius and Aristogiton assassinated Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant Hippias. Yet, he emphasises that this act did not diminish the tyrant's grip on power; it made it only more oppressive (Hdt. 5.55; 6.109; 123). In Herodotus' assessment, the Alcmaeonids – with whom Pericles had strong family ties – were the most fervent fighters for freedom and popular rule by leading in the overthrowing tyranny in Athens.[141] Moreover, Herodotus identifies Cleisthenes, rather than Solon, as the father of Athenian democracy. He believes that Cleisthenes' reforms and his crucial role in freeing Athens from tyrannical dominance were instrumental in establishing popular rule.[142] No less important is that with the dismantling of the tyrannical rule, a profound and lasting transformation in the mindset occurred. The Athenians were, from now on, prepared to fight for their freedom against overwhelming odds, be it against the Spartans and their allies (including the former tyrant Hippias) or the Persians (Hdt. 5.78; trans. A. D. Godley; see Lateiner 2013, 206):

> So the Athenians grew in power and proved, not in one respect only but in all, that equality (*isēgoria*) is a good thing. Evidence for this is the fact that while they were under tyrannical rulers, the Athenians were no better in war than any of their neighbours, yet once they got rid of their tyrants, they were by far the best of all. This, then, shows that while they were oppressed, they were, as men working for a master, cowardly, but when they were freed, each one was eager to achieve for himself.

[139] Hdt. 1.59.6; see also Thuc. 6.54.5–6; Arist. Ath. pol. 14.3; 16.1–2, 7–9; Plut. Sol. 31.1–2; Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 265.

[140] Hdt. 1.62.1; see Dewald & Vignolo Munson 2022, 268–269.

[141] Hdt. 5.62–66.1; 6.121, 123–124; cf. Scott 2005, 405–408.

[142] Hdt. 5.66.1; 90–91.1; 6.123.2; 131.1; cf. Raaflaub 1995, 8–9; Scott 2005, 430.

Herodotus reiterates the fundamental and permanent nature of this change by echoing in the speech of Socles of Corinth, who with the following words opposed the Spartan plan to militarily intervene in Athens in order to reinstate Hippias as a tyrant:[143]

> In truth heaven will be beneath the earth and the earth aloft above the heaven, and men will dwell in the sea and fishes where men dwelt before, now that you, Lacedaemonians, are destroying the rule of equals (*isokratia*) and making ready to bring back tyranny into the cities, tyranny, a thing more unrighteous and bloodthirsty than anything else on this earth. If indeed it seems to you to be a good thing that the cities be ruled by tyrants, set up a tyrant among yourselves first and then seek to set up such for the rest. As it is, however, you, who have never made trial of tyrants and take the greatest precautions that none will arise at Sparta, deal wrongfully with your allies. If you had such experience of that thing as we have, you would be more prudent advisers concerning it than you are now.

Herodotus implies through these comments that tyranny in Athens is a thing of the past and is unlikely to return. While demagogue-tyrants may have emerged in Media, Persia or sixth-century BCE Athens, such a development seems unimaginable in the context of the Athenian democracy of the fifth-century BCE. Even if a remarkably skilled and ambitious individual were to gain extraordinary power by acting for the common good, establishing a tyranny would still be impossible. This "immunity" to tyranny can be ascribed not only to the Greek mindset but also to the lessons that Athenians have learned from their past mistakes. Conversely, the Persians disregard Otanes' argument even though he directly relates his proposal to the experience of tyranny, and instead accept Darius' reasoning on the inevitability of monarchy.[144] Therefore, the parallels and distinctions among Herodotus' references to Pericles' remarkable rise, the *Constitutional Debate*, the story of Deioces, *Lydian logos* and the narrative of tyrannical rule in Athens ultimately lead to the conclusion that allegations against any popular leader for exercising tyrant-like authority are utterly implausible. While Thucydides defends Pericles from criticisms by omitting any mention of them, Herodotus goes further by constructing a sophisticated political model that makes all accusations of wielding tyrant-like power against Pericles seem absurd, all while not directly naming the great statesman.

The context in which Herodotus sets the tale of Agariste's dream of giving birth to a lion lends support to such an interpretation. This tale stands at the end of Herodotus'

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[143] Hdt. 5.92*α* (trans. A. D. Godley); see Pelling 2002, 151; Strasburger 2013, 301–302.

[144] Hdt. 3.80.2, 6; 82.3–5; see Bringmann 1976, 270; Pelling 2002, 134–135, 140, 146–147; Linderborg 2019, 20.

famous Alcmeonid excursus. Hermann Strasburger convincingly argues that this episode is neither an encomium nor a condemnation of the Alcmeonids.[145] It contains various rumours and stories that portray prominent members of this family as highly ambitious, capable, and determined in their pursuits. While their attitude to power and wealth may, at times, appear too pronounced, it never poses a threat to their polis. Herodotus explicitly dismisses the most insidious charge: secret collaboration with the Persians (Hdt. 6.121–124; see Scott 2005, 405–414). Regarding the origin of the famous wealth of the Alcmeonids, Herodotus tells how Alcmeon used a clever trick to secure a considerable fortune from Croesus, who wished to show his gratitude for Alcmeon's assistance with his envoys to the Delphic oracle. Importantly, Herodotus notes that the Lydian king found Alcmeon's conduct shrewd and amusing rather than deplorable (Hdt. 6.125; see Scott 2005, 415–417). Lastly, the story of Megacles' marriage to Agariste, daughter of Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon, is portrayed not as a source of disrepute for the Alcmaeonids but as an event that enhanced their standing in Greece. Although Megacles was not the wealthiest, the best-looking, of the best lineage, the bravest, or the most charming of the suitors – those qualities belonged to Hippoclides – he succeeded because he never lost sight of his goal. Still, Megacles remained irreproachable since the competition for the hand of Agariste adhered to the finest traditions of the aristocracy, while Hippoclides ultimately disqualified himself from the contest. Herodotus states that from this marriage, Cleisthenes was born, who later established democracy in Athens (Hdt. 6.126–131; see Scott 2005, 417–430). Given this backdrop, the tacit message of Agariste's dream is that Pericles is indeed a very powerful and ambitious leader, but one who would never turn against his native city. Finally, there are signs that a "lion" does not necessarily have to be completely irreconcilable with the democratic order. Otherwise, Paphlagon would not boast of a false prophecy about a lion who will fight for the demos (Aristoph. Equ. 1037–1040). Aristophanes' *Frogs*, performed in 405 BCE after Alcibiades' second and final departure from Athens, are even more telling. In this play, the character Aeschylus comments on Alcibiades, noting that it is best to rear no lion in the city, but if one has been raised, it is necessary to accommodate its ways (Aristoph. Ran. 1427–1433; see also Plat. Grg. 483; Rep. 341c).

Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis of the genesis of the demagogue-tyrant leads to several conclusions. The demagogue-tyrant paradigm took its definitive form in the fourth century

[145] Hdt. 6.121–131; esp. 131.2; cf. Scott 2005, 29–30, 405–408, 430–431; Strasburger 2013, 298, 310–312.

BCE, but its development was a lengthy process that began during the Golden Age of Athenian democracy. Moreover, this evolution was complex and not always straightforward. While various commonly recognised factors did play a role, their impact was not always decisive. Cleon and the reactions to his policies contributed to the term demagogue acquiring its pejorative connotation. Nevertheless, neither he nor this term were central to the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant concept.

The author of this paradigm is undeniably Plato. The examination of the relevant sources showed that he skilfully assimilated, modified, and reinterpreted the observations and arguments of other ancient authors in furthering his demagogue-tyrant model. Thus, Plato's concept did not emerge *ex nihilo* from mere philosophical contemplation on the nature of democracy. It was also profoundly shaped by his engagement with the intellectual currents of the late fifth and early fourth century BCE. Although the *Republic* offers the most exhaustive exposition of this paradigm, this dialogue only partially explains the reasoning and process that underpin its development. In the *Gorgias*, Plato strongly contests the prevailing notion that after Pericles, a new breed of politicians came to power, precipitating the downfall of Athens. Instead, he posits that changes in the Athenian leadership following Pericles were not "revolutionary" in nature but rather evolutionary. As a result, there is no fundamental discontinuity in the political culture of Athenian leadership, and the great statesman was simply a part of a broader continuum that caused Athens' decline. The issue is that the traditional rhetoric, rather than mitigating the destructive tendencies inherent within the Athenian demos, actually embraced and enabled them. The difference between Plato's portrayal of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm in the *Republic* and *Gorgias* (e.g., the term *dēmēgoria* and the issue of class struggle) reveals his tailoring of the concept's elements to support the overarching argument of the particular dialogue. Consequently, it becomes clear that the components of this paradigm were not fully defined from the outset.

The analysis and juxtaposition of diverse narratives about Pericles reveal that the comic poets besmirched the points he valued most in his relationship with the demos. Despite considerable discrepancies in how the renowned statesman is assessed and portrayed in the Old Comedy, Plutarch, Thucydides and Plato, all these sources agree on the remarkable concentration of power in the hands of Pericles. The characterisation of this power – whether termed tyranny, *dynasteia*, the *licence to do what one pleases*, or the rule of the foremost citizen – varies according to each source's political agenda and overall view of a great statesman. These differing and yet related reactions to Pericles' exceptional success with the Athenian demos demonstrate how it catalysed the emergence of the demagogue-tyrant paradigm.

Herodotus' *Constitutional Debate* and *Logos of Deioces* outline a model of benevolent leadership. In this model, an ambitious and power-hungry individual achieves rulership by protecting the common good while concealing his true intentions from others. Though he proceeds against influential figures who jeopardise the well-being of the community, there is no indication of a conflict with the elite or a struggle between social classes. Thus, this construct foreshadows key aspects of the concept of demagogue-tyrants, albeit with some elements inverted. However, Herodotus' motivation for articulating this model was neither to praise autocratic rule nor to criticise democracy. His true intent is expressed through striking parallels and distinctions he draws among the references to Pericles, the *Constitutional Debate*, the story of Deioces, the *Lydian logos* and the narrative of tyrannical rule in Athens. These similarities and disparities illustrate that the distinction between the Greeks and the so-called barbarians extends beyond varying government structures; it is rooted in divergent mentalities and values. In contrast to the Greeks, the Medes and the Persians accepted despotism over freedom and did it willingly. Through this message, Herodotus suggests that any accusations against Pericles for exercising tyrannical authority are completely misguided, as a new Pisistratus cannot arise in Athens. However, the parallels between the benevolent tyrant and the demagogue-tyrant model suggest that Plato borrowed some ideas from Herodotus in formulating his paradigm.

Finally, the origins of the demagogue-tyrant reveal that the rise of antidemocratic sentiment in Athens during the second half of the fifth century BCE is much more complex than it initially appears. The champion of the people who propelled the development of one of the key elements of antidemocratic thought was not a notorious demagogue but none other than the great Pericles. Moreover, the dynamics of class struggle do not figure in the contemporary criticism of Pericles, nor in Herodotus' model of the benevolent ruler or Plato's evaluation of the nature of democratic leadership in the *Gorgias*.

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