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THE POWER OF THE FEW
THE IDEA OF OLIGARCHY IN THE THUCYDIDEAN WORLD

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Introduction

What did *oligarchy* mean for Thucydides and his contemporaries?

The first hint to a thesis on oligarchy as a political form of government came to be some years ago during a discussion with my beloved Professor Nikos Birgalias at the Athens University. Birgalias, who unluckily passed away some years later, emphasized to me the interest that could emerge from a research of this type of constitution, because, in his opinion, the bibliography on this subject was not so conspicuous. I think that in hindsight he gave to me a very good suggestion and it is unfortunate that we could not discuss further on this interesting topic. But I had then the opportunity to accomplish my research at the University of Palermo under the careful and constant supervising of my Professor Nicola Cususmano who gave me the possibility to make the subject of my work more specific and mature.

The term oligarchy, deriving from the term *ὀλίγος* (few) and *ἄρχω* (rule, govern), indicates the rule of the few, the government in the hands of a few families or persons[1]. The term appears for the first time in the *Histories* of Herodotus[2], but its history will not end with the collapse of the ancient world, quite the opposite: oligarchy has survived as a political term till modern times, even though in a different meaning. In the 19th century A.D., the term changed its meaning and characterizes till now associations (even of a democratic character), which get guided by a small group of persons.[3] This observation is important, in order to understand both the long history of the term and the different characteristics, which it received during its long existence. Already from the antiquity, oligarchy did not correspond to one and only form of government, as both Thucydides, and his subsequent scholars show in their work. This 'poly-interpretability' of the term is very interesting because it can lead us to a very important conclusion: a modern reader should not read and interpret the ancient texts with the standards of his times. As Versnel says:

> "In doing so, many interpreters take their departure from the almost axiomatic presumption that, always and everywhere, there is a coherence in our sense of that word. It is only under heavy pressure that the most pliable among them may momentarily

[1] See LSJ and Beekes 2010, *ad locum.*

[2] See the chapter on the term oligarchy.

[3] See Treccani (http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/oligarchia). Nowadays, for example, we use the word 'oligarchy' for Russian businessmen of the former Soviet republics who rapidly accumulated wealth during the era of Russian privatization in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

> surrender and pay lip service to the theoretical possibility that it is our sense that is thus being imposed on a text which was not created according to the same principles"[4].

In modern times, we have the tendency to interpret the ancient terms in our way, but this cannot work always for ancient societies, which were formed on another basis. A modern researcher should try to understand deeply the society and the way it worked, before drawing any conclusions. What we call nowadays "oligarchy" is in reality not translatable with one and only word and this was more than clear to Thucydides. The need that we have in the modern times to 'create' absolute definitions was not an end in itself for several ancient Greek thinkers and addittionally could be very misleading for the modern researcher at the end.

Aim of this thesis, consequently, is to research deeply the oligarchical political structures of the fifth century[5], as presented in the work of Thucydides, trying to not overlook the distance between ours and the classical world. The great Athenian historian dedicated a period of his life in the writing of the history of the Peloponnesian War, which he considered as the most important war of all times, with great detail. Since he understood very well the way, in which this war would change radically the Greek history, he decided to write down, in the most painstaking way, all the events he could gather:

> "Thucydides of Athens wrote the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, how they waged it against each other. He began writing at its very outset, in the expectation that this would be a great war and more worthy of account than any previous one (*ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων*)"[6].

This admission from our historian had as a consequence the extremely analytical description of the events of the Peloponnesian War and especially of the armed conflicts, which exploded between its participants. Thucydides is disposed to dedicate many pages of his work in the description of every military detail of the war, every battle, every important or less important event; in other words he wanted to mention every single detail he could gather through the years, in order to leave as inheritance his *κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ* (a possession for all time)[7] to the subsequent generations. It is obvious, consequently, that from this description could not have been absent also the narration of the very important political changes, which inevitably

[4] Versnel 2011, 190.
[5] All dates are B.C.
[6] Thuc. 1.1.
[7] Thuc. 1.22.4.

happened in the Greek world during a war of this importance. How easy can it be for a modern scholar, however, to draw forth from the text of the historian all the information provided in the text, in order to build the "puzzle" of the political development in the Greek world of the fifth century? And in particular, is it possible to specify the – sometimes very different between each other – oligarchic forms of government, which multiplied during the fifth century?

At this question, I would answer that this task can be easy and difficult at the same time. On the one hand, even if Thucydides is not primarily interested to write down the constitutional history of the Greek world, his very important information on the several political structures in the Greek city-states of the fifth century are our only – contemporary of the events – source for the diverse oligarchic constitutions and their development. In my thesis, I have tried to gather all the information offered by our historian and with the help of his antecedent and subsequent sources to complete the image of oligarchy as a political term in general and the oligarchic constitutions developed in Greece during the war, in particular. Without the help of Thucydides, a reconstruction of this type would be extremely difficult – if not impossible. On the other hand, when it comes to the analysis of the different political structures, our historian remains many times mute or limits himself to the description of them in some few lines, leaving in this way important questions to the reader. This fact is the reason for many shortages in his description of the diverse oligarchies in his history.

In my thesis, I have tried to gather all the information provided by our historian, as I already said, even though sometimes my narration will have to remain unsatisfying, because of the lack of fundamental information. All this information that I managed to gather is divided in the different chapters of my work, which are tightly connected each other: oligarchy in the work of our historian has so many different shades and denominations that require a constant comparison. Thucydides was completely aware of the fact that the city-states were in a continuous contact with each other and so were also their forms of government obviously. In a war of this importance, one cannot make a list of oligarchies, believing that they remain independent between each other. The connections between the cities and the political – and not only – influence that the two big protagonists of the war, Athens and Sparta, had on them have been decisive for the development of the Peloponnesian war

Aim of this thesis, consequently, is not to reproduce the historical truth: this is impossible, in my opinion, for a modern scholar, who has as basic source the work of the only author, who

dedicated a long period of his life, in order to write in the most detailed way the events of the Peloponnesian war. More than that, my aim is to understand as more as possible through the words of the historian, at first which were the oligarchic constitutions of the fifth century and secondly the way, in which they were organized and consequently their importance for the development of the war itself. Thucydides is a contemporary writer of the events and his narration is fundamental, exactly because he represents a society, which he experienced with his own eyes.

Oligarchia in the modern literature

When it comes to the modern literature on *oligarchia*, I have to admit that the contribution of the modern scholars is rather limited. It is impressive that, whereas democracy is analysed in such profundity from the modern research, oligarchy, which has been one of the most important forms of government in the antiquity, remains a restrictedly researched field of ancient politics. Of course this does not mean that the idea of oligarchy was not a field of interest for several scholars, who understood its importance for the Greek politics of the archaic and classical period; but the monographs on this subject are very limited, which makes me think that between the two leading constitutions of the fifth century, it was mostly democracy to have awaken the interest of the modern research leaving oligarchy in the background.

One of the most important monographs on oligarchy is for sure the one of Whibley. His very accurate work on the birth and evolution of this constitution especially in the archaic period should be considered as one of the most important works on the understanding of the real character of this form of government, according to me. On the conditions of the birth of oligarchy, the scholar explains that it arose in a period of the decline of the old aristocracies. According to Whibley, "a close society, based upon hereditary succession and maintained by intermarriage, tends naturally to become narrower, and as it become narrower, to become also more despotic"[8]. This turnaround of the aristocratic constitutions into a more despotic government in combination with "the growth of trade and navigation, which succeeded the spread of colonies and introduced new methods of producing wealth" led to the gradual replacement of aristocracy by oligarchy, still a constitution based on the sovereignty of the "few", but not the same "few" as the ones of the aristocratic constitution[9]. The power of the

[8] Whibley 1913, 75.
[9] Whibley 1913, 76.

"best men" of the aristocratic government was based mostly on a hereditary succession of people considered as "descendants of the gods, who had given them both their power and their wealth, and with whom they alone could mediate". According to Whibley, "to overthrow this government and set oligarchy in its place was to substitute wealth for 'virtue', to ignore the power of the gods and drive them from the earth, to give to might the place of right, to abolish privilege and let social forces have unchecked play"[10].

When it comes to the definition of oligarchy, the scholar defines it as "a form of government in which supreme power is held by a privileged class, small in proportion to the total number of free men in the state"[11]. This privileged class owes for sure its power to wealth, which means that both aristocracy and oligarchy were the governments of the rich, as also Aristotle highlights in his work[12]. Aristotle was the one to make an accurate definition of oligarchy in his *Politics*, by basing, however, his observations on the text of Thucydides. According to Whibley, the philosopher follows the historian both in his phraseology and in his general descriptions. To Thucydides the Peloponnesian War was "a conflict of political principles, a duel between oligarchy and democracy: it was even more particularly a trial of strength between the free and popular constitution of Athens and the rigid, military aristocracy of Sparta" [13]. Whibley makes the same observation that I have also noticed in my research of the term in the ancient literature[14]; the one to make a precise definition of oligarchy as a political structure is for sure Aristotle, but the philosopher without the contribution of Thucydides would have never had the instruments to make his so profound political analysis.

The other for sure fundamental research of oligarchy is the one of Ostwald. The scholar attended thoroughly to understand the concept of oligarchy in the Greek political thought and especially to conceive the way, in which Aristotle dealt with this constitution; the Thucydidean view of oligarchy is rather restrictedly analysed from Ostwald in opposition to Whibley, who is more analytical in his research on the evolution of the term in the ancient Greek thinking. The scholar delineates the fact that, till the Peloponnesian War, oligarchy, which had been already adopted as the regular form to describe the government of the few, was considered as indistinguishable from aristocracy; Herodotus makes this clear, when in

[10] Whibley 1913, 73.
[11] Whibley 1913, 18.
[12] Whibley, 1913, 22.
[13] Whibley 1913, 3ff.
[14] See the chapter on the term oligarchy.

the famous debate of the three Persians equates *oligarchia* with an "aggregate of the best men (*ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἀρίστων*)"[15].

After Herodotus and during the Peloponnesian War, however, *oligarchia* tends to be considered basically as the antonym of democracy, a fact, which becomes very clear in the civil strife of Corcyra, where oligarchy and democracy become political factions[16]. This opposition of the two constitutions is delineated, according to the scholar, also by Pericles in his *Funeral,* where the Athenian politician highlights the main characteristic of the democratic constitution, which is "administered not with a view to a few (as in the case of an oligarchic constitution), but with a view to a greater number"[17]. According to Ostwald, "oligarchical or democratic ideology is seen as a more potent bond than patriotism, and reaches across the boundaries of the state". Thucydides is the one to describe this new concept of the leading political systems of the fifth century.

Other important works on the development of the idea of *oligarchia* in antiquity (even though not so detailed) are also of great interest. I could not leave out from this list the very important work of Gehrke on *Stasis.* The scholar believes that the oligarchic constitutions of the antiquity can be divided in two categories. The first should be the government of the "few" citizens, whose power is based on the propriety and wealth[18] (which is the most common case of oligarchic governments), the second type is the oligarchy based on the sovereignty of the "few", who have usurped the political power of the state[19] (the one that Aristotle denominates as *dynasteia* in his list of the different forms of oligarchy[20]). I think that the examples of the diverse oligarchies offered by Thucydides can confirm this classification of Gehrke.

Other references to oligarchy from the modern literature concentrate mainly on the famous question on if the Spartan constitution could be characterized as oligarchy or not[21]. Lane, basing his argumentation on the fourth century text *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*[22], defines

[15] Ostwald 2000a, 23.
[16] Ostwald 2000a, 21.
[17] Ostwald 2000a, 22.
[18] Gehrke 1985, 316ff.
[19] Gehrke 1985, 318ff.
[20] Aristot. Pol. 4.1293a 30-34, if not indicated differently, all translations of the Politics of Aristotle are taken from Rackham 1944, *ad locum*.
[21] See the chapter on "the Lacedaemonians and their slaves", first note.
[22] Rhetorica ad Alexandrum, 2.18-19.

oligarchy as the constitution, in which the multitude "should be citizens, but they should be excluded from the 'offices' that are assigned 'on an equal footing to all those sharing in the constitution', i.e. to the select few who share in governing the oligarchy"[23]. As used in oligarchies, wealth is the one to differentiate these "few" from the "many", according to the scholar. Of the same idea is also Poma, who mentions that in an oligarchy "i criteri che regolano l'accesso alla *politeia* […] sono in genere fondati sulla richezza [...] oppure sulla capacità di corrispondere a certe funzioni civiche, ad esempio il servizio oplitico"[24]. Wealth is, consequently the main factor for the rise of an oligarchical constitution, according to the modern scholars.

From the list of the scholars, who dealt particularly with Thucydides, the fundamental works of Gomme and Hornblower could not be absent for sure. The extremely important work of Gomme, which after his death was continued by Dover and Andrewes, as long as the more modern version of Hornblower are considered as the most important comments of the work of Thucydides. Both of them offer additionally important information on the development of the political history in Greece, as described by the historian, and on the oligarchic constitutions, which derive from his text. With their detailed bibliographical note (especially by Hornblower), both texts are a very important "manual" for a researcher of the Thucydidean political history.

Even though the bibliography on oligarchy is more limited compared to other constitutions, one cannot refuse that there are some very fundamental works on the characteristics of this form of government: what can a thesis on the oligarchy in Thucydides add to this research consequently? It seems that most of the scholars dealt mainly with the development of the term through Aristotle and I find it very logical since the philosopher with his accurate – almost scientific could someone say – view on the political structures in the Greek world manages really to offer to us a more complete picture of oligarchy. With his numerous definitions, Aristotle understood very well the diverse shades of this form of government and with his painstaking research, he managed to present oligarchy to us in a very specific way. I think, however, that a more detailed research on the way, in which his precedent scholar Thucydides, understood this type of governing is missing from the modern research. Our historian, contemporary of the events in Greece during the Peloponnesian War, offered not

[23] Lane 2014, 81.
[24] Poma 2003, 154.

only to the modern research, but also to his own subsequent ancient scholars, as already said, plenty of information on the way, in which this constitution got established in the Greek world of the fifth century and managed to play an important role at the development of the Peloponnesian War. I think, consequently, that a thesis on this subject is more than important, in order to understand deeper the development of oligarchy through time.

Thucydides: An Oligarch?

A thesis on the Thucydidean perception of oligarchy could not leave out the interesting theories, expressed by several modern scholars, on the political identity of our historian and especially on his conceivable preference for oligarchic forms of government. This consideration is based basically on the admission of the historian in his eighth book that in the period of the government of the Five Thousand, which succeded the oligarchy of the Four Hundred in Athens in the year 411,

> "[...] for the first time, in my life at any rate, the Athenians appear to have enjoyed good government (*εὖ πολιτεύσαντες*), with a moderating balance between the few and the many (*μετρία γὰρ ἥ τε ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ξύγκρασις ἐγένετο*), and this was the thing that first began to lift the city out of its sorry state"[25].

This new government for Athens, which is destined to have a brief history and be replaced by the traditional Athenian democracy in 410, has interested the modern literature for several reasons and especially because Thucydides is extremely laconic on the description of its characteristics[26]. The regime was for sure law-abiding, in opposition to the precedent one and consisted of Five Thousand citizens, who should have been wealthy, since it was not planned from the new regime to offer a public salary. Thucydides did describe indeed perfectly this form of government as the balance between the few and the many, since it is obvious that we cannot speak, neither of a typical oligarchic constitution because of the large number of its participants, nor of a democracy, of course, the existence of which presupposes the participation of the whole *demos*.

The enthusiasm of Thucydides for this new form of government in Athens is the reason, for which some scholars attributed a more oligarchical political identity to our historian, who for the first time after the time of Pericles seems to express a personal opinion on the politics of

[25] Thuc. 8.97.2.

[26] All characteristics and theories on this new constitution are to be found in the corresponding chapter.

Athens. At this point, and before starting to mention the different ideas of the modern scholars, I would like to make an important declaration: I am not interested to give an answer to this question, because I truly believe that we cannot really have a complete idea of the political ideals of Thucydides. I think that one cannot speak with absolute certainty of the political identity of a historian, who tried with passion to write down the events of the Peloponnesian War and leave in the next generations its *κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ*[27] in the most objective way possible.

There are quite a few scholars, who sustain the oligarchical identity of Thucydides actually. Canfora is one of the most important researchers of the Thucydidean history and a scholar, who did not hesitate to call directly Thucydides an "oligarch"[28]. In one of his books, Canfora refers to the enthusiasm of Thucydides for the new Athenian regime, which

> "non contraddice il suo ben noto apprezzamento per Pericle, poichè Pericle è per lui il correttivo necessario, e fortunatamente efficace, di un pessimo regime, quello popolare".[29]

According to the scholar, Thucydides' enthusiasm for a constitution with clear oligarchic characteristics does not cancel his admiration for Pericles and his governing, but not because the historian admired together with its leader also the Athenian democracy, but because in reality he considered Pericles as the most efficient politician for a constitution so awful as the one based on the sovereignty of the *demos.*

The same opinion adopts also De Ste Croix, who believes that Thucydides is much closer to be called a moderate oligarch than a moderate democrat.[30] The scholar highlights the fact that our historian "is much less interested in the form than in the practical working of constitutions" and this is the reason, for which he approved the Periclean constitution, but disapproved the governance in his city after him, although "in constitutional form there was no difference whatever between the two". Indeed Thucydides in his second book, when he speaks of the death of Pericles, finds an excuse to glorify the great Athenian politician and to highlight his important contribution to the city of Athens both in periods of peace and during

[27] Thuc. 1.22.4.
[28] See e.g. the titles of his books "Tucidide, l'Oligarca imperfetto" (Canfora 1988) and "Storie die Oligarchi" (Canfora 1983), in which he dedicates one chapter in Thucydides.
[29] Canfora 1983, 44.
[30] De Ste Croix 1956, 21.

the war[31]. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to criticize rigidly the successors of Pericles, which committed mortal errors and brought Athens to its complete disaster in Syracuse and definitive defeat from the Peloponnesians. The following admission of Thucydides is emblematic:

> "So it came about that what was in name a democracy (*ἐγίγνετό τε λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία*) was in practice government by the foremost man (*ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή*)"[32].

It seems that besides the enthusiastic description of the 'Five Thousand' regime by the historian, this is the other point, on which several scholars, Canfora and De ste Croix included, based their arguments on the oligarchical political direction of Thucydides: according to them, the historian, was an admirer of Pericles himself and not of the Athenian democracy in general. This consideration does not mean anyway that Thucydides was oligarch in an absolute sense, according to De ste Croix. The moderate character of the Thucydidean political ideas should not be disputed, as long as his recognition of the benefits of a "healthy" democratic constitution. He should have been in favour of a moderate democracy, according to the scholar, which "accepted certain oligarchic elements as a temporary measure but retained the power to abolish those elements and did before long abolish them, without resort to violence"[33].

On the other side are the scholars, who do not recognize an oligarchical background behind the words of Thucydides. According to Hornblower, for example, the *εὖ πολιτεύσαντες* does not refer to the recognition of Thucydides that Athens enjoyed a good form of constitution, as De ste Croix believed. The scholar mentions that "the more we incline to take *πολιτεύω* as referring to behaviour not structure, the less inclined we will be to label Th. as oligarch not democrat" (even if Hornblower adds anyway that "this passage does not make him an enthusiast for democracy either").[34] Of the same idea is Leppin, who believes that Thucydides in this passage refers to the political conduct of the new regime and not the way the constitution was structured[35]. Donini additionally believes that also Aristotle uses the verb *πολιτεύω* "non in senso constituzionale ma per indicare la vita dei cittadini nei loro rapporti

[31] Thuc. 2.65.5-9.
[32] Thuc. 2.65.9.
[33] For other scholars, who highlight the oligarchical identity of Thucydides, see Edmunds 1975, 78, who characterizes Thucydides' ethical sympathies as Spartan or oligarchic as revealed in 3.82.4-5.
[34] Hornblower 2008, 1036.
[35] Leppin 1999, 192.

l'uno con l'altro"[36]. One should not believe, consequently, that Thucydides with *εὖ πολιτεύσαντες* refers to the new constitution of Athens and the way, in which it is structured.

Which could have been then the political direction of Thucydides? According to several scholars, the answer should be "a moderate one". Thucydides, according to Raaflaub, should have been not in favour nor of oligarchy, which was likely to turn into oppressive tyranny because of the ruthless selfishness and ambition of those dominating it", nor of democracy, which as rule by the entire dèmos could not but fail ultimately because of the fickleness of the masses, their vulnerability to demagogic rhetoric, and their propensity for emotional reactions and irrational decisions".[37] In other words, according to Wolpert, Thucydides praises the constitution of the Five Thousand, because "he saw in the intermediate regime a way for the Athenians to move beyond past extremism and factionalism that threatened to destroy Athens"[38].

This should have been the main reason for the admiration of Thucydides of the new regime in Athens after the fall of the Four Hundred, according to several scholars: every constitution (a democracy under Periclean leadership, or a moderate oligarchy like the one of the Five Thousand, or even a tyranny, like the one of Pisistratus) can be good for the city, as long as their main objective is to serve the interests of its citizens and bad "as soon as individual ambitions (*ἴδιαι φιλοτιμίαι*) prevail against the common good".[39] He seems to have been in favour of a mixed constitution between oligarchy and democracy "for it represents not only a mix of the rule of the few and the rule of the many, but also a blend of political wisdom and domestic stability"[40]. This should have been the reason, for which the constitution of the Five Thousand, which was based on the *μετρία ξύγκρασις* between the few and the many, could have seemed at our historian as an ideal form of government, after he has seen with his own eyes the total collapse of the post-Periclean Athenian democracy and the damages, which the misleading policy of its demagogues caused to the city.

[36] Donini 1969, 11.
[37] Raaflaub 2006, 220ff.
[38] Wolpert 2017, 190. Of the same opinion is also Lange 1894, 626ff, who highlights that Thucydides should not be considered as an oligarch, but more as a "Vernunftdemokrat", whose main interest is the maintenance of the outer position of power of his city, even if it means that Athens should have passed a period of oligarchic government, in order to hold its power.
[39] See Saïd 2013, 209. For the same opinion, see also Harris 1990, 276.
[40] Jaffe 2017, 405

As I have just shown, the discussion on the political identity of our historian is various, mainly because Thucydides himself was not so interested to give an absolute answer to this question. Are these evidences enough for us, consequently, to reconstruct a full image of his political identity and beliefs? As, already said, the aim of this thesis is not to understand if Thucydides was in reality a "hidden oligarch", but more than that to gather more information possible on the diverse oligarchical forms of government of the fifth century through the words of our historian. Secondly, I believe that no definite answer can be given to this question, also because Thucydides was directly influenced from what he lived. He experienced one of the most crucial wars in history and lived with his own eyes the fall of his own city, as long as the banishment of himself, even if he paid his duty to Athens as a General. During such intense facts, the political ideas of our historian could also have been in constant change. Even his admiration to Pericles should have been more a personal belief and should not be combined with a general political direction of him. I will cite at this point the opinion of Pope, with which I too agree:

> "He is neither oligarch nor democrat nor anywhere in between not only because he grew up before this dichotomy existed but also because its very existence implies discord and makes it impossible for a citizen to have a whole-hearted loyalty to his city"[41].

An absolute definition of the Thucydidean political ideas is, consequently, not the topic of my thesis. On the contrary, I will concentrate my work on the way, in which oligarchy gets presented in the *History*, in order to understand as more as possible the evolution of the term during the years of the war. An analysis like this cannot only offer to us important information on the diverse constitutions of the fifth century and their development, but also help us to conceive a bit more the way, in which the political thought in the antiquity was structured After all this research, I am even more convinced that, through the sharp eyes of the ancients, we can manage to understand a bit more the way in which politic works also today.

[41] Pope 1988, 289.

Chapter 1. *Eunomia* and the constitution of Sparta

The concept of *eunomia* as a political value

The concept of *eunomia* is one of the main political ideas that appear in the work of Thucydides. In his first book the historian, when describing the Spartan system of governing, mentions the following:

> "Sparta itself, after the arrival of the present Dorian inhabitants, went through the longest period of unrest in recorded history (*ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον στασιάσασα*), yet even so its system of good order is very ancient and it has never been subject to tyrants (*ἐκ παλαιτάτου καὶ ηὐνομήθη καὶ αἰεὶ ἀτυράννευτος ἦν*). The Spartan constitution has remained unchanged for somewhat over four hundred years dating to the end of this war — a source of strength, enabling their political intervention in other states (*τῇ αὐτῇ πολιτείᾳ χρῶνται, καὶ δι' αὐτὸ δυνάμενοι καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι καθίστασαν*)."[42]

In a few phrases, Thucydides lays out the pass of Sparta from the long period of unrest (*stasis*) to a calmer period of its history characterized by *eunomia* and the absence of tyrannical forms of government. This new constitution remained stable for about 400 years and permitted to the Spartans to carry out political interventions in other states. Gomme comments on this passage that *eunomia* in this context implies two things; a constitutional government (the rule of law) and the internal peace, the absence of *stasis*[43]. This long stability that Sparta has managed to experience because of the establishment of *eunomia*, is, according to Gomme, what the Greeks admired most about the Spartans. *Eunomia*, deriving from *εὐ* and *νόμος* (*νέμω*), indicates as a general idea the 'good order'[44], the 'lawful order'[45], in other words, the use of "good laws", laws well established, that serve the good functioning of the city. It is anyway impossible, according to me, to give such an absolute definition to a political term that has been a topic of discussion by several ancient scholars. Further down, I will try first of all to comprehend the general idea that derives from the precedent and contemporary ancient sources of Thucydides about *eunomia*, but mainly – like already said – to understand, which is the connection of this political idea with the Spartan way of governing.

[42] Thuc. 1.18.1, transl. by Hammond 2009, *ad locum.*
[43] Gomme 1945, 128.
[44] LSJ 1996, *ad locum*; Chantraine 1968, *ad locum.*
[45] Beekes 2010, *ad locum.*

The idea of *eunomia* is a common subject in Greek literature. Chronologically, the first citation of the word can be found in Homer, when the suitors of Penelope opposed Antinoos because he struck Odysseus, who was transformed into a beggar. Inter alia, the suitors will mention that the gods sometimes may change their look and stroll along the cities unrecognizable, "taking a look at the violence of men and at lawful behaviour (*καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες*)[46]". After Homer, Hesiod in his *Theogony* speaks also of *eunomia* by personifying the idea with one of the three *Horai*, the child of *Themis* and the sister of *Dike* (justice) and *Eirene* (peace)[47]. Hesiod does not speak more about the characteristics of this *Hora* but from her family tree, one can at least understand that she is directly combined with law and order[48]. Furthermore, *eunomia* will play a significant role in the elegiac poetry and especially in the poem of Solon, who will define this idea in a few words:

> "My heart bids me to teach the Athenians that lawless
> behavior is the bane of a city,
> but respect for law *(εὐνομίη)* spreads order and beauty;
> it shackles the legs of the unjust,
> smooths and moderates, diminishes arrogance and withers
> delusion's burgeoning blossoms;
> it straightens crooked judgments, humbles pride,
> halts partisanship and the anger
> born of faction. Everything righteous and wise
> depends on respect for the law."[49]

The Athenian lawgiver did not write this poem by chance: *eunomia* represents the order and sets limits on the injustice, an idea that Solon wanted to spread in Athens by offering the Athenians his laws; in other words, it represents the well-ordered state, which Solon wanted to construct in Athens.

The concept of *eunomia* in Solon's poem is anyway different than the one presented in his precedent texts. In opposition to Homer and Hesiod, *eunomia* here abandons its mythological

[46] Hom. Od. 17.487, transl. by Dawe 1993, *ad locum.*
[47] Hes. Th. 901-3.
[48] See Melle 2004, 57, who mentions that "il suo essere, insieme a Dike ed Eirene, una delle Stagioni e poi sorella della Parche, fa capire che Eunomie si colloca entro un contest sovraordinario, nel quale rientrano da un lato il regolare flusso della natura e la definizione del destino umano, dall' altro il rispetto del giusto, la pace sociale che ne deriva. Il contesto è perciò quello in cui le leggi della natura e della società si identificano e rispecchiano ciascuna nel suo specifico un'unica volontà divina".
[49] Solon, CURFRAG.tlg-0263.4, transl. by Mulroy 1992, 69.

existence and becomes a political idea[50]. It is still, however, closer to a philosophical ideal than to an applied constitution, as it will become later. In this period *eunomia* represents the moderate lawful order that controls every exaggeration, unfairness, and discord. Ehrenberg mentions on Solon's poem the following:

> "It is obvious: *eunomia* is an ideal state of affairs. It is not a definite constitution, nor is it a State with good laws. It is a human community which is ruled by moderation, unity, and order. We hear nothing of custom and tradition, nothing of the good old times. They were, in fact, anything but good. Solon was not a romantic, but an idealist who traced his picture of *eunomia* in an ideal future."[51]

I will totally agree with this idea. In this period of history, we cannot speak of *eunomia* as a form of constitution but as a condition of the state characterized by order and moderation. *Eunomia*, as the opposite of *dysnomia* (lawlessness)[52] – according to Solon – characterizes a state that is well-ordered, a state in which the citizens obey the laws. As Andrewes remarks, "it is not, I believe, a new combination of *εὖ* and *νόμος*, but the noun of *εὔνομος* and *εὐνομοῦμαι*, meaning discipline and good order; a condition of the state in which the citizens obey the law, not a condition of the state in which the laws are good".[53] Andrewes believes that *eunomia* originally refers to the conduct of individuals and not to the way that the constitution of the city-state is constructed and the afore-mentioned examples do not permit another assumption; the passage of Homer speaks directly of a lawful behaviour (*εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες*) and not of a lawful state, when Solon concentrates also on the behaviour of the Athenians by trying to teach them what is *eunomia* and how this idea can be used, in order to create a better state. I cannot totally agree with the opinion of Andrewes that *eunomia* does not refer to a condition of state in which the laws are good, but to a state, in which the citizens obey the laws; according to Aristotle, the origin of the word indicates both the establishment of good laws and the constant obedience to the laws by the citizens[54]. But I will agree with Andrewes that the concept of *eunomia* in this period is not connected with some sort of constitutional reform. The same opinion has also Ostwald, who mentions that "[…]

[50] See Melle 2004, 68, who accurately mentions that "*eunomia* ha perduto il suo valore originario di ossequio a nome tradizionali e divine nel momento in cui una legislazione umana ha preso corpo". As the most ancient "legislazioni", which contributed at this development, are defined by the scholar the Great *Rhetra* and the legislation of Solon.

[51] Ehrenberg 1946, 84-85.

[52] *Dysnomia* is personified in Hesiod as the daughter of Eris, goddess of strife and sister of the Atë, goddess of mischief, delusion, ruin, and folly (Hes. Th. 230).

[53] Andrewes 1938, 89.

[54] Aristot. Pol. 4.1294a, 3-4.

before the end of the sixth-century *εὐνομία* was used in two senses. As a quality, it describes the behaviour of a normal and decent human being, and as a condition, it characterizes a state which is well-governed and in which justice, peace and order prevail".[55] The seventh and sixth century has introduced *eunomia* as a philosophical idea, as a characteristic of human behaviour. In the fifth century however the word will obtain its political character and Herodotus will be the first to express this new concept of the idea. In his first book he mentions the following:

> "But the Spartans, he heard, had just emerged from great difficulties and were now waging war victoriously against the Tegeans. Under their kings Leon and Hegesikles, the Lacedaemonians kept failing in their attempts against Tegea, although they had been victorious in all their other wars. In a still earlier period, the Spartans experienced the worst government of nearly all the Hellenes, in both their domestic and their foreign affairs, as they lived in an enforced isolation from others. Their conversion from bad to good government occurred in the following way (*τὸ δὲ ἔτι πρότερον τούτων καί κακονομώτατοι ἦσαν σχεδὸν πάντων Ἑλλήνων κατά τε σφέας αὐτοὺς καὶ ξείνοισι ἀπρόσμικτοι: μετέβαλον δὲ ὧδε ἐς εὐνομίην*). Lykourgos, one of Sparta's most worthy men, went one day to the oracle at Delphi, and as he entered the inner shrine there, the Pythia spontaneously proclaimed:
>
> You have come, Lykourgos, to my rich temple,
> You are dear to Zeus and to all on Olympus;
> Do I speak to a god or a man? I know not,
> Yet, I rather think to a god, Lykourgos.
>
> Some say that in addition to this, the Pythia dictated to him the laws that established the present Spartan way of life. The Lacedaemonians say, however, that Lykourgos, who became regent of his nephew King Leobates while the latter was a child, brought these new institutions from Crete and implemented them in place of the old as soon as he became regent. Having changed all the institutions, he was careful to see that the new rules and precepts would not be violated. Later, he established Sparta's military institutions: the platoons of citizens bound together by oath, the companies of thirty, and the system of communal messes. And in addition, he set up the Board of Ephors and the Council of Elders.

[55] Ostwald 1969, 70.

> With these changes, they attained good government, (*μὲν μεταβαλόντες εὐνομήθησαν*) […]."[56]

If one should compare the text of Herodotus and of Thucydides, he would discover many similarities; both texts have actually the same content, though the text of Thucydides is more concise. Both speak of a constitutional change in Sparta, which led the city from a period of unrest to a period of good governing. The connection of the constitution of Sparta with *eunomia* is not limited in those two passages, however. The idea of *eunomia* is referred already in the elegiac poetry of the seventh century from both Spartan poets Tyrtaeus and Alcman. Tyrtaeus's poem "*Eunomia*" – apart from some few fragments – is unfortunately not in our possession, but from Aristotle, we get informed that the subject of the poem was about the Messenian War[57]. It was expressed also the idea that the poem "seems to have included a discussion of the circumstances and substance of Lycurgus' reforms"[58]. I think, however, that since we are not in possession of the entire poem, we cannot come to absolute conclusions about its content. Apart from this, the Spartan Alcman speaks also of *eunomia*, this time from a mythological point of view[59]. He defines *eunomia* as a goddess and sister of Peitho, the goddess of persuasion and seduction. In this period *eunomia* is however still combined with a philosophical interpretation and is not comprehended as a political idea like already said.

On the other hand, the text of Herodotus does indicate a change of concept about the idea of *eunomia*; from this moment *eunomia* receives also a political dimension and the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides do indicate clearly this new interpretation of the word. Reading carefully the text of Herodotus, one can observe that the Spartan *eunomia* is clearly combined with the constitutional changes that Lycurgus brought to the city after he consulted the oracle of Delphi. Lycurgus changed all the laws and took care that everybody would obey the new ones. He established also the affairs of war, as long as the ephors and the council of the elders. These changes, which in the Spartan tradition are defined as the *Great Rhetra*, indicate the change of the Spartan way of living and governing from a bad-governed to a

[56] Hdt. 1.65.1 – 1.66.1, transl. by Strassler 2007, *ad locum.*

[57] Aristot. Pol. 5.1306b, 36-40. See also Keyt 1999, 199 about the content of the poems of Tyrtaeus: "Our only reliable source for the Messenian wars is the poet Tyrtaeus, whose poems were composed for the military and political crisis. The poem 'Law and Order', or *Eunomia*, of which only a few fragments survive, addresses the political crisis. It seems to have recounted the history of Sparta up to and including the poet's own day. His war poems are exhortations to battle. They glorify patriotism and death in battle and were probably chanted on the march to the accompaniment of a flute."

[58] See Osborne 2004, 18.

[59] Alcman fr. 64.

lawful and well-governed constitution. Sparta passes from a period of unrest, as Thucydides mentions, to a period of *eunomia*, a constitution based on good laws.

At this point, I find it very important to make a small parenthesis, in order to speak of an important problem, which arises from the afore-mentioned passages of Herodotus and Thucydides; the problem of the dating of the Spartan *eunomia*. Like already said, Herodotus speaks clearly of a transformation of the Spartan constitution from a bad-governed state, characterized by the establishment of bad laws (*κακονομώτατοι*) and *xenelasia* (*ξείνοισι ἀπρόσμικτοι*) to a well-ordered one (*εὐνομήθησαν*). In this passage, one can observe a clear dating confusion. On the one hand the historian dates the event at the beginning of the sixth century in the time of the kingship of Leon and Hegesikles, when right after he re-dates the Spartan *eunomia* at the beginning of the ninth century, when he connects its establishment in Sparta with Lycurgus and the kingship of Leobotes (c. 870-840). Thucydides does not help us unfortunately with Herodotus's confusing dating; he dates the Spartan *eunomia* 400 years before the end of the Peloponnesian War, i.e. in c. 800. The confusing dating of the two main historians of the fifth century caused naturally a very large discussion between the modern scholars about the dating of the *Great Rhetra* and consequently also the date, in which Sparta *ηὐνομήθη*.

One of the main articles about the concept of *eunomia*, which has been an important source for many researchers of this idea is, of course, the one of Andrewes[60]. On the dating problems of the episodes of Herodotus and Thucydides, Andrewes expressed the very interesting idea that the establishment of the Spartan legislation and constitution by Lycurgus and the *eunomia* of Sparta should be considered and dated as two different events: the first one was placed, according to him, at a very early age in the history of Dorian Sparta, when the second should have been "effected about 600 B.C. and has not necessarily any bearing on the constitution"[61]. According to Gomme, who characterizes the passage of Herodotus as the most remarkable instance of a carefree chronology, even if the theory of Andrewes could be considered as "tempting", is however groundless[62]. Gomme believes that the text of

[60] Andrewes 1938.

[61] Andrewes 1938, 93, cf. the later text of Andrewes 1956, 73-74, in which he changes the dating of the legislation of Sparta by stating that the *Rhetra* "cannot be earlier than the introduction of hoplites soon after 700", that some measures of the Spartan constitution should have been entered in the time of Tyrtaeus and that the establishment of the new legislation of Sparta should have been the result of the violent revolutions of the seventh century against a narrower aristocracy, which have guaranteed the rights of the Spartan *homoioi*.

[62] Gomme 1945, 128ff.

Thucydides, which is correcting the anomaly of Herodotus with its reference to an earlier dating, is very clear about the concurrent establishment of the *Great Rhetra* and the Spartan *eunomia*, which guaranteed at Sparta a stable form of constitution. Further scholars, like Hornblower[63], Hammond[64], and Koiv[65] do also rely their research basically on the texts of the two historians and believe that Herodotus and Thucydides may have aimed to supply the same date, i.e. an earlier dating (ninth – eighth century) according to a common opinion that existed in the Greek world about the establishment of the Spartan constitution and that the dating confusion in the text of Herodotus should not be a reason to believe that Lycurgus established the *Great Rhetra* in Sparta in the archaic period. Wade-Gery will also date Lycurgus in an earlier date and in particular in the early eighth century; the text of Plutarch[66] indicates, according to him, the existence of Lycurgus in the time of the First Olympiad (776-773)[67], when in the *Pseudepigraphus* of Aristotle[68] is indicated that the lawgiver was the first to receive the poesy of Homer and bring it to Peloponnesus.

In contrast to the afore-mentioned dating stand several scholars, who prefer a later dating of the Spartan *eunomia* (seventh-sixth century) and basically recede themselves from the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides and base their arguments on other sources. Huxley, for example, considers that it is possible to believe in a later dating, since inter alia[69] the *ephors*, which, according to Herodotus, were introduced in Sparta by Lycurgus[70], did not exist before the eighth century and since the Cretan influence on the Spartan constitution, which Aristotle supported so vividly[71], should be dated at approximately 700[72]. Of the same opinion is Toynbee, who dates the establishment of the Spartan constitution in the archaic period at the date of the political changes in Sparta and the agreement between aristocrats and commoners,

[63] Hornblower 1991, 52f.
[64] Hammond 1950, 55.
[65] Koiv 2005, 249.
[66] Plut. Lyc. 1.2.
[67] Wade-Gery 1944, 4. Wade-Gery makes a confusing note in his text (note 2), in which he mentions that "Lykourgos is contemporary with the First Olympiad". According to the text of Aristotle, Lycurgus is characterized as "*ἔτεσι πρεσβύτερον […] τῆς πρώτης Ὀλυμπιάδος*", i.e. many years older than the First Olympiad (transl. mine).
[68] Aristot. fr. 611, par. 10. For the text see Rose 1886, *ad locum.*
[69] The argumentation of Huxley is for sure larger, but cannot be discussed here. See Hammond 1973, 98-99, about the argumentation of Huxley based on some passages of Pausanias, which he characterizes as deficient.
[70] Hdt. 1.65.5.
[71] Aristot. Pol. 2. 1271b 21 – 2. 1272b 23. Aristotle inter alia mentions that, when Lycurgus "relinquished his post as guardian of King Charilaus and went abroad, he subsequently passed most of his time in Crete because of the relationship between the Cretans and the Spartans" (Aristot. Pol. 2.1271b, 25-28). After his period abroad, the lawgiver should have turned to Sparta, where he should have instituted the Great Rhetra.
[72] Huxley 1962, 42-43.

which resolved the problems between them[73]. Additionally, Forrest believes that the later dating of the Spartan constitution is supported first of all by the words of Herodotus about the dating of the event at the kingship of Leon and Hegesikles, which needs to be considered seriously, secondly by the poesy of the Spartan Tyrtaeus, who refers to *eunomia* and is dated in the seventh century and last but not least by archaeological evidences[74].

There is no doubt that our two basic historiographical sources of the fifth century do not indicate a clear date of the establishment of the Spartan constitution and the change of Sparta into an *eunomoumene* polis. I am asking myself if even Herodotus and Thucydides were aware of an exact date; their texts do not indicate something like that at least. But there is no doubt also that these are our main sources of the event and that they should also be considered in our research like that. The collection of diverse sources can help surely at our research, but they should be held anyway as supplementary sources to our basic texts. This is why I think that we should trust Herodotus and Thucydides about the earlier dating of the Spartan constitution and not insist on the confusion that Herodotus – unwillingly or purposefully – caused; there is a great possibility that he, like Thucydides, followed a certain tradition about the mythical story of Lycurgus and that he may have been confused also by himself. Since both historians agree – even on one point only – with each other about the earlier dating of the establishment of the Spartan constitution, I will live aside the confusion that Herodotus provoked with his dating and I will trust the direct sources of the fifth century.

The sources about the Spartan *eunomia* are not limited, however, only in our basic ancient historiographers of the classical period. It is not adventitious that, the almost contemporary of Thucydides, Plato refers also to Sparta as an *eunomoumene* polis. In his *Hippias Major,* he defines Sparta several times – through the words of Socrates – as a city, which is well-governed (*ἀλλὰ μὴν εὔνομός γ' ἡ Λακεδαίμων*)[75]. If one wants to understand, what Plato means with the characterization of Sparta as *eunomos,* he should pay particular attention, according to me, to the combination of *eunomia* with virtue:

[73] Toynbee 1969, 225.
[74] Forrest 1963, 172-73.
[75] Plat. Hipp. Maj. 283e, all the passages from Hippias Major are translated by Lamb 1925, *ad locum*. See also Plat. Crito 52e: "But you preferred neither Lacedaemon nor Crete, which you are always saying are well governed (*ἃς δὴ ἑκάστοτε φῂς εὐνομεῖσθαι*), […]", transl. by Fowler 1966, *ad locum.*

> "and in well-governed states virtue is most highly honoured (*ἐν δέ γε ταῖς εὐνόμοις πόλεσιν τιμιώτατον ἡ ἀρετή*)"[76]

Virtue is, according to Socrates, a very important value for the states combined with *eunomia*. Heitsch mentions that: "Sparta is *εὔνομός*, d.h. in Sparta werden die Gesetze befolgt; in Staaten, in denen die Gesetze befolgt werden, gilt die Tüchtigkeit (*ἀρετή*) viel."[77] What *arete* really means for Plato could be for sure the subject of a very big discussion, but I will not analyse it further, since this is not the aim of this thesis. The fact, however, that Plato connects *eunomia* to a value that is combined with goodness and excellence[78] indicates the positive meaning of *eunomia* for the scholars of the fifth century. *Arete* is the offspring of an *eunomos polis* and Sparta is one of the states, in which *arete* and *eunomia* are strictly connected.

On the other hand, it is very interesting in my opinion the fact that another contemporary of Thucydides, Pseudo-Xenophon, speaks of the same concept in his *Constitution of the Athenians* but from another point of view. More concretely, the writer, when describing the Athenian democracy, speaks of *eunomia* as a condition of slavery and mentions that the Athenians prefer the *kakonomia*[79], which will guarantee them freedom. In a condition of *eunomia* the cleverest men make laws, in order to serve their own interests, a fact, which has as a result that, since the laws are not on favour of the common people, the last will plunge into slavery.

> "Such a way of life could never produce the best city, but this is the way democracy would be best preserved. For the common people want not to be slaves in a city which has good laws (*οὐκ εὐνομουμένης τῆς πόλεως αὐτὸς δουλεύειν*), but to be free and in control – and they are not much worried if the laws are bad (*κακονομίας*). For what you consider[80] not having good laws, is in fact what enables the common people to be strong and free (*ὃ γὰρ σὺ νομίζεις οὐκ εὐνομεῖσθαι, αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τούτου ἰσχύει ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν*). But if you are looking for good laws (*εἰ δ' εὐνομίαν ζητεῖς*), the first

[76] Hipp. Maj. 284a. See also Plat. Hipp. Maj. 284b: "Then will not he who is able to transmit the doctrines that are of most value for the acquisition of virtue (*ἀρετὴν*) be most highly honored in Lacedaemon and make most money, if he so wishes, and in any other of the Greek states that is well governed (*εὐνομεῖται*)?".
[77] Heitsch 2011, 50.
[78] LSJ 1996, *ad locum.*
[79] LSJ 1996, *ad locum*, "a bad system of laws and government"; see Fontana 1969, 83-84 and Lapini 1997, 72 about the idea that *κακονομία* is an unknown word in the fifth century and that it should be considered as a spontaneous coining of the writer, in order to highlight the contrast to *εὐνομία*".
[80] See Stecchini 1950, 30 for the theory that the listener in this passage could be identifiable as a Spartan, since in the fifth century *eunomia* is combined with the Spartan constitution.

> thing you will see is that the cleverest men make laws in their own interest; second, the good will punish the bad and the good will take counsel about the city and will not allow madmen to become members of the Council, nor to make speeches, nor to attend the Assembly. As a result of these excellent decisions, the common people would soon plunge into slavery."[81]

In this passage of Pseudo-Xenophon one can observe a different concept of *eunomia*; in this case, the establishment of good laws results in the slavery of its citizens and not in a well-governed state. It is indeed strange that an ancient scholar combines this idea with the plunge into slavery, when in other preceding and contemporary texts *eunomia* is interpreted as something positive. Lapini posed also his question about the fact that Solo perceived the idea of *eunomia* as a condition that guaranteed the harmony of the polis and not as the slavery of the *demos*[82]. One cannot precisely know, what Pseudo-Xenophon had in mind when he wrote this part, which could seem like a paradoxical theory to a modern scholar. I think that the aim of the writer in this passage is to highlight the difference between the Spartan and the Athenian way of governing and this could be, in my opinion, the best proof of the connection of the Spartan constitution with *eunomia*[83]; in order to underline the differences between Athens and Sparta, Pseudo-Xenophon defines the *eunomia*, i.e. the Spartan way of governing, as a condition of slavery and opposes it to the Athenian democracy, which guarantees freedom to its citizens.

The opposed concept: *isonomia* as a democratic value

Since we are trying to understand in depth the idea of *eunomia* and since the text of Pseudo-Xenophon encourages the deeper analysis of the antithesis between the Athenian and Spartan way of governing, I would find it very interesting to make a parenthesis about the contradiction of the two main slogans of both cities; the *eunomia* and *isonomia*. Even if Pseudo-Xenophon does not use the exact term of *isonomia*, in order to define the opposed idea of *eunomia*, the contrast between the two political ideas is, also in Thucydides, one of the main characteristics of the antithesis between Athens and Sparta and one of the main instruments of propaganda that both cities practiced, in order to highlight even more the

[81] Ps. Xen. 1.8-9, transl. by Osborne 2004, *ad locum.*
[82] Lapini 1997, 72.
[83] See also Marr and Rhodes 2008, 71-72 for the connection of the Pseudo-Xenophonian *eunomia* with the Spartan constitution, which is confirmed, according to him, "by the closely following direct reference to 'Lacedaemon', i.e. Sparta at 1.11 (a rare example of specific detail in the treatise), where the context is similar, i.e. the citing of different, and allegedly better, practice elsewhere."

difference of political and social mentality between them. Stechhini mentions, and I cannot find any reason to disagree, that in the *Constitution of the Athenians* the writer contrasts *eunomia* (good, traditional distribution of rights), which is the traditional Spartan slogan, to *isonomia* (equal, rationalistic distribution of rights), which is traditionally combined to the Athenian democracy[84]. Can we however really identify *isonomia* with democracy?

The term *isonomia* is of great interest. Asheri mentions that the word etymologically should derive from *ἴσος* and *νέμειν*. The original sense should have been "equitable distribution", but later the meaning changed into "equality in front of the laws" (from *ἴσος* and *νόμος*), a more convincible explanation if we consider the political meaning that the word obtained later.[85] One of the earliest uses of the word can be found in a text of Alcmaeon, where the philosopher speaks of the importance of the *isonomia*, i.e. the equity, between all elements of nature (humidity and dryness, cold and warmth, bitterness and sweetness, etc.) for the guarantee of good health.

> "Gesundheitbewahrend sei die Gleichberechtigung der Kräfte, des Feuchten, Trocknen, Kalten, Warmen, Bittern, Süßen usw., die Alleinherrschaft dagegen sei bei ihnen krankheiterregend (*τῆς μὲν ὑγείας εἶναι συνεκτικήν τὴν ἰσονομίαν τῶν δυνάμεων, ὑγροῦ, ξηροῦ, ψυχροῦ, θερμοῦ, πικροῦ, γλυκέος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν, τὴν δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς μοναρχίαν νόσου ποιητικήν*). Denn verderblich wirke die Alleinherrschaft des einen Gegensatzes (*φθοροποιὸν γάρ ἑκατέρου μοναρχίαν*)[86]".

It is interesting that this perfect balance of nature, characterized as *isonomia*, is set in contrast with *monarchia*, the autocracy of one of these elements on the expense of the others. One cannot speak of a political dimension of the afore-mentioned terms, but it is for sure impressive that Alcmaeon highlights the contradiction of these two very important political terms[87].

When it comes to its connection with political constitutions, however, *isonomia* has a more concrete meaning and gets basically connected to democracy. In the famous discussion of

[84] Stecchini 1950, 30.

[85] Asheri 1990, *ad locum*, for the meaning of the term see also Betant 1847 *ad locum*, "iuris aequabilitas"; LSJ 1996, *ad locum*, "the equality of rights, the equality of a Greek democracy" and Chantraine 1968 "tous ont des droits ègaux".

[86] See Diels 1906, 104, fr. 4 for the Greek text and the translation.

[87] For the existence of the term in the archaic period, see the very interesting monograph of Birgalias 2009, who considered *isonomia* as a separate political constitution, which played a decisive role in the development of politics in the years 550-479.

Herodotus between the three Persian Grandees about the ideal constitution for Persia, Otanes will support democracy as the ideal form of government by defining it as *isonomia*: "but the rule of the multitude *(πλῆθος δὲ ἄρχον)* has in the first place the loveliest name of all (*οὔνομα πάντων κάλλιστον*), equality in front of the laws *(ἰσονομίην)* […]"[88]. In the text of Herodotus, *isonomia* is identified with the *πλῆθος ἄρχον* and is considered as the total opposite of monarchy. It is a situation, which determines offices by lot, holds power accountable and conducts all the *βουλεύματα* (resolutions) publicly. In a *politeia isonomos* all citizens are equal in front of the laws.

This idea about the identification of *isonomia* with democracy will remain in the fifth century, as the text of Thucydides can show. It has provoked, however, a big discussion between the modern scholars about if *isonomia* could be connected also with other forms of government since the text of the historian does not help to the resolution of this confusion. On the one hand, it has been supported the idea that *isonomia* represented several forms of government and not only the democratic one. In the episode of Thucydides about the conquest of Plataea, during the discussion of the Thebans in front of the Lacedaemonians, in order to convince them to attack the city, the Thebans speak of their constitution during the Persian Wars, which is characterized as *dynasteia*, a form of tyranny, ruled by few men and extremely opposite to the *isonomos oligarchia*[89]. In this case, *isonomia* is used as an adjective of oligarchy. Hornblower mentions that, according to him, the noun *isonomia* is not identical with democracy and that the words of Otanes are "merely a way of saying that *ἰσονομία* is something which can be predicated, as the philophers say, of democracy"[90], not that *isonomia* and democracy are the same. Even farther from the identification of *isonomia* with democracy is Gomme, who defines this constitution as: "a constitutional, law-abiding government, in which all citizens have equal rights, though not equal political power"[91]. In the episode of Thucydides, the idea of *isonomia* has another meaning from the one in Herodotus. The position of *isonomos* before the word *oligarchia* defines the character of *isonomia:* it cannot be defined as a political constitution, but more as an adjective not only of

[88] Hdt. 3.80.6, transl. by Godley 1920, *ad locum,* ed. by me.
[89] Thuc. 3.62.3
[90] Hornblower 1991, 455-56.
[91] Gomme 1956, 347. Of the same opinion is also Birgalias 2009, 29ff., who believed that *isonomia* is actually connected with the way, in which the *polis* is structured and not with a specific constitutional type of governing, like democracy. The scholar highlights that the fact that *isonomia* indicates equality of the citizens in front of the laws does not presuppose necessarily also that these citizens had also the right to have access at public magistracies, like they would have in a democracy.

oligarchy but of any other constitution, the citizens of which have equal rights; in other words, *isonomia* refers to constitutions, which are based on the equality of the laws. Asheri will interpret the term in the same way, as Gomme, when mentioning that the word *isonomia* "venne usato in età classica per qualsiasi regime «libero», cioè non monarchico". *Isonomia* is neither a synonym of democracy nor of oligarchy, "è piuttosto lo slogan dei regimi liberi, in particolare delle democrazie"[92]. Any constitution, which has this basis, can be *ἰσόνομος*.

When it comes to the connection of *isonomia* with democracy, however, Thucydides offers us two important passages, which highlight this connection particularly. The first instance appears during the events of the Civil War in Corcyra in the year 427, a war exploded between the two *ἑταιρεῖαι*[93] of Corcyra, the oligarchic faction (*οἱ ὀλίγοι*) and the democratic one (*ὁ δῆμος*), during which each of them participated and fought – with the help of the powerful cities of the war, Sparta and Athens respectively – for another objective; the first to cultivate good relations with the Peloponnesians, whereas the second to remain on the side of Athens. In the context of the political propaganda of the two factions, which aimed the accomplishment of their personal interests and not the commonweal, Thucydides describes the instruments of propaganda for both factions:

> "The leaders in the various cities would each of them adopt specious slogans professing the cause either of 'political equality for the masses' (*πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς*), or 'aristocracy – the government of moderation' (*ἀριστοκρατίας σώφρονος*)[94]; they pretended in their speeches to be competing for the public good, […]"[95]

It would be natural to be confused about if in this passage *isonomia* is really identified with democracy since we have seen that Thucydides may interpret this idea also in other ways. In Gomme's opinion, however, the reason why we can be sure that in our passage this idea is expressed by the democratic faction and not the oligarchic one is the use of the word *πλῆθος* (the multitude)[96], which in the political propaganda of the democratic faction indicates the majority of the people. In his sixth book, Thucydides will also combine *isonomia* with democracy, when the Syracusian Athenagoras will hold a speech in front of the Syracusian *ecclesia* in favor of the Athenians shortly prior to the arrival of the last in Syracuse in 415.

[92] Asheri 1990, *ad locum.*
[93] For the *ἑταιρεῖαι* in Thucydides, see the corresponding chapter.
[94] For the use of *ἀριστοκρατία* and *σωφροσύνη* in Thucydides, see the corresponding chapter.
[95] Thuc. 3.82.8, if not indicated differently, all translations are taken from Mynott 2013, *ad locum*
[96] Gomme 1956, 379.

During his speech the *δήμου προστάτης*[97] will ask his co-citizens the following question: "Or is it that you don't want to be equal before the law (*ἰσονομεῖσθαι*) with the majority?"[98] In this case, Athenagoras uses the idea of *ἰσονομία* as an adjective of democracy and highlights that it would not be just[99] if the citizens of a city would not have the same rights. If one considers that Syracuse is democratic in this period of its history, then the connection of *isonomia* with democracy gets even more evident. Dover mentions that in this passage it seems that "*ἰσονομία*, the situation in which all have the same rights, is one face of democracy; *δημοκρατία*, 'power in the hands of the majority', is another."[100] *Isonomia* and *demokratia* are both two faces of the same way of governing; the one that is based on the sovereignty of its citizens[101].

The afore-mentioned interpretation of *isonomia* has been supported by several scholars. Ehrenberg, for example, believes that Herodotus in his famous speech of Otanes uses the expression *οὔνομα πάντων κάλλιστον*[102] , not in order to translate *isonomia* as "equality in front of the laws" [103]. According to him, Herodotus wants mostly to highlight that the term indicates the share of state and power from all the citizens of the city, which constitutes the main characteristic of the democratic ways of governing and of the Cleisthenic democracy in particular[104], since Cleisthenes had realized through the use of *isonomia* the *ἀναμίσγεσθαι τὸ πλῆθος*[105] in an exemplary manner. Szegedy-maszak mentions that the slogan was adopted and perhaps invented by Cleisthenes "to denote his new order, dedicated to the proposition that in Athens all free adult males were created equal"[106]. When it comes to Thucydides, for many scholars even his most confusing passage about the *isonomos oligarchia* of the

[97] I.e. the leader of the popular party, see Thuc. 6.35.2.
[98] Thuc. 6.38.5.
[99] On the importance of justice in Thucydides' orations in general, see the interesting article of Birgalias 2013, 55ff.
[100] Dover 1970, 304.
[101] See also Ehrenberg 1950, 537, who believes that "we cannot connect Thucydides' ἰσονομία with any special political institution such as, e.g., that of responsible government, but neither was it to him an ὄνομα κάλλιστον. On the whole, it was little more than a fine cloak to cover any moral deformity." The text of Thucydides does not indicate in an absolute way, according to the scholar, neither a democratical character of *isonomia,* nor an oligarchical one.
[102] Hdt. 3.80.6.
[103] Ehrenberg 1940, 295-296.
[104] See also Ostwald 1969, 155 about the idea that "no other term would have served Cleisthenes better than *ἰσονομία* to suppress any sympathy for the tyrants that may still have lingered and at the same time win the people over to his side in his struggle against Isagoras."
[105] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 21.3, "the mixing up of the multitude", transl. mine.
[106] Szegedy-maszak 1993, 204.

Thebans does not indicate an oligarchical character of the term. According to Vlastos, who had to write a second article about *isonomia* after the publication of Gomme's commentary, in order to support once again his opinion about the democratic character of *isonomia*[107], oligarchies could use the term *isonomia* "only by borrowing it from democracy and only by approximating as best as they could the democratic pattern". In the case of Thebes, the *isonomos oligarchia* refers to a responsible constitution, which grants "an equal share in government to its fully enfranchised civic body"[108], i.e. a democracy.

In my opinion, the democratic aspect of *isonomia* in the fifth century cannot be really questioned. It is true that Thucydides does not explain clearly the real character of this term, especially in the case of Thebes, but I think that in this case Thucydides uses this idea not because he wants to give another meaning to the word but in reality because he wants to highlight the antithesis between the so-called *dynasteia*[109] and the lawful oligarchy based on the equality of the citizens in front of the laws[110]. The same idea will be expressed also in the fourth book of the historian, when Thucydides refers to the expedition of the Spartan Brasidas to Thessaly and the constitution that he found, when he passed by there: "So if the Thessalian system had been based on equal rights for all, rather than the traditional dominance of oligarchic cliques (*εἰ μὴ δυναστείᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ ἰσονομίᾳ*), Brasidas could never have gone on."[111] The afore-mentioned passage is also a part of the contradiction between *dynasteia* and *isonomia* that Thucydides wants to highlight. It does not represent, however, according to me, the general idea about *isonomia* in the fifth century; in this case, the use of the term is an instrument of the historian, in order to show the antithesis between a constitution based on laws and a tyrannical form of it[112].

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[107] See Vlastos 1971.

[108] Vlastos 1953, 366.

[109] About *dynasteia* as a political constitution, see the corresponding chapter.

[110] Ostwald 1969, 119 mentions that the term *oligarchia* refers justly to the constitution of Thebes in 427, because it was a government characterized by the restriction of active citizenship and the adjective *isonomos* also, "because all full citizens enjoyed equal political rights and equal political power".

[111] Thuc. 4.78.3, transl. by Hammond 2009, *ad locum.* Cf. Vlastos 1971, 17 on this passage: "The thessalian *πλῆθος* had been traditionally friendly to Athens. Hence if they were now enjoying *isonomia*, Brasidas would not have been allowed to pass. Here it should be obvious that Thucydides uses *isonomia* to refer to the kind of government in which the sovereign decisions are made by the *πλῆθος* itself; and since this happens *only* in democracy, our word here denotes democracy in a very straightforward way. Thucydides could have made exactly the same point by using *demokratia* in lieu of *isonomia*, leaving everything else unchanged in his text". I will have to disagree on the idea that Thucydides identifies democracy with *isonomia* in this particular passage.

[112] See also Vlastos 1971, 17, who mentions that: "So even if this passage were our only clue to the meaning of the word, we would still be in a position to infer that its "equal law" pertains specially to those rights which

Finally, I would like to quote the words of Vlastos, who has given, according to me, a very convincing explanation of how *isonomia* became a special feature of democracy and not of other forms of government. According to him, *isonomia* assures the good functioning of a democratic society, since it guarantees equality in front of the laws of all citizens, poor or rich, common citizens or aristocrats:

> "*Isonomia* refused to countenance either the ancient monopoly of law in the hands of a hereditary aristocracy or the claims to political privilege of the new plutocracy whose social power rivalled that of the old nobility. It promised the poorest citizen an equal right in the law-making, law-administering, law-enforcing power of the state. It expressed the spirit of a constitution, hitherto undreamed of in civilized, which declared that the poor man's share in law and political office was equal to that of the noble and the rich"[113].

In these few phrases is concentrated, according to me, in whole the main idea about the concept of *isonomia* in the fifth century. *Isonomia* offers to all citizens equal rights by guaranteeing to the poor equal share in law and public administrations with the richer ones; there can be nothing more democratic than that.

What can we understand about *eunomia* from the comparison with its opposed term?

Much could be said about *isonomia* and its political shades; this is not the topic of my thesis, however. In this small parenthesis, I have tried to present the main characteristics of this idea in the period of the Peloponnesian War and the main bibliography about this subject, in order to understand the connection of the term with the Athenian constitution. Returning to our main subject, i.e. the research of the connection of *eunomia* with the Spartan way of governing, I think that the comparison between *isonomia* and *eunomia* is of great interest, in order to understand the real character of *eunomia*. From a lexicological point of view, the two terms derive from the same word, *νόμος*, i.e. custom, law, which derives from the verb *νέμω*, i.e. allot, dispense, distribute[114]. Consequently, the prefix of each word is the factor that changes the whole meaning of the word. In the case of *isonomia*, the attribute *ἴσος* (equal) indicates the equality in front of the laws, when the prefix *εὐ* (good, well) in the case of *eunomia* indicates the use of well-established laws. One could ask, which is the real

insure access to the devices of self-government, and is thus specially bound to that form of government which is, in principle, pure self-government".

[113] Vlastos 1953, 355-356.

[114] Beekes 2010, *ad locum*.

lexicological difference between the two terms. Indeed, Ehrenberg believes that both *isonomia* and *eunomia* "with all their contrasting qualities and their contradictory nature, […] implied one and the same fact, the rule of law"[115]. According to Ehrenberg, since *Nomos* became the fundamental idea, on which the Polis rested, whether we speak of oligarchic or democratic forms of government, the concepts of *eunomia* and *isonomia*, both connected with the sovereignty of law, should have become relative ideas between each other. "For that reason, they disappeared during the fifth century from the front line of actual politics", according to the scholar.

I have to disagree with Ehrenberg. The concepts of *eunomia* and *isonomia* indicate, in my opinion, clearly different political ideas, which could easily represent different forms of government, especially in the fifth century. In the case of *isonomia*, the term indicates that the citizens of the city are equals in front of its legislation when in the case of *eunomia* the equality in front of the laws is not a prerequisite, only the good quality of the established laws is. This means that an *eunomoumene polis* can consist of diverse political institutions with different functions and different power since it is based on a constitution of well-established laws and not on a constitution, which is based on the sovereignty of its citizens. On the other hand, the *isonomos politeia* requires the equality of the citizens in front of the laws of the city, a measure that indicates the equal position of all citizens and therefore their sovereignty in the city.

There is no doubt, in my opinion, that the case of *eunomia* fits better to oligarchic constitutions and the case of *isonomia* to democratic ones; this does not mean, however, that one can speak of an identification of the afore-mentioned terms and constitutions. Even more important that that should be to investigate the background of the tendency of the ancient scholars to identify *eunomia* with oligarchy and *isonomia* with democracy and I think that in the fifth century this background is strongly connected with the concurrence of the two protagonists of the Peloponnesian War, Athens and Sparta. Both *eunomia* and *isonomia* –like already seen – are much older than the war and their initial meaning can be sometimes very far from any connection with Athens or Sparta; this is why one can observe Solon teaching at the Athenians the benefits of *eunomia*. Even if the Spartan Tyrtaeus in the seventh century speaks of *eunomia*, the first direct connection of *isonomia* and *eunomia* with the proper forms of government, i.e. democracy and oligarchy respectively, appears in Herodotus and

[115] Ehrenberg 1946, 92-93.

continues in Thucydides and this cannot be adventitious, according to me. The two main historians of the fifth century represent the society of their time, a society, which "simmers" because of the concurrence of Athens and Sparta, which will lead the Greek world to its cruelest Civil war. The two philosophical ideas of the past centuries get transformed in this way to the two main political slogans of the two powerful cities, which will empower their political propaganda. Thucydides manages to present very successfully the two dimensions of the Peloponnesian War; the one in the real battlefield and the other in the battlefield of the concurrence of the political ideas, each of which will determine in another way the development of the war. In this context, *eunomia* and *isonomia,* as the slogan of Sparta and Athens respectively, had a very important role in the concurrence of the political forms of government that each part represented. One should not forget that one of the main initial reasons of the concurrence between the two cities has been the different constitutions of each of them, which indicated also different mentalities and way of life; consequently, *eunomia* and *isonomia* as political slogans have served perfectly as the instruments of the cities to feed this concurrence.

Last but not least, the reference of the subsequent of Thucydides, Aristotle in his *politics* about *eunomia* and its characteristics should not be omitted from the research on the connection between *eunomia* and Sparta. First of all, Aristotle defines *eunomia* as a political condition, which requires not only the enactment of good laws but also the obedience to them (*"οὐκ ἔστι δὲ εὐνομία τὸ εὖ κεῖσθαι τοὺς νόμους, μὴ πείθεσθαι δέ*")[116] and highlights that

> "now it appears to be an impossible thing that the state which is governed not by the best citizens but by the worst should be well-governed (*δοκεῖ δ' εἶναι τῶν ἀδυνάτων τὸ εὐνομεῖσθαι τὴν μὴ ἀριστοκρατουμένην πόλιν ἀλλὰ πονηροκρατουμένην*), and equally impossible that the state which is ill-governed should be governed by the best (*ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἀριστοκρατεῖσθαι τὴν μὴ εὐνομουμένην*)".[117]

Aristotle seems to connect directly *eunomia* with aristocracy, which is presented here from the philosopher as a 'good government'[118]. If one considers the connection of aristocracy with Sparta[119], this passage of Aristotle does not indicate for sure any identification of the Spartan constitution with *eunomia* but can indicate at least the non-connection of this

[116] Aristot. Pol. 4.1294, 3-4.
[117] Aristot. Pol. 4.1294a, 1-3, transl. by Everson 1996, *ad locum*.
[118] See Melle 2004, 57ff., for the Aristotelian concept of the term.
[119] See the corresponding chapter of the thesis.

political idea with democratic forms of government. Bertelli and Moggi mention on this passage the following:

> "Stabilito che l'aristocrazia è il regime dei "cittadini migliori" (1293b 41), simile in questo all' oligarchia come regime dei più ricchi dotati di educazione e prestigio (1293b 41-42), il "buon governo" (*eunomia*) apparterebbe per definizione a una città aristocratica (*ἀριστοκρατουμένη πόλις*), mentre sarebbe impossibile per una città retta dai *poneroi* (*πονηροκρατουμένη πόλις* [...]): l'opposizione non implica che con *πονηροκρατουμένη πόλις* Aristotele stia alludendo alla politeia, che non potrebbe in alcun modo essere definita in questi termini, ma fa riferimento a un' opposizione del genere di quella che troviamo in [Xen.] Ath. 1, 5-9, tra "governo dei migliori" (*chrestoi*) e "governo del demos."[120]

Even if Aristotle does not identify clearly *eunomia* with oligarchy and Sparta in particular, I think that in his text he represents the society of his time, in which the perception of Sparta as an *eunomoumene* polis should have been a common idea. This theory will be strengthened, when one reads some characteristics of the *eunomia*, which can remind the reader of the way that the Spartan constitution is constructed. Aristotle refers to two elements of the *eunomoumene polis*: in the first place, he is asking himself if a city with many citizens can be governed in a right way because the *πόλεις* who are *eunomoumenai* do not have many citizens[121] and in the second place, if the contact with *πόλεις* that have different laws could be beneficial for the *eunomoumenai poleis*[122]. When it comes to the second argument Aristotle expresses his doubts about if the communication of a city with the sea is beneficial to a well-ordered state, because of the constant coming and going of merchants and strangers in the city, which will cause the increase of the population; there could be nothing more "Lacedaemonian" than this description. Sparta, a traditional territorial power, located in a big distance from the sea and with a weak marine, was known about the *ὀλιγανθρωπία*, the small number of citizens, which in her history was constantly diminishing[123], but also about the so-called *ξενηλασία*, a practice of the city to keep away the influences of people who are *ξένοι*

[120] Bertelli; Moggi 2014, 237-238. On the idea that a democratic constitution cannot be *eunomos* see also Erasmus 1960, 62, "[…] since he (Aristotle) regards aristocracy as the best form of government and the only form of government conducive to *eunomia*, he emphasises the fact that *eunomia* can only be attained by enacting good laws (i.e. by an aristocracy) and by the obedience of the citizens to these laws. In a state where bad laws have been enacted (e.g. by a democracy) and where these bad laws are obeyed, there can be no *eunomia*."

[121] Aristot. Pol. 7. 1326 a, 25-28.

[122] Aristot. Pol. 7. 1327a, 11-17.

[123] See Aristot. Pol. 2. 1270 a, 29-42 about the number of Spartan citizens.

(strangers)[124]. If one reads the text of the philosopher of the fourth century behind the lines, he can easily observe the similarities of the idea about *eunomia* represented in his text with the ideas that the historians of the fifth century, Herodotus and Thucydides expressed.

The afore-mentioned observations have been a subject for discussion from several modern scholars. Ostwald, for example, notes that the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides

> "[…] use the noun and the verb to describe the lasting social and political conditions brought about by the reforms of Lycurgus, but that the same terms could also be applied, as Herodotus' discussion of Cheops and Deioces shows, to conditions prevalent elsewhere. This suffices to prove that the Greeks of the fifth century would associate *eunomia* no more closely with Sparta or with the Spartan constitution after Lycurgus than with any other state"[125].

The idea of Ostwald is that the concept of *eunomia* should not be considered as the definition of the reforms of Lycurgus, but as an adjective of every political situation that fits to its characteristics. In this sense *eunomia* can be interpreted not only as a form of political constitution but also as a political idea, which can be adapted to every political situation that represents a well-governed state; in other words, genuine *eunomia* is, according to Szegedy-Maszak "a force of moderation that preserves a state intact"[126]. It is for sure not adventitious that Thucydides speaks of *eunomia* once again in his work when he speaks of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred imposed in Athens in the year 411, even if this time he uses the word in a different way than we are used to. Thucydides, while describing the effort of the Athenian oligarchs to impose the new constitution on their submissive cities, will mention that the Thasians preferred freedom instead of the *ὑπούλου* (fraudulent) *εὐνομίας*[127], which the Athenians offered to them. The constitution that the Athenian instigators tried to impose on their submissive city-states is an *eunomia*, i.e. an oligarchy but a fraudulent form of it. *Eunomia* is equivalent to a "healthy" oligarchic constitution, based on the good functioning of the laws; the authoritarian constitution of the Four Hundred could never be identified with this form of government. *Eunomia* in Thucydides is consequently not only combined with Sparta but with several forms of government. If we presuppose however that this theory is

[124] See Thuc. 1.144.2; Thuc. 2.39.1 about the connection of Sparta with *ξενηλασία*. For more information, see the chapter on the Lacedaemonians.
[125] Ostwald 1969, 80.
[126] Szegedy-Maszak 1993, 204.
[127] Thuc. 8.64.5.

true, why is then prevailed in the ancient texts a connection of *eunomia* with the Spartan way of governing in particular?

I think that the answer to this question is of particular interest. Like already seen, the connection of *eunomia* with Sparta does not appear for the first time in the time of Herodotus; in particular, it appears in the seventh century and the poesy of the Spartans Tyrtaeus and Alcman. Kiechle supported the idea that the awareness of Herodotus and Thucydides about the Spartan *kakonomia* and the *staseis* that took place in archaic Sparta should have derived from the oral tradition and not from any written evidence, considering that Sparta is in no case known for its inheritance of written texts[128]. In this context, according also to Koiv[129] and Hammond[130], the poems of Tyrtaeus, in particular, had to have been an important source for the historians of the fifth century about the development of the archaic history of the Lacedaemonians, since they represented the traditions of the past[131]. In this way, the "Spartan propaganda" about its very unique mentality of governing and living and in particular in our case about the strong connection of Sparta with the concept of *eunomia* got spread in the whole Greek world. This is the reason why this tradition of the Lacedaemonians survived also in the subsequent years including the text of Plutarch and Diodorus, who both speak of Sparta as *eunomoumene*. Erasmus believes that "when Diodorus[132] and Plutarch[133] used eunomia as the name of the Spartan constitution, […] had Herodotus and Thucydides, and the writers of the fourth century, before them"[134]. This means that this idea about Sparta as *eunomoumene* is based on a tradition of the archaic period and remained alive in a large period of its history[135].

[128] Kiechle 1963, 200.
[129] Koiv 2005, 247-48.
[130] Hammond 1950, 54.
[131] For the sources of Thucydides, see Hammond 1950, 54, who believes that in this case the historian should have followed the Spartan tradition of Tyrtaeus and Alcman for the writing of his work, when he considers as less probable the possibility that he drew directly on Herodotus.
[132] Diodorus in 7, fr. 12, added two lines to the oracle described by Herodotus 1,65,3, according to which Lycurgus is in search of *eunomia*, when he appeals to the oracle.
[133] See Plut. Lyk. 5,3; 29.6; 30.2.
[134] Erasmus 1960, 64.
[135] Hammond 1950, 55 notes that the aorist tense (*εὐνομήθησαν*) in Hdt. 1.66.1 "is sufficiently rare for its appearance in the same context in Herodotus and Thucydides to be striking. It looks like a technical term in relation to the reform at Sparta". Cf. Erasmus 1960, 60, "It is an attractive suggestion, but if we accept it, it must be stressed that it is a technical term designating the proverbial Good Order of Sparta which, according to Herodotus and Thucydides, resulted from the Lycurgean reforms — it is not yet a technical term designating the Spartan constitution as such". I will agree with the last opinion.

Is this tradition about Sparta, however, sufficient, in order to speak of an identification of the concept of *eunomia* with the Spartan way of governing? I think the answer to this question is somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, the fact that Sparta is an *eunomos politeia* does not indicate also that every *eunomos politeia* is identified with Sparta, as the examples of Herodotus und Thucydides have shown. *Eunomia*, which appears in the Greek thought as a mythological creation and a philosophical idea indicating the good order, receives a political character in the fifth century and gets used from the two main historians of this period as a political concept, combined with the calming down of unrests and the establishment of a well-governed state, based on the good functioning of the laws. As a general idea, this concept can be adapted obviously to several political constitutions, since, which non-tyrannical form of government should not have been based on a well-constructed legislation actually? When we speak, however, of political systems of this complexity, like the ones of the Greek city-states of the fifth century, a period of a particular political instability because of the explosion of the Peloponnesian War, the answer cannot be so simple. We know very well, which was the importance of tradition for the Greek world in general; in our case, the archaic tradition of Sparta as *eunomoumene* is too powerful to be forgotten in the next centuries. We know very well also, that the Peloponnesian War was based first of all on the concurrence between Athens and Sparta, which was not limited only to their military power but was also interpreted as a concurrence of political ideas and way of life. In this background, the political propaganda from both sides had to be one of the main instruments of the two cities, in order to impose their power on the other and win the war. For Sparta the concept of *eunomia*, historically combined with its ancient form of government through the poems of Tyrtaeus and Alcman, should have been a basic political weapon against the corresponding Athenian weapon, *isonomia*, a concept also historically combined with Athens and its form of government, like already seen. Of course, one cannot say that *eunomia* was a term used only by and for the Spartans, as several afore-mentioned examples can show; the same happens also with *isonomia*. But, on the other hand, we cannot say that the connection of the afore-mentioned political concepts with the corresponding *poleis* is also a coincidence. I think that in the Peloponnesian War, a war of life and death, in which both leading cities had to fight for their interests in extreme conditions, every idea that derives directly from their historical background can become an important "weapon". *Eunomia* is not exclusively Spartan but is connected so intensely with the development of the history of the city, that I will have to agree with the scholars that have characterized *eunomia* as a clearly Lacedaemonian value.

Chapter 2. The Lacedaemonians and their slaves. The role of *phobos* in the development of the Spartan state

The *phobos* of the Helots

When it comes to Sparta and to the Lacedaemonian constitution[136], Thucydides is not really interested to offer us detailed information about its form and development; unlike Xenophon, our historian refers to the several institutions of the Lacedaemonian state many times without several explanations of their particular characteristics. On the other hand, he is very interested to understand the deepest layers of a society, which was widely characterized as strict and introverted. One of the most important factors, which determined the development of the Lacedaemonian state, was for sure the existence of their Messenian slaves, called Helots[137] and the constantly insecure relationship between them and their masters.

Thucydides highlights in different parts of his work the constant fear of a possible revolution of the helots in Sparta, which influenced a lot the story of the city. The small number of Spartan citizens[138], (which constantly became smaller) against the huge number of the helots[139] caused the extreme *phobos* of the Lacedaemonians of a possible rebellion of their

[136] Aim of this part of my thesis is not to speak extendedly of the Spartan constitution and its characteristics, but rather understand which idea Thucydides had on the way of governing of the Lacedaemonians. This is why I will not speak of the famous discussion between the scholars about the distinctiveness of the Spartan way of governing, which had obviously some oligarchic characteristics, but cannot be defined really as a typical oligarchy. It is notable that this discussion seems to have existed already in the antiquity, as Aristotle (Aristot. Pol. 4.1294b, 20-34) notes, when he mentions that the Spartan constitution can be characterized for many as an oligarchy, for others as a democracy. On the discussion of the particular nature of the Spartan constitution, see among others Cartledge 2001, 21ff.; Lane 2014, 82ff.; Poma 2003, 155ff., as long as Jaffe 2017, 397. See also Birgalias 2007, 125ff., who inter alia notes that the denominations of the constitution of Sparta as *eunomia* or *isokratia* by Herodotus and *oligarchia* by Thucydides are not sufficient for the definition of the Lacedaemonian form of government, since the last was much more complicated and manifold, as Plato and Aristotle indicate.

[137] For the history of the helots and their enslavement, see, among the extremely rich bibliography, first of all the very accurate work of Ducat 1990 as long as the very interesting articles and works of Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 667-671; Clauss 1983, 109-115; Cartledge 1979, 138-168; Cartledge 1987; Ducat 1978; Ducat 1983, 205-207; Figueira 2018, 565-595 (especially on the connection of the Helotage with the Spartan economy); Jones 1967, 8-12; MacDowell 1986, 31-42; Oliva 1986, 317-326 and Toynbee 1969, 195-203; 170-177.

[138] Or differently called *homoioi*, attribute given to the Lacedaemonians from the fifth century on from several historians (see e.g. Hdt. 7.103; 234; Thuc. 4.40), according to Birgalias 2005, 268, n. 5. On the political identity of the Spartan *homoioi*, see Birgalias 2005, 267ff.

[139] Talbert 1989, 23, in his work refers to 8.000 adult males, citizens of Sparta in 480, a number, which was diminished in 1.100 citizens after 371 against the huge number of helots, which is estimated between 170.000 and 224.000 people. On the numbers of the Helot population see also Grundy 1908, 80 ff.; Figueira 2003, 193-239 and Scheidel 2003, 240-247 (for a simplified model) and on the Spartan population in general including the Helots, see Figueira 1986 and Cawkwell 1983, 385-390.

Messenian slaves[140]. Apart from the disproportion of the numbers between them, the fact of the enslavement of a whole region, i.e. Messenia, by the Spartans indicated that the Messenians were probably bound together "by something far more than just the weak negative factor of sharing a common fate, by ties of kinship, nationhood (if I may use the term) and tradition, all perpetually reinforced through their survival on their native soil."[141] It should have been consequently much easier for them to get organized and attempt a rebel for the common cause.

All of the afore-mentioned parameters have caused a constant feeling of insecurity in the city of Sparta. Thucydides writes that the relations between Lacedaemonians and helots were determined from the effort of the Lacedaemonians to guarantee their security (Thuc. 4.80.3), which means, that somehow the Spartans were "subject" to their own fear. This fact has influenced not only the military and social life of the Spartans, but also their political life and has probably affected the Spartan constitution in a great measure. How realistic was this fear anyway and in which way could the Spartan constitution have been conditioned by this?

The willing of the helots to rebel is made clear from Thucydides already from his first book, where the historian mentions the closed-door discussions of the Spartan general Pausanias with some helots in 478 during the period, in which he was accused from his city for being medized. According to the historian, Pausanias had promised to the helots that he would have liberated them if they had collaborated at his plan to revolt against the state[142]. His plan was never realised, but the helots did indeed rebel some years later and specifically after the great earthquake[143], which hit Sparta on in the year 464 and caused the death of 20.000 people and serious damages in the city[144]. Thucydides mentions that this natural catastrophe gave the helots and the Messenians[145] the chance to enter in a 10 years' revolt[146] and at the end

[140] *Phobos* and its synomyms have a dominant role in the Thucydidean narration. Desmond 2006, 360, notes that fear, according to our historian, is "one of the dominant forces shaping political events". For the way, in which Thucydides treats fear, see the whole article of Desmond 2006.

[141] Finley 1964, 240. Among the numerous publications on the identity of the Messenians, see the recent and interesting monograph of Biagetti 2018, which moreover presents a very detailed bibliography on this argument.

[142] Thuc. 1,132,3-4. For Pausanias and his medism, see Thuc. 1.128-130. For the modern bibliography on the case of Pausanias' betrayal see among others Hornblower 1991, 219; Roobaert 1977, 144-145 and Lotze 1970, 271ff.

[143] Thuc. 1.101.2-3, Thucydides does not date the earthquake, for the dating and further information about the helot revolution, see Plut. Cim. 16.4-7 and Diod. 11.63-64.

[144] On the great earthquake see Cartledge 1979, 186 ff. and Cartledge 1976, 25-28 .

[145] Thucydides makes a clear separation between the "normal" helots and the Messenians. In 1.101.2 he mentions that "most of the helots were descendants of the early Messenians who had long been enslaved and were hence all called Messenians", which indicates that some of them were not enslaved in the first two

manage to capitulate with the Spartans and leave from Peloponnese. In order to face this revolution, which has been characterized as the greatest social upheaval that Sparta experienced during the Classical period[147], the Spartans asked the help of the Athenians, which was never really given from the city of Athens at the end: this fact showed, according to the historian, for the first time the open difference between the Spartans and the Athenians[148]. Consequently, the Spartans got constrained to liberate the Messenians, who were settled in Nafpaktos from the Athenians[149], but, as Diodorus narrates, only the last were the ones saved, because the Spartans punished the ones, who were responsible for the revolt and enslaved the rest.[150] The unexpected rebellion of their slaves should have panicked the Spartans, who were constantly under the terror of a possible revolution of their slaves.

Indeed, this fear of the Spartans gets highlighted in diverse passages of the Thucydidean history. In the discussion before the destruction of the city from the Spartans in the year 426 the citizens of Plataea, in their attempt to convince the Spartans to cancel their predicted attack, evoke to the Lacedaemonians that they had sent troops at Sparta during the revolt of the helots after the earthquake. Inter alia, the Plataeans mention that:

> "You, men of Sparta, were particular beneficiaries at that critical moment after the earthquake when your city was gripped by fear (*μέγιστος φόβος περιέστη τὴν Σπάρτην*) because the helots were in revolt and had seized Ithome […]"[151].

This *phobos* of the Lacedaemonians, which, according to Aristotle, is not unreasonable[152], will become the characteristic that will accompany Sparta during the whole Peloponnesian War. Thucydides does not hesitate to speak of this fear in several passages of his work. This

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Messenian wars. There should have been also some Laconian helots, who of course should have been a minority, see Hornblower 1991, 157 and Ducat 1990, 138.

[146] Thuc. 1.103.1.

[147] Jordan 1990, 47.

[148] Thuc. 1.102, see also Plut. Cim. 17.2.

[149] Thuc. 1.103.3.

[150] Diod. 11.84.8.

[151] Thuc. 3.54.5.

[152] See Aristot. Pol. 2.1269a, 38-40. The philosopher mentions that the helots in Sparta were "like an enemy constantly sitting in wait for the disasters of the Spartiates". When he will speak of the differences between Sparta and Crete afterwards, the philosopher will mention that in contrary to Crete, where the serf population stands firm, the helots in Sparta often revolt (Aristot. Pol. 2.1272b, 17-20). Obviously there was a common voice in Greece that helots were always ready to rebel against their masters and indeed the helots would not finish with the attempts of revolution after the one of the great earthquake. Plutarch mentions that during the expedition of Agesilaus some helots ran away from the army and enjoyed the enemy (Plut. Ages. 32.7). Apart from that, Xenophon narrates that some helots had also participated at the conspiracy of Cinadon against the state in the year 399 (Xen. Hell. 3.3.6).

intention of the historian is made very clear also from the choice of the words, which he uses, in order to express this fear; he makes a constant use of two words, when he describes the problems between the Lacedaemonians and the helots: the use of the participle *φοβούμενοι* and of the verb *νεωτερίζω* or the form *νεώτερόν τι γένηται*.

For example, when Thucydides describes the events after the battle in Sphacteria, an island opposite to Pylos, the victory of the Athenians and the surrender of the Lacedaemonians of Sphacteria to them, he speaks once again of the fear of the Spartans. After their victory, the Athenians settled down some garrisons in Pylos, an event, which gave the opportunity to the Messenians of this region to desert. Under these circumstances is described the fear of the Lacedaemonians, which were afraid of a possible rebellion of the helots in the region:

> "The Spartans had no previous experience of predation and warfare of this kind. Moreover, the helots were deserting (*τῶν τε Εἱλώτων αὐτομολούντων*), and they were afraid that they might be faced with a more extensive uprising throughout the country (*καὶ φοβούμενοι μὴ καὶ ἐπὶ μακρότερον σφίσι τι νεωτερισθῇ τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν*), so they became seriously troubled […]".[153]

All of this aside, the successful efforts of the Athenians in the region of Pylos caused the expedition of Brasidas in Chalkidike, in order to support the cities of the region, who wanted to rebel from the Athenian League. This mission has been used by the Lacedaemonians as an excuse, in order to send a part of the helots out of the country. The conquest of Pylos by the Athenians gave to the Spartan slaves the opportunity to rebel, as we have seen, and the fear of this revolution appears always to be present for the Lacedaemonians:

> "Moreover, the Spartans were glad to have an excuse for sending some of their helots out there *(καὶ ἅμα τῶν Εἱλώτων βουλομένοις ἦν ἐπὶ προφάσει ἐκπέμψαι*), (for fear) that the present aspect of affairs and the occupation of Pylos might encourage them to rebel (*μή τι πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τῆς Πύλου ἐχομένης νεωτερίσωσιν*[154]). The Spartans' relations with the helots had always been largely determined by issues of security, and indeed on one occasion they were so fearful of the large numbers of helot youth that they even perpetrated the following deed. (*ἐπεὶ καὶ τόδε ἔπραξαν φοβούμενοι αὐτῶν τὴν σκαιότητα*

[153] Thuc. 4.41.3.

[154] In this sentence we could mean the participle *φοβούμενοι* because of the existence of the participle *φοβούμενοι* in the next sentence, which is connected with the former sentence with the conjunction *καὶ*.

καὶ τὸ πλῆθος (αἰεὶ γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ Λακεδαιμονίοις πρὸς τοὺς Εἵλωτας τῆς φυλακῆς πέρι μάλιστα καθειστήκει) […][155]".

The interesting part in these passages is the use of the verb *νεωτερίζω*. The word can be translated inter alia as "to attempt political changes, to make revolutionary movements"[156]. Thucydides uses the verb in both meanings[157]. In my opinion, in our text, the combination of the word *φοβούμενοι* with *νεωτερίζω* means not only the fear of a possible revolution of the helots but could also refer to the fear of some changes in their constitution because of this revolution. This assumption is more obvious in 4.55.1 because of the use of the word *κατάστασις*[158], which is combined with the phrase *φοβούμενοι μὴ σφίσι νεώτερόν τι γένηται* and defines the fear not only of a possible revolution from the part of the helots but also of a possible change or even an overthrow of the Spartan constitution[159].

The measure of this fear can be understood from a future episode of the Peloponnesian war: the beguilement and the assassination of a part of the helots from their masters. The Spartans announced that the helots who claimed to have offered the most services of all to the Lacedaemonians would be liberated. Instead of this, however, they were assassined from the Lacedaemonians, for the reason that the Spartan masters got afraid that the first that would rebel against them would be exactly those helots, who claimed that they should have the right to be free men. Thucydides describes that:

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[155] Thuc. 4.80.2-3, transl. ed. by me.

[156] LSJ, *ad locum.*

[157] With the meaning of "to attempt political changes", see Thuc. 1.115.2; 4.76.5 (*νεωτερίζω* combined with *τὴν πολιτείαν*) and Thuc. 5.34.2; with the meaning of "to make revolutionary movements", see Thuc. 1.97.1; 1.102.3; 3.72.1; 3.82.1; 4.51; 4.108; 5.14.3.

[158] The meaning of the word is "settlement, establishment, institution", see LSJ, *ad locum* for more details.

[159] In Thuc. 4.55.1, Thucydides speaks of the conquest of Cythera, an island lying opposite the south-eastern tip of the Peloponnese peninsula from the Athenians, which provoked the fear of the Lacedaemonians of a possible overthrow of their political system (*καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐν φυλακῇ πολλῇ ἦσαν φοβούμενοι μὴ σφίσι νεώτερόν τι γένηται τῶν περὶ τὴν κατάστασιν*). Even if in this case the historian does not mention a helot rebellion at this episode, Hornblower 1996, 218 combines this event with Thuc. 4.41.3 and the occupation of Pylos by the Athenians, which provoked once more the fear of the Spartans of a revolution of their slaves. If we consider the use of the similar phrases for the historian, when he describes the two episodes, I think a connection of this type is by no means exaggerated. The same observation could be made also for a later episode of the Peloponnesian War shortly before the peace agreement between Sparta and Athens in 421. Thucydides mentions in 5.14.3 that one of the reasons, for which the Lacedaemonians wanted a peace with Athens was that "the helots were deserting and there was always the apprehension that even those who remained might be influenced by those outside to take advantage of the circumstances and revolt, as they had done before (*αὐτομολούντων τε τῶν Εἰλώτων καὶ αἰεὶ προσδοκίας οὔσης μή τι καὶ οἱ ὑπομένοντες τοῖς ἔξω πίσυνοι πρὸς τὰ παρόντα σφίσιν ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον νεωτερίσωσιν*)." According to Hornblower 1996, 460 "*ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον*" refers to the helot revolt of the 460s. Gomme 1956, 658, mentions that "this passage certainly says that helot desertions played a considerable part in determining Spartan policy".

> "They made a proclamation that all those helots who could claim to have best distinguished themselves in war would be selected as candidates for emancipation (*ὅσοι ἀξιοῦσιν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις γεγενῆσθαι σφίσιν ἄριστοι, κρίνεσθαι, ὡς ἐλευθερώσοντες*). In fact they were testing them out, with the thought that the ones who had the confidence to press their case for freedom would be the ones most likely to turn on them. Accordingly, they selected about 2,000 of them, who then paraded round the temples in garlands[160] in the belief that they were freed, but shortly afterwards the Spartans did away with them and no one ever knew how they each met their end. So on the present occasion they gladly dispatched 700 helots as hoplite support for Brasidas and he hired the rest of his men from the Peloponnese as mercenaries"[161].

Thucydides does not define the date of this event, "it is in fact an achrony", so Hornblower[162]. Gomme mentions in relation to this episode that "a stratagem at once so perfidious in the contrivance, so murderous in the purpose, and so complete in the execution, stands without parallel in any history.[163]" This is anyway not the first time, in which the Spartans treat the helots in a cruel way. The humiliation and assassination of their slaves was a common practice of the Spartan state. When it comes to the practices of humiliation of them, Plutarch mentions in his "Instituta Laconica", for example, that the Spartans "used to

[160] On the crowning see Blech 1982, 364, who mentions that garlanding was particularly appropriate to free men. On the processing and garlanding see Jordan 1990, 40, who argues that "one might explain the helots' rounding of the temples as an imitation of the birth-festival symbolizing the beginning of a new life, the helots' rebirth, so to speak, as free men. This explanation fits the presence of the garlands which could be worn on festive occasions, in this case the day of liberation, to express happiness and joy". See also Jordan 1990, 58ff. for the parallelisation of the selection procedure of the afore-mentioned episode with the corresponding procedure of choosing the new members of the *gerousia* in the Spartan state.

[161] Thuc. 4.80.3-5. It has been expressed the opinion that this episode could have been fictional or that it has been real but presented in an exaggerated way from the history. On this assumption, see Talbert 1989, 24, who argues that "suspicion must still attach to the high total of victims in relation to the Spartiates' own numbers, as well as to the Machiavellian character of the unparalleled action taken, which makes no sense alongside recruitment of helots at the same time". Of the same opinion is also Paradiso 1994, 163, who believes that the number of the helot massacre could not have been realistic basing his argument on the passage of Thucydides, where the historian admits in. 4.80.4 that "no one ever knew how they each (i.e. the helots) met their end". On this idea see Cartledge 2001, 128-129, who believes that Thucydides could not know such an important and cruel act of a state, like Sparta, which is based on the secrecy of its *politeia*. The aim of the historian in this case should have been to give "a paradigmatic illustration of the general nature of relations between the Spartans and the Helots, and thereby of both the Spartans' collective mentality and the condition, in which they were called upon to wage a constant internal war at the same time as any occasional external war.", so Cartledge. On this idea, see also Debnar 2006, 565.

[162] Hornblower 1996, 266. On the diverse theories of the dating of this episode, see Jordan 1990, 55, who suggests that the liquidation of the helots happened not long before Brasidas expedition, perhaps during the year following the surrender in Sphacteria (c. 424). On the other hand Hamilton 1987, 36 suggests a much earlier dating (in the 470s or 460s).

[163] Gomme 1956, 548.

make the helots drunk and exhibit them to the young as a deterrent from excessive drinking"[164], when in the life of Lycurgus he mentions also that the helots were made to sing obscene and ridiculous songs and perform dances of the same kind[165]. Apart from that, Thucydides refers in his first book to an episode from the past of Sparta[166], during which the Lacedaemonians killed some Helots, who went at the temple of Poseidon at Tainaron[167] as suppliants[168]. It was believed actually, according to our historian, that this "unholy" act of the Lacedaemonians has caused the great earthquake in Sparta.

The Lacedaemonians were actually famous in the Greek world for their continuing effort to exterminate more or less large numbers of helots in any occasion that was given to them: we need only to think of the extreme institution of *crypteia,* which Plutarch describes as an abominable measure of Lycurgus, during which the trainee young Spartans, as part of their rigid military training, were left in the country equipped only with daggers and such supplies as were necessary[169]. In the progress of their training, the young Spartans were allowed to kill every helot they found in their way and to take any food they needed. The institution of *crypteia* was not considered however only as an educational system of the young Spartans. Plutarch mentions that normally they slew the sturdiest and best of them[170], which means that it should have been used from the state also as a measure of diminution of the large numbers of their slaves and especially of the best and strongest of them.

Violent measures against the helots were, however, not the only way, in which the citizens of Sparta tried to face the "helot" problem. They proceeded also to other methods. First of all, it was a common practice of the Spartans to use helots as *hoplites* in their battles[171]. According to Jordan, "The Spartans sent helots on military expeditions in order to prevent revolts and secure their backs at home."[172] For example, the "Brasideioi" helots, as they were

[164] Plut. Inst. 30.
[165] Plut. Lyc. 28.
[166] No dating is mentioned by the historian, but Hornblower 1991, 213 believes that the episode takes place before 465.
[167] According to Hornblower 1991, 213, "Tainaron was at the tip of what is now the Mani peninsula. It was and it is inaccessible. This explains not only why it was a helot refuge but also why, in Alexander's time and later, it was to be a great centre for recruiting mercenaries".
[168] Thuc. 1.128.1.
[169] See on *crypteia* Plut. Lyc. 28, 1-3; Plat. Laws 1.633b. For the modern bibliography on the subject see Ducat 1997 and Birgalias 1999, 97ff.
[170] Plut. Lyc. 28.3.
[171] Thuc. 4.8.9; 4.80.2-3; 5.64.2.
[172] Jordan 1990, 53, on the participation of the helots in the war as hoplites see also Finley 1986, 337; Busolt-Swoboda 1926, 668, n. 4 and Lazenby 1985, 59-60.

characterized, i.e. the ones, who have accompanied Brasidas at his expedition in Chalikidike[173], have been one of the most famous groups of helot soldiers, especially for their enfranchisement. In his fifth book, Thucydides mentions that after the death of Brasidas and the return of the soldiers of Chalcidice in the year 421:

> "the Spartans then voted that the helots who had fought with Brasidas should be free men and should live where they liked (*οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐψηφίσαντο τοὺς μὲν μετὰ Βρασίδου Εἵλωτας μαχεσαμένους ἐλευθέρους εἶναι καὶ οἰκεῖν ὅπου ἂν βούλωνται*); and not much later they settled them with the freedmen (*μετὰ τῶν νεοδαμωδῶν*) at Lepreum, a place on the border between Laconia and Elis (the Spartans now being at odds with the Eleans)."[174]

Thucydides inserts here a new term, which will characterize the newly freed helots. The term *νεοδαμώδης*, which derives from *νέος* and *δᾶμος*[175] indicates the newly enfranchised slaves and especially the helots freed by the Lacedaemonian state in reward for service in war[176]. It is interesting that the historian does not explain further the term, but he writes as the reader already knew about them; according to Andrewes and Hornblower, this omission from Thucydides should be considered an 'indication of incompleteness'[177]. One should note that no other group of *neodamodeis* is mentioned in the Thucydidean narration. The Brasideioi helots seem to be the only enfranchised Messenian slaves during the Peloponnesian War. All other mentions of the historian to the *neodamodeis* and their contribution to the Lacedaemonian expeditions in Sicily and Euboea[178] refer to these freed helots, who had accompanied Brasidas. When it comes to the conditions of living of the *neodamodeis* after their enfranchisement, Willets mentions that they should have remained farmers, "freed from the obligations of helotry, which must surely mean that their right to hold land was recognized, since they obviously remained without political rights".[179] They should have enjoyed consequently a limited economic freedom, which did not offer them the right to vote or participate at the *koina* of the Spartan society but gave them the right to usufruct of their

[173] Thuc. 4.78-116.
[174] Thuc. 5.34.1.
[175] See LSJ, *ad locum* and Bétant 1847, *ad locum. Δᾶμος = δῆμος* in the doric dialect (Chantraine 1968, *ad locum*).
[176] It was a common practice of the Spartans to use helots as *hoplites* in their military expeditions (Thuc. 4.8.9; Thuc. 5.64.2). According to Jordan 1990, 53, "The Spartans sent helots on military expeditions in order to prevent revolts and secure their backs at home."
[177] Hornblower 2008, 80 and see also Andrewes 1970, 35.
[178] Thuc. 5.67.1; 7.19.3; 7.58.3; 8.5.1.
[179] Willets 1954, 28.

land without paying tribute to a Spartan master[180]. In any case, the enfranchisement of a part of their slaves should be considered, in my opinion, as a desperate measure of the Spartans, in order to avoid the rebellion of the ever-increasing number of them; their *phobos* determined much of the development of the history of the city.

There can be no doubt that the Spartan *phobos* of a possible rebellion of the helots has determined the development of the Spartan history in the fifth century. It is, however, remarkable that the first traces of hostility between helots and Spartans after the two Messenian wars of the eighth and seventh century appears with the great earthquake and the events after it; Herodotus does not refer to any kind of problematic relationships between helots and their masters in his *Histories*[181]. On the contrary, the historian mentions constantly episodes, in which the Messenian slaves participated without particular complaints in the battles of Thermopylae and Plataea against the Persians and were buried in graves next to those of the Spartans[182], when they seem also willing to stand under the direct command of the kings who trusted them to carry out their orders[183]. Dickins believes that before the great Earthquake the economic position of the helots "was by no means unique in Greece and it is only at a later time that they developed into a class of discontented slaves"[184]. Their cooperation with their masters during the Persian wars is a proof of their good relationships, according to the scholar.

Additionally, I should mention also at this point the interesting theory of Birgalias, who went one step further and believed that the idea that the Spartan society was determined by the fear of the Spartans of a 'helotean' rebellion is exaggerated[185]. If one considers the large number of the helots, on the one hand, and the very rare revolutions of them after the Messenian wars, on the other hand, it should be obvious, according to the scholar, that this so discussed *phobos* should not have been so present in the Lacedaemonian society, as we today tend to believe. Even though the helots were subjugated to their masters, they were still in a better position than the Athenian slaves in the Spartan society, which means that their relationships

[180] For more information on the *neodamodeis*, see among others the whole article of Willets 1954, Andrewes 1970, 35-36; Toynbee 1969, 201 n.2; MacDowell 1986, 39-42 and Kahrstedt 1922, 46ff.
[181] See also Jordan 1990, 44-45.
[182] See Hdt. 8.25; Hdt. 9.85.
[183] See Hdt. 6.80-81.
[184] Dickins 1912, 23.
[185] Birgalias 2002, 249.

with their masters should not have been so tensed at the end[186]. I cannot disagree completely with the afore-mentioned colleagues; indeed the helots seem many times really calm in respect to their relationships with the Lacedaemonians and the lack of the Herodotean testimony of problems between masters and slaves could reinforce this idea. On the other hand, one cannot refuse a turmoil of these relationships in the second half of the fifth century, as we have seen. What could be the fact that changed their behaviour in that period of time consequently?

The historical development of the fifth century would have a key role in this development. Even if Herodotus does not speak clearly of this *phobos*, one can assume anyway that the period of the Persian wars meant for the Greek city-states a period of fear of a possible conquest from the Persian King. Under these circumstances, the priority of the Greek cities has been their survival and independence from the enemy that was attacking them. When this danger disappeared, the hidden anger of the Messenians subdued in the eighth and seventh century[187] should have returned and the great earthquake that has caused great damage in the city of Sparta should have been the perfect chance for them to attempt a revolution. If we consider that the Messenians were enslaved by their neighbours in a violent way and that the Spartans, after the submission of them, treated the helots in a very cruel way, we can easily

[186] Birgalias was not the only one to speak of an 'exaggerated' *phobos*. Talbert 1989, 22ff. in response to Cartledge 1987, 13, who claimed that Sparta was a society the very existence of which was constantly menaced by the Helots and that "the history of Sparta […] is fundamentally the history of the class struggle between the Spartans and the Helots" tried to prove that the tension between masters and slaves was limited, and that the class struggle at Sparta requires fresh definition as a result. Talbert mentions that even though the helots did revolt after the shock of the great earthquake, as soon as this rising had been suppressed, "most of them quickly returned to their old loyalties and stuck to them until after Leuktra" and did not attempt a revolt of this growth again. The Spartan *phobos* consequently was, according to the scholar, "seldom, if ever, an over-riding concern in the determination of state policy". The opinion of Talbert adopts also Hamilton 1987, 37, who argues that "helot-Spartan relationship has been exaggerated and that it was not the most important social tension in Sparta", but also Whitby 1994 108-109, who mentions that "whatever 'class struggle' may have been in progress in Sparta this did not impinge on Spartan perceptions: there were several practices designed to inculcate and reinforce contempt for helots and demonstrate Spartan superiority, but the helots were not seen as an overriding problem for the system". The scholar believes, additionally, that "in spite of occasional revolts Spartans expected that most of the helots most of the time would be malleable, bribable, or subject to fear and discipline". Of the same opinion is also Hodkinson 2006, 133, who argues that Thucydides' claim in 4.80 about the fact that the Lacedaemonian policy towards the helots was determined from their fear should not be considered as a general description of the relationships between Spartans and helots. He mentions additionally that other scholars, such as Herodotus and Xenophon, do not give such a big emphasis on this fear. According to the scholar, "so little were the Spartans normally in fear of the helot threat that they went about their daily lives unarmed". Cartledge 1991, 379-381 and Hornblower 1996, 265 deny (justly, according to me) this idea by arguing, inter alia, that the episode of the massacre of the helots (Thuc. 4.80) should be enough for us to get convinced that the Lacedaemonians lived under the fear of their slaves.

[187] On some basic information on the development of the Messenian wars, see e.g. the book of Kiechle 1959.

understand the dudgeon that was hidden in the hearts of the helots for several centuries. With the explosion of the Peloponnesian War and the ever-increasing fear of the Spartans of the Athenian power[188], additionally, these revolutionary ideas of the helots and correspondingly the fear of the Spartans of a helot rebellion grew bigger, as the text of Thucydides (and not only) can prove. Epps mentions that:

> "From 450 B.C. on, as they are portrayed by Thucydides, it would be difficult to find a people more actuated and controlled by fear than the Spartans […] They seem literally to have passed their lives in fear, and the moral effect of defeat on this people was always of greater import than any loss sustained in the field"[189].

I find this consideration very accurate if we consider the extreme violent measures taken from the Lacedaemonians, but also their decision to enfranchise a part of them, in order to prevent a helot rebellion. There is no doubt consequently, according to me, that this extreme fear of the Spartans not only existed but played also a significant role in the development of the Spartan politics in the fifth century.

Was the Spartan foreign policy influenced by the fear of the Helots?

When it comes to the Spartan domestic and foreign policy, I think that the first thing that comes to the mind of a scholar is its conservatism. The Spartans were famous in the Greek world for their extreme isolation from the rest of Greece. The Lacedeamonian state was characterized by *ξενηλασία* (expulsion of foreigners)[190], fear of living the city and an extreme form of government and leaving. It is notable that one of the main arguments of Pericles in his *epitaphios* in relation to the predominance of the Athenians over the Spartans is that:

> "we keep our city open to the world (*τήν τε γὰρ πόλιν κοινὴν παρέχομεν*) and do not ever expel people to prevent them from learning or observing the sort of thing whose disclosure might benefit an enemy (*οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε ξενηλασίαις ἀπείργομέν τινα ἢ*

[188] See Cusumano 2018, 292ff. for the double fear of the Spartans both of a helot revolt and of the ever-increasing power of the Athenians. According to the scholar, Sparta suffered under these two fears, which determined the history of the city and constituted one of the main factors that led to the explosion of the Peloponnesian War.
[189] Epps 1933, 25 and 29.
[190] From *ξένος* and *ἐλαύνω*, see LSJ *ad locum.*

μαθήματος ἢ θεάματος). Our way is to place our trust not so much in secret preparations as in our own innate courage in action"[191].

The purpose of this Lacedaemonian practice should have been to keep the citizens from being demoralised by contact with foreigners, as Xenophon remarks[192]. In order to understand the Spartan foreign policy, one should return to the text of Thucydides. The historian already in his first book speaks of the practices, with which Sparta and Athens managed to hold their hegemony between their allied cities:

> "The Spartans exercised their leadership not by making their allies subject to tribute but by taking good care to ensure that they were governed by an oligarchy, which served the Spartan interests exclusively (*οὐχ ὑποτελεῖς ἔχοντες φόρου τοὺς ξυμμάχους ἡγοῦντο, κατ' ὀλιγαρχίαν δὲ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς μόνον ἐπιτηδείως ὅπως πολιτεύσουσι θεραπεύοντες*). The Athenians, by contrast, ruled by taking possession of the ships of allied cities over time, except for those of Chios and Lesbos, and by imposing fixed taxes on all these (*Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ ναῦς τε τῶν πόλεων τῷ χρόνῳ παραλαβόντες πλὴν Χίων καὶ Λε σβίων, καὶ χρήματα τοῖς πᾶσι τάξαντες φέρειν*)"[193].

I think that Thucydides summarizes in these few lines one of the most important differences between Athens and Sparta. At first reading, one can directly understand that Sparta is not interested to have economic profits from its allies[194] like Athens did. The imperialistic policy of Sparta is not characterized by territorial conquests, but by the coercion of the submissive cities to change their constitution into an oligarchic one. Athens, on the other hand, was for sure a more extroverted imperialistic power, which was not afraid even to cross the Aegean and make allies far away from its land. On this subject Thucydides speaks at length further down in his work, when he refers to the events after the historical battle of Mantineia in 418 between Sparta and its allies and an army led by the – in 420 agreed – coalition of Argos and

[191] Thuc. 2.39.1. This affirmation of Pericles seems to come in contrast with the presence of some Athenian ambassadors in Sparta during the discussions of the Peloponnesian League on the Thirty Years' Peace and its breach from the Athenians, which led to the explosion of the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 1.72). This fact does not indicate, however, that the Spartans were more "hospitable" to the foreigners. On the *ξενηλασία* as a practice the Lacedaemonians see among others also Thuc. 1.144.2; Plat. Prot. 342a-d.

[192] Xen. Const . Lac. 14.4.

[193] Thuc. 1.19, transl. ed. by me.

[194] See Fornara 132, an inscription of either the 420s or the 390, with some haphazard-looking contributions of the allied cities to Sparta, which shows that Sparta really received much less money than Athens did from its allies.

Athens[195], which led to the victory of the Lacedaemonians[196]. The victory offered to the Lacedaemonians the opportunity to approach Argos and try to sign an alliance with them:

> "Right at the start of the following winter, with the Carneia celebrations now over, the Spartans went back out on campaign and on reaching Tegea they sent peace proposals ahead to Argos. They already had various sympathisers in Argos who wanted to overthrow the rule of the people there (*ἦσαν δὲ αὐτοῖς πρότερόν τε ἄνδρες ἐπιτήδειοι καὶ βουλόμενοι τὸν δῆμον τὸν ἐν Ἄργει καταλῦσαι*), and after the battle these men were in a much better position to persuade the majority to an agreement (*πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἐδύναντο πείθειν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐς τὴν ὁμολογίαν*). They wanted first to make a treaty with the Spartans and after that to have an alliance, so preparing for an eventual attack on the people (*καὶ οὕτως ἤδη τῷ δήμῳ ἐπιτίθεσθαι*)"[197].

The historian mentions that the Lacedaemonians went to Argos, in order to sign a treaty with the city and collaborated with the oligarchic party, which wanted to overthrow the dominant democratic constitution of Argos. After some secret discussions between the oligarchic party of the last and the Lacedaemonians, the first managed to convince their fellow citizens to sign a treaty with the Spartans.[198] Consequently, the Lacedaemonians went to Sicyon, where they converted the already oligarchic constitution of the city into a more oligarchic form[199], because of the fear of the Spartans that the Sikyonians might go over to Argos. In the meantime the Lacedaemonians and the –obviously- oligarchic Argives overthrew the democracy in Argos and established an oligarchy:

> "The Spartans and Argives now mounted a joint campaign, each supplying a thousand troops. First the Spartans themselves went and instituted arrangements at Sicyon to impose a narrower oligarchy on Sicyon (*ἐς ὀλίγους μᾶλλον κατέστησαν*); then they jointly put an end to the rule of the people in Argos, and an oligarchy more sympathetic to Sparta was established there (*καὶ τὸν ἐν Ἄργει δῆμον κατέλυσαν, καὶ ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεία τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις κατέστη*)"[200].

[195] Thuc. 5.46-47.
[196] For the events of the war see Thuc. 5.64-73.
[197] Thuc. 5.76.1-2, transl. ed. by me.
[198] Thuc. 5.76.3.
[199] Andrewes 1970, 149 mentions that: "since Sikyon was presumably an oligarchy already, this is not 'oligarchy rather than democracy' as viii.53.3, but 'narrower oligarchy than before'." For the constitution of Sikyon, see IACP no. 228, at 468.
[200] Thuc. 5.81.2, transl. ed. by me.

The third station of the Spartan imperialistic policy was Achaea, where the Lacedaemonians went, in order to settle affairs in a way more suitable to their interests:

> "and the Spartans restructured the political situation in Achaea to conform better than before to their own interests. (*καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὰ ἐν Ἀχαΐᾳ οὐκ ἐπιτηδείως πρότερον ἔχοντα καθίσταντο*)."[201]

Even if at the end the democrats of Argos managed to rally with the help of Athens[202], to attack against the oligarchs and despite the expedition of the Spartans against the city with the help of some oligarchic Argives[203], to dominate[204], the way that the Spartans tried to enforce the oligarchic constitution to the above-mentioned cities is very important, in order to understand how the imperialistic policy of Sparta worked.

In order to focus on the character of this Spartan policy, it would be helpful to make a deeper lexicological analysis. The keyword of the text of Thucydides about this subject is the use of the adjective *ἐπιτήδειος* next to the *ὀλιγαρχία*, which the Spartans wanted to establish in the Greek city-states. This is not the only example of the use of the word *ἐπιτήδειος* in the work of the historian. However, when the word is combined with the constitution of oligarchy, it receives a particular meaning. If we return to the text, Thucydides uses the word in 1.19, when he says that: *"κατ' ὀλιγαρχίαν δὲ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς μόνον ἐπιτηδείως ὅπως πολιτεύσουσι θεραπεύοντες"*. As we have seen, he uses the word also in the fifth book in 5.81.2, in the case of Sicyon: "*καὶ μετ' ἐκεῖνα ξυναμφότεροι ἤδη καὶ τὸν ἐν Ἄργει δῆμον κατέλυσαν, καὶ ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεία τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις κατέστη*" and in 5.82.1, in the case of Achaea: "*καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τὰ ἐν Ἀχαΐᾳ οὐκ ἐπιτηδείως πρότερον ἔχοντα καθίσταντο*".[205] We can observe consequently, that the historian refers to the afore-mentioned term in connection with the form of constitution that the Lacedaemonians wanted to establish in many Greek city-states, i.e. an *ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεία.*

First of all, it would be of great interest to understand how the adjective *ἐπιτήδειος* is defined in this context. Bétant[206] translates the word as "obnoxious", i.e. "subject, submissive,

[201] Thuc. 5.82.1, transl. by Hammond 2009, *ad locum.*
[202] Thuc. 5.82.5-6.
[203] Thuc. 5.83.1.
[204] Thuc. 5.82.2.
[205] See translations above.
[206] Bétant 1843, *ad locum.*

obedient", which means that the *ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεία τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις*[207] should be, in Bétant's opinion, the oligarchy subject to the Lacedaemonians, an oligarchy dependent from Sparta. On the other hand, Parker[208] interprets this adjective as "more expediently, commodiously" and the Liddell Scott[209] as an oligarchy "fit or serviceable for the Lacedaemonians". Finally, Hornblower translates the word as "an oligarchy congenial to the Spartans"[210]. As far as I am concerned, all translations want to indicate the same thing: the *ὀλιγαρχία ἐπιτηδεία* is the oligarchy friendly to the Spartan way of life and thinking, the oligarchy serviceable for the Lacedaemonians.

The use of this adjective is for sure not randomly chosen by the historian. By placing the word *ἐπιτηδεία* next to the Spartan oligarchy, Thucydides manages to emphasize that the constitution, which got established from the Lacedaemonians to the cities, was a type of oligarchy friendly to the Spartans, so even if in some cities did exist already an oligarchic constitution, like in the case of Sicyon, the Spartans wanted anyway to overthrow the constitution of the city and establish a type of oligarchy friendly to them. The Lacedaemonians are not only interested to establish a similar constitution to the Spartan one in the city-states: they want often to establish their own form of government, which will be friendly to their interests, in order to control better the cities. This is the imperialistic policy of Sparta: they are not interested to conquer the Greek city-states in a military way or more economically like Athens. For the Lacedaemonians is enough to have the political domination over the city-states.

Thucydides describes consequently Sparta as a conservative city, which does not dare to move away from its land, but makes alliances only in Peloponnese, which Sparta tries to control by imposing them its own form of government. The afore-mentioned policy of Sparta does not appear for the first time during the events of the Peloponnesian War. Herodotus delineates several times the fear of the Spartans to leave their city and attempt warfare far away. The reason, for example, for which the Spartans did not participate at the Ionian revolution, was the fact that they should have done a three months' journey from the sea[211] and they seem many times to not want to pass the Isthmus, but to stay fortified in

[207] Thuc. 5.81.2.
[208] Parker 1824, *ad locum.*
[209] LSJ 1996, *ad locum.*
[210] Hornblower 2008, 208.
[211] Hdt. 5.50.

Peloponnese and protect the peninsula during the events of the Persian wars[212]. Herodotus admits even that Athens was actually the saviour of Hellas exactly because the Athenians were more courageous to leave the city when the main concern of the Spartans was to protect the Isthmus[213]. This conservatism of the Spartans caused naturally their denial for any innovation at their way of life and of course any influence from the outside of the city[214]. Their imperialistic policy was based on submitting their neighbour Peloponnesian cities in a political way by imposing them an oligarchical form of government[215] contrary to Athens, which – apart from that – tried to have also an economical profit from its "allied" cities. This is the policy, which the Lacedaemonians will continue to use for the whole of their history. This is why, after their victory at the Peloponnesian War, we observe the Spartans to attack Mantineia in Arcadia, which during the war had allied with Argos and has been turned into a democratic state, and to send away the democrats from the city. It is characteristic that the aristocracy of the city remained satisfied with the overthrow of the democratic constitution and the conquest of the city from the Spartans[216]. Allies and enemies of the Lacedaemonians should have had similar forms of constitution with them, in order for the Spartans to manage to govern them or even discuss with them; for a strict state like the Lacedaemonian one, there would be no other way to make foreign policy than this.

The *deos* of the Athenians and the *phobos* of the Spartans

In order to understand more the Spartan mentality, I think we should go back to the connection of Sparta with fear and point out an interesting observation on the use of the terms *phobos* and *deos* in Thucydides[217]. It is important to note that the historian differentiates in some way the *phobos* of the Spartans, which determined their history, from the *deos* of the Athenians. When it comes to the Spartan *phobos*, the Lacedaemonians seem to have diverse reasons to feel terrified. On the one hand, when Thucydides in 1.23.6 defines the reason for the explosion of the war, he mentions clearly that it was the ever-increasing power of the Athenians, which caused the *phobos* of the Lacedaemonians (*φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις*) and consequently the beginning of the war (see also Thuc. 1.88; 1.90;

[212] Hdt. 8.40; Hdt. 9.8.
[213] Hdt. 7.139.
[214] On the too cautious foreign policy of the Spartans in the *Histories* of Herodotus, see Ingarao 2017, 269f.
[215] See also Aristot. Pol. 5.1307b.
[216] Xen. Hell. 5.2.
[217] On the concept of these two emotions in Thucydides, see Huart 1968, 131-136 for *phobos* and 341-344 for *deos.*

1.33.3). On the other hand, they seem constantly to be controlled by their fear of a revolution of their slaves, as I have shown in the main text. They see to be, consequently, under constant fear of their two main enemies (the Athenians and the helots) and it seems that all of their actions are determined by this. Athens nevertheless seems to be connected more with *deos* than *phobos*, according to the historian. Athens, for example, lives in the most of the passages *ὑπὸ δέους* of the barbarians (Thuc. 1.75.3), of their defeats in the battlefield like the one in Amphipolis (Thuc. 4.108), of the defection of their allies (Thuc. 5.14.2), of the Syracusans (Thuc. 6.83.4; 6.85.3; 7.77) et al.[218] De Romilly observed that *deos* is connected with verbs, which express a thought (e.g. *νομίζειν*) and is a more intellectual type of fear could someone say, whereas *phobos* with terms which indicate alarm and anxiety (e.g. *ταραχή*); According to the scholar, *deos* is more active, when *phobos* is passive, leaving its victim defenceless; *deos* may have also positive consequences, when *phobos* leads usually to negative ones.[219] Even if we consider, however, this theory of de Romilly as a right one, one should note that the two words are normally translated by the diverse dictionaries as synonyms.[220] Konstan mentions that:

> "there is no cognitive difference between *phobos* and *deos* in ordinary usage. *Deos*, as well as *phobos*, may be paired with alarm (Lysias 6.35); one may feel *phobos* just as much as *deos* before the gods of the laws of the city (Lysias 32.17, 14.15; for *deos* and virtue, 2.57). There attaches, I think, a slightly more elevated tone to *deos*, which thus more easily assumes the sense of reverent awe, but I can find no context in which the two terms are not effectively interchangeable"[221].

I will agree, on the one hand, with Konstan, when it comes to the general interpretation of the word, but when it comes to the way, in which Thucydides uses it, I think that de Romilly is closer to the truth. Indeed one can note that our historian connects in most of the cases the idea of *phobos* with the Spartan's fear against the Athenians and the helots and *deos* with the Athenian fear, which could be described, according to me, as a more controllable fear. It

[218] See on the connection of *deos* with Athens among others also Thuc. 1.76.2; 1.77.5; 2.37.3; 2.42; 3.45.4; 8.65.3.
[219] De Romilly 1956, 119-120.
[220] See LSJ *ad locum*; Chantraine 1968, *ad locum*; Beekes 2010, *ad locum* and Bétant 1843 for *deos* and 1847 for *phobos*, *ad locum*. I find interesting the comment of Ammonius, who characterizes *deos* as being morelasting than *phobos* (*δέος καί φόβος διαφέρει. δέος μέν γάρ ἐστι πολυχρόνιος κακοῦ ὑπόνοια. φόβος δέ ἡ παραυτίκα πτόησις*), see the entry of *δέομαι* in LSJ. I think, however, that a definition of this type cannot correspond to the use of both terms in the fifth century and in Thucydides in particular; the *phobos* of the Lacedaemonians of their helots for example seems a rather long-lasting fear.
[221] Konstan 2006, 154.

cannot be compared with the unmanageable and irrational fear (*phobos*) of the Spartans, which determined the development of the history of a whole city. If however the two terms are interchangeable, why does our historian make this choice, which is of course not random?

I think that the answer is combined with the fact that the *phobos* of the Spartans had a different effect on the history of the city as the *deos* on Athens. The fear of the Spartans, both of their helots, and of the ever-increasing power of Athens had direct consequences on the development of the history of the city. Epps makes a very accurate observation:

> "The fanatical conservatism of the Spartans which caused them to lean away from all innovation is also, it seems, consonant with, if not the result of undue fear; for nothing could be more fatal to progress than inordinate fear"[222].

Fear was indeed a great barrier for the development of Sparta, both inside of the city, and in its relations with the other Greek cities, because "men who have to guard against destruction every day of their lives have no time for day-dreams or large ambitions"[223], so Grundy. The fear of the Spartans should have been really uncontrollable if someone considers not only the violent measures that they took, in order to eliminate more helots as possible but also their willingness to keep their policy secret. When he describes the events of the battle of Mantineia, Thucydides mentions that the number of the Spartan troops were incalculable because of their secrecy about matters of state (*τὸ μὲν γὰρ Λακεδαιμονίων πλῆθος διὰ τῆς πολιτείας τὸ κρυπτὸν ἠγνοεῖτο*).[224] Thucydides describes with this phrase an extremely closed state, which did not want any exposure of its domestic politics. The Lacedaemonians were so terrified from their enemies in the internal and external of the city that they preferred to keep their policy more secret as possible from the rest of the Greek world.

There is a reason consequently, why Thucydides uses two different terms, in order to describe the Spartan and Athenian fear; the two cities were completely different between each other and Thucydides makes it clear through a long passage of his text in 1.70, where the historian, through the speech of the Corinthian Ambassadors in the conference of the Peloponnesian League[225], recites the most important differences between the two cities. The use of the words, which Thucydides chooses, in order to emphasize the differences between both cities

[222] Epps 1933, 17.
[223] Grundy 1908, 83.
[224] Thuc. 5.68.2.
[225] I.e. the alliance of diverse cities in Peloponnesus from the sixth to the fourth centuries, dominated by Sparta. For more information on the League, see Birgalias 2003, 19ff.

is of great importance. Sparta was *ἀρχαιότροπος*[226], as the Corinthians highlight at the Lacedaemonians, i.e. old-fashioned[227] and more conservative and negative at the idea to greet strangers in the city, when Athens was *νεωτεροποιός*[228], an innovating city often to new challenges and ideas. Sparta was limited in its own territory when Athens was ready to cross the sea and make alliances far away. Sparta made everything possible, in order to not have to deal with any changes in its constitution and way of life, when Athens was open to innovations. The fear of the Athenians could never be the same with the one of the Spartans, because the first was a fear open to new experiences when the second served to guarantee the stability of a conservative state.

Conclusions: The double fear of the Spartans as a decisive character of their policy

Many theories have been expressed on how much the fear of the Lacedaemonians influenced the Spartan political system and way of life. That this fear existed is out of doubt; the question is if this *phobos* was so exaggerated like Thucydides narrates in 4.80.3, or if it weakened after the great earthquake and the helot revolt. On the one hand, the fact that no other helot revolt was attempted during the years of the Peloponnesian War could be an evidence that the helots should not have been of such a great danger for the Spartan state, as several scholars believe today. It is true that helots and Spartans lived also peacefully with each other in several periods of time and that some helots accompanied their masters in several expeditions as hoplites without causing any problems. If one excludes the helot revolt during the period of the earthquake in Sparta, which is dated two decades earlier than the Peloponnesian War, the relationships between Spartans and their slaves during the war seem actually not so catastrophic.

On the other hand, however, one cannot ignore the behaviour of the Spartans towards their slaves during the war. Apart from the fact that the Spartan state lived already a great revolt in the 460s, Thucydides delineates several times that the Lacedaemonians lived in reality under

[226] From the derivatives *ἀρχαῖος* (ancient) and *τρόπος* (way, manner), LSJ, *ad locum.* Thuc. 1.71,2: "[…] whereas in actual fact, as we have just demonstrated, your practices are antiquated compared to those of the Athenians". A Thucydides' invention, as it seems. The historian uses the term only once in his work.

[227] LSJ, *ad locum.* See also Bétant 1847, *ad locum* (obsoletus).

[228] From the comparative *νεώτερος* (younger, newer) and the verb *ποιέω* (make, create), LSJ, *ad locum.* Thuc. 1.70.2, "They are natural innovators, quick to have ideas and then to put their plans into action (*οἱ μέν γε νεωτεροποιοὶ καὶ ἐπινοῆσαι ὀξεῖς καὶ ἐπιτελέσαι ἔργῳ ἃ ἂν γνῶσιν)*". *Νεωτεροποιός* here in the meaning of "innovating", see LSJ *ad locum*.

the constant fear of a helot revolt and the several measures that they took during the history of the city prove exactly this fact. The institution of *crypteia* for example, during which several helots got eliminated, cannot be considered, in my opinion, only as an educational method of the Spartan state[229]; in the meantime served also the need of the Spartans to limit the great number of the helots, which with the passing of time grew always bigger and bigger and to make them live in constant danger. It is impossible also to forget the beguilement and massacre of the helots, who were considered as the most dangerous for the Spartan state. Sparta was in general famous for its cruel methods, but the afore-mentioned act could be considered as one of the most inhuman attitudes in history. Even the enfranchisement of the helots, who have served loyally alongside Brasidas could be probably considered as an act motivated by fear rather than humanity. The Spartans should have thought that with this goodwill gesture they would calm down the rest of their slaves by showing that a good behaviour of them could lead even to their liberation.

Consequently, even if I partly understand the opinion of several scholars, who characterize the relations between Spartans and helots as calmer than we nowadays believe, the text of Thucydides does not leave much space for doubts, according to me. The historian mentions several times that the Spartans lived under this fear and that their actions were influenced by the *phobos* of a revolt from their slaves. Herodotus may not refer to this problematic relationship, but one should consider that the historian speaks of another period of Greek history. The Persian wars were the period, during which the Greek city-states, including Sparta and the helots, fought for their freedom and I cannot imagine that the Messenian slaves were really interested in attempting revolutionary movements in a period, in which the freedom of all Greek city-states was in danger. The end of the Persian wars however led to the emergence of two powerful cities, Athens and Sparta, which were destined to hold the power over the Greek world for several years. Under these circumstances and if we consider that the number of the Spartan citizens was in a constant decrease because of the strictness of the Spartan constitution, it is obvious that it would be much easier for the helots to attempt any kind of revolt, which caused the ever-growing fear of their masters. According to me, the narration of Thucydides should not be doubted and the history of Sparta should have been indeed determined by the constant *phobos* of their slaves.

[229] See, however, Birgalias 2002, 256, who believed that the crypteia "should not be thought of as the murder of helots" and this is why it should not be considered as an evidence of bad relationships between Spartans and their slaves.

When it comes to the way that this fear influenced the Spartan policy, I think that Thucydides is a great source of information about this fact. The historian delineates that Sparta was not interested in conquering cities by making them economic subjects like Athens did, but its foreign policy was based on the effort to settle oligarchies especially at its neighbour cities since the Spartans were afraid to leave Peloponnesus and attempt expeditions far away from home. Our historian is clear when he says that Sparta was suffering under two great fears, the fear of a possible helot revolt and the fear of the ever-growing power of Athens, which led also to the explosion of the Peloponnesian war. Under these circumstances, the Spartans developed a close and conservative state, not open to strangers and always willing to have a similar constitution with its subdued cities, in order to guarantee the security of the city. One cannot assume consequently that the Spartans were not seriously subdued by fear; it was this fear that determined the state of the Lacedaemonians and its development through history and its conservative and strict character was the one to guarantee the dominance of the city over all other Greek cities during the Peloponnesian War, except Athens of course. Consequently, one should not underestimate the important role that fear had for the Lacedaemonians; the Spartan *phobos* is very important, in order to understand the real character of the Lacedaemonian state, since it determined its development in a radical way.

Chapter 3. A tyrannical oligarchy. The concept of *dynasteia*

One of the several "deviations" of oligarchy, which arises from the work of the historian, is also the one of *dynasteia*, a non-constitutional form of government based on the sovereignty of the few. The term appears few times in the work of the historian, in order to characterize a very precise form of regime, which, even if it was not so popular as tyranny or oligarchy[230], played, anyway, a significant role at the political development of some Greek cities. Apart from that, the research of *dynasteia* offers us the possibility to understand a bit more the variety of the oligarchic forms of government in the archaic and classical period. In the next few pages, I will try to understand as deeply as possible the characteristics of this form of government, as long as the importance of the Thucydidean narration for the understanding of this idea from the modern research.

The city of Thebes and its *medismos*

During the third year of the war (428/7) the city of Plataea was called upon to support its freedom from the long-lasting siege of the Spartans[231]. In the discussions, which emerged during the siege, the Plataeans made a long speech explaining to the Lacedaemonians, why they should be not attacked by them. On the other hand the delegates of Thebes, a city traditionally opposed to Plataeans because of their denial to submit to the Thebans, tried to explain to the Lacedaemonians, why the city of Plataea should be assaulted. The discussions ended with the decision of the Spartans to destroy completely Plataea. Between other arguments, however, which the Plataeans used, in order to support their right for freedom, occurs also the fact that during the Persian Wars their city was more useful against the enemy than the city of Thebes, which was known for betraying the Greek forces by offering to the Persians *γῆν καί ὕδωρ*. When the Thebans tried with passion to justify the reason for their *μηδισμός* during the Persian wars, an interesting information comes out for the past ways of governing of Thebes:

> "In our case the city was at that time not constituted either as an oligarchy with equality under the law or as a democracy (*οὔτε κατ' ὀλιγαρχίαν ἰσόνομον πολιτεύουσα οὔτε κατὰ*

[230] On this idea see the interesting article of Jordović 2005, 28ff., who makes a list of the reasons, for which, according to him, *dynasteia* had never been as widespread as tyranny or oligarchy. The later dating of the use of the term, as long as the different interpretation of it by several ancient scholars, are some of the reasons, according to the scholar.
[231] Thuc. 3.52-68.

> *δημοκρατίαν*), but affairs were managed by a cabal composed by few men (*δυναστεία ὀλίγων ἀνδρῶν εἶχε τὰ πράγματα*) – something at the opposite extreme to the rule of law and moderation in government, indeed closer to tyranny (*ὅπερ δέ ἐστι νόμοις μὲν καὶ τῷ σωφρονεστάτῳ ἐναντιώτατον, ἐγγυτάτω δὲ τυράννου*)"[232].

Thucydides informs us that in the period of the Persian wars, Thebes was governed by a so-called *dynasteia oligon andron*, a form of government, which is opposed both to oligarchy *isonomos,* i.e. an oligarchy, in which all citizens are equal in front of the laws[233], and to democracy. The reason of the collaboration of the city with the Persians consequently is that Thebes was governed by an oppressive constitution, completely different from the two most common forms of government of the fifth century, democracy and oligarchy, both constitutions based on the sovereignty of law; it was not in the power of the citizens to resist the Persian King consequently. Thucydides highlights indeed in this passage that this form of government is closer to tyranny than to a lawful constitution. A closer approach to the constitution of Thebes in the period of the Persian wars can prove that there was indeed a small clique of citizens of Thebes, who collaborated with the Persians, as Herodotus informs us:

> "After the Hellenes buried their dead at Plataea, they at once held a conference at which they resolved to wage war on the Thebans and to demand from them the surrender of those who had medized (*ἐξαιτέειν αὐτῶν τοὺς μηδίσαντας*). The most prominent of these were Timagenides and Attaginos, who were the leaders among their chief men (*οἳ ἀρχηγέται ἀνὰ πρώτους ἦσαν*)"[234].

The word *ἀρχηγέται,* i.e. the first leaders, also in the meaning of the founders of a city or family[235], indicates probably the existence of a small group of men, who obviously decided to collaborate with the Persians in an authoritarian way without the common opinion of the *demos*. We know also that Thebes after this tyrannical-oligarchical period was governed by a democratic constitution (457-447) and that after the Athenian defeat in Koroneia in 447/6 the city returned to an oligarchical form of government[236]. It is, however, interesting, that between 382 and 379 the constitution of the city becomes once again a *dynasteia*, as Xenophon narrates: "For in all of them (i.e. Thespiai and the cities around) oligarchical

[232] Thuc. 3.62.3, transl. ed. by me.
[233] On the concept of *isonomia*, see the chapter on *eunomia*.
[234] Hdt. 9.86.1, transl. by Strassler 2007, *ad locum.*
[235] LSJ, *ad locum.*
[236] IACP, *ad locum.*

governments had been established (*δυναστεῖαι καθειστήκεσαν*), just as in Thebes"[237]. Even if we speak of a much later period of the history of the city than the period of the Persian Wars, the fact that a *dynasteia* re-appears after so many years in Thebes, especially in the period after the Peloponnesian War, in which such constitutions seem lost in the past, could signify the traditional connection that Thebes had with this kind of governing[238].

Brasidas, the Thessalians and the North Barbarians

Thebes is, however, not the only city, which is connected with a *dynasteia* in the work of the historian. When Thucydides refers to the expedition of the Spartan Brasidas to Thessaly and the constitution that he found there, he mentions that:

> "Besides, the bulk of the Thessalian people had always been favourably disposed towards the Athenians. And so, if the Thessalians had not traditionally been governed by powerful ruling groups rather than enjoying equality before the law (*ὥστε εἰ μὴ δυναστείᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ ἰσονομίᾳ ἐχρῶντο τὸ ἐγχώριον οἱ Θεσσαλοί*), he would never have made any progress, since even as it was he was confronted on his march by Thessalians of the opposite persuasion. They stopped him at the River Enipeus and told him he had no right to go on without the consent of the whole community"[239].

Thucydides explains very clearly that the reason, for which Brasidas was allowed to pass from Thessaly with his troops, was that at that period the region was governed by a *dynasteia* and not by an *isonomia*, i.e. a constitution based on the rule of law. In the very detailed work of Westlake on the history of Thessaly, it seems that the region was actually governed by a class of rich proprietors distributed through the principal cities processing most of the soil[240]. The theory of Thucydides about the existence of a *dynasteia* in Thessaly can be confirmed, consequently, if we consider that the power in the region was held by these rich landowners. A lawful government and especially a democracy would very hardly allow Brasidas to proceed through Thessaly if we consider also that the region was in this period friendly to

[237] Xen. Hell. 5.4.46, transl. by Carleton 1918, *ad locum.*
[238] On the political history of Thebes see among others Buck 1979; IACP, *ad locum* and for the Boeotian Federal constitution see among others; Bonner 1910; Larsen 1968, 26-40.
[239] Thuc. 4.78.2-3.
[240] Westlake 1935 21-31. On the history of Thessaly in the classical period see also IACP, *ad locum*; Mili 2015; Gerhke 1985, 184-197 and Carlier 1984, 412ff. (especially on the Thessalian royalty).

Athens[241]. When it comes to the constitution of Thessaly, I find very interesting the suggestion of Martin, who argues that till the middle of the fifth century the region had a rather loose organisation, based on the war and governed traditionally by the aristocratic families, who based their power on the exploitation of their slaves, called *penestae.* This should mean that the – from Thucydides mentioned – Thessalian *dynasteia* should have been a rather conservative constitution for the region and not a political clique of some few rich men, who aimed to overthrow an already established form of constitution, like in the other cases of *dynasteia* in the Thucydidean history[242]. Even if we consider this theory as possible, *dynasteia* is presented in this case anyway as a non-constitutional government with a lawless character. From the case of Thessaly we can understand that a constitution of this type is very similar to a tyranny; in a region ruled by this form of government there is no political consciousness but only chaos.

At this point, I would like to add a rather controversial passage of Thucydides, where Brasidas makes a speech in front of his troop, in order to encourage them during the expedition of the Peloponnesians and Perdiccas (King of Macedonia) against Lynkestis (Greek kingdom of Upper Macedonia). During his speech he refers to the constitution of Sparta and to the reason, why the Spartan soldiers will manage to win the battle:

> "Do not fear their numbers, for you do not all come from states in which not many rule a few, but a few the many, having won their mastery only by military prowess" (*οἵ γε μηδὲ ἀπὸ πολιτειῶν τοιούτων ἥκετε, ἐν αἷς οὐ πολλοὶ ὀλίγων ἄρχουσιν, ἀλλὰ πλεόνων μᾶλλον ἐλάσσους, οὐκ ἄλλῳ τινὶ κτησάμενοι τὴν δυναστείαν ἢ τῷ μαχόμενοι κρατεῖν*)"[243].

This passage caused a great discordance between the researchers of the Thucydidean work about the real meaning of the words of the historian. The biggest problem of the modern analysis of this sentence is the admission of Brasidas that the Peloponnesians come from cities, where the many rule over the few when their enemies from the North come from cities, where the few rule over the many having won their *dynasteia* with their military skills. This phrase of the Spartan general may sound a bit strange, if we consider that especially Sparta was seen as a traditionally oligarchical society, in which the *apella* had a limited role at the important decisions of the city, in opposition to Athens, where the *politeia* was based on the

[241] It is interesting that Aristotle (1269a, 37-40) mentions that the *penestae* rebelled several times against their masters, like the *helots* in Sparta. This similar characteristic of the two regions could have been, in my opinion, one of the reasons, for which Brasidas managed to pass from Thessaly so easily.
[242] Martin 1979, 229.
[243] Thuc. 4.126.2, at this passage I prefer the translation of Gomme for reasons that I explain in my text.

sovereignty of the *demos.* This is why several editors attempted emendations at the text (e.g. by changing *οὐ πολλοί* to *οἱ πολλοί*)[244], which should indicate that the *politeiai*, in which the few rule over the many are the cities of Peloponnese. If we accept these changes of the text, then we should consider that Brasidas is congratulating his men for their achievement to win a privileged position, a *dynasteia* over the *perioikoi* and *helots*, a theory, which has been supported by several scholars[245]. In any case, in the light of the very negative meaning of this form of government in all the work can we consider this theory as a realistic one?

I think that in this case, the *dynasteia* is actually a key-word, in order to understand the real meaning of this passage. Gomme especially, and after him also Hornblower and Hammond[246], reject the emendation and keep the meaning of the original sentence. According to Gomme, the meaning of the text of Thucydides is the opposite of what has been supposed: "Brasidas is slightingly referring to the large numbers of the enemy, who […] are no better than slaves of a small military clique, now being driven into battle by their rulers"[247]. Gomme believes (and I agree with him) that the Peloponnesian troops (who were obviously not only Spartans) "would not have recognized a description of themselves as citizens of states with military *δυναστεῖαι* at the head, and would not have been complimented by it, if they had: with them the majority, the sound hoplite burghers, did rule. Nor would Sparta itself have been so described by any but an enemy". I also believe that Brasidas, who does not hesitate to highlight during another encouragement speech the free spirit of the Peloponnesians[248], would never connect his city with a tyrannical form of government, which in the antiquity had a clear negative meaning, as my text can show, especially when it comes to the encouragement of the Spartan troop before a difficult battle with the "barbarians" from the North. In this case, consequently, the *dynasteia* refers, according to Gomme, "to the small Argead ruling class among the Macedonians[249] and similar chieftainships among the others". The theory of Gomme has been for sure revolutionary for the interpretation of the passage, which was established among the scholars for centuries with its first version and it is enough to mention that translations of the modern times still interpret the text by using the

[244] See the critical note of Oxonii 1900, *ad locum*, which refers to the emendation of the publisher, editor and collator of manuscripts Stephanus (1654).
[245] See among others Luschnat 1942, 61, Hunter 1973, 24.
[246] Hornblower 1996, 398-9; Hammond 1972, 103 n.5.
[247] Gomme 1951, 135-36.
[248] Thuc. 5.9.1 "Peloponnesians, I need not spend long telling you what kind of country we come from – that its spirit of courage is what keeps it free (*ἀπὸ μὲν οἵας χώρας ἥκομεν, ὅτι αἰεὶ διὰ τὸ εὔψυχον ἐλευθέρας*)."
[249] Ancient Macedonian ruling house of Dorian Greek provenance, founders and the ruling dynasty of the kingdom of Macedon from about 700 to 310 BC, for more information see Howatson; Harvey 1989, 339.

emendations of the editors[250]. A further research on the term *dynasteia*, however, does not leave much space for doubts on this passage. *Dynasteia* is connected mainly with tyrannical forms of government of the "barbaric" folks from the North (see above the example of Thessaly) or with constitutions of the past of the Greek city-states, which are often linked with black pages of their history. I cannot believe that Brasidas in his encouraging speech was referring to the Spartans or any other Peloponnesian city-state of the fifth century as cities based on the tyrannical *dynasteia.*

Athenagoras and the *dynasteia* of Syracuse

The idea of Thucydides about the tyrannical character of this constitution can be observed also in other two episodes of his work. In this speech, Athenagoras, the Syracusian leader of the commons, acknowledges that periodically the constitution of Syracuse, which in this period of its history happens to be democratic, gets destroyed from diverse *staseis*, i.e. internal conflicts, and overthrown by tyrannical forms of government:

> "There you have the reason why our city is rarely at peace but inflicts a multitude of conflicts and struggles (*στάσεις δὲ πολλὰς καὶ ἀγῶνας*) not so much on its enemies as on itself, including sometimes tyrannies and oppressive cliques (*τυραννίδας δὲ ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ δυναστείας ἀδίκους*)"[251].

Hornblower believes that this passage refers probably to the tyranny of Dionysius that came after and was the one to overthrow the democratic constitution in Syracuse in 405[252]. According to me, Athenagoras in this passage clarifies with his speech the opposition of the current constitution of his city not only with its future forms of government but also with its past ones. When it comes to the past of the Syracusian politics, one should note that the original constitution of the city was the aristocracy of *Gamoroi*[253], who in Syracuse, in particular, were the wealthy land-owners, who constituted the class of the elite of the city, as we also can understand from the etymology connected probably with the word 'ghe',

[250] See e.g. Ferrari 1985, *ad locum* "dato che non provenite da città rette in modo tale che in esse i molti comandino ai pochi, ma piuttosto da quelle in cui i pochi comandano ai molti, avendo acquistato il vostro dominio solo per mezzo del combattere e del vincere".

[251] Thuc. 6.38.3, transl. ed. by me.

[252] See Hornblower 2008, 412. For the tyranny of Dionysius I, see the very detailed work of Sordi 1992a.

[253] For the existence of them we get informed from FGr Hist 239 (36). The text refers to the period of the poet Sappho (last quarter of seventh century) and mentions clearly that "*ἐν Συρακούσσαις δὲ τῶν γαμόρων κατεχόντων τὴν ἀρχήν*" (in Syracuse the *gamoroi* had the power). See also Diod. 8.11, where they are denominated as "*γεωμόροι*".

according to Powell's definition[254]. Herodotus informs us that the *Gamoroi* were exiled from Syracuse to the Syracusian colony of *Kasmenai* by the common people of the city and their slaves, the Cyllyrians and were called back from Gelon, to whom the *demos* handed over both itself and the *polis*[255]. Gelon took afterwards possession of the city of Syracuse and from that moment the city was ruled by the tyrant dynasty of the Dinomenids[256]. The tyranny was brought to an end in 466/5 when the Syracusans revolted against Thrasybulus, brother of Gelon and Hieron I and one of the subsequent tyrants of the first and expelled him[257] reintroducing in this way the democracy in the city[258]. When Thucydides speaks through Athenagoras of "*δυναστεῖαι ἄδικοι*", he refers probably to these powerful men of Syracuse, who possessed the power in the city in the past. Even if no further information about this type of government in Syracuse was provided to us, one can imagine the similarities of the Syracusan *dynasteia* with the other types of *dynasteiai* in the main continent; a clique of few men, who had the power and governed tyrannically.

From Sophocles to Aristotle: a rapid look through the other sources

Thucydides alludes to three different examples of *dynasteia* in the Greek world, all of them based on the same principle: the idea of a constitution of few (wealthy) men, who hold power in the city, comparable with a sort of tyranny and in opposition to other forms of constitution ordained by law. Actually, the term *dynasteia*[259] derives from the noun *δύναμις*, i.e. 'strength, power'[260] and indicates in a general sense the dominion of a more or less arbitrary power[261]. When it comes to its political interpretation, the term is considered as a synonym of tyranny, as Thucydides mentions in his sixth book through the words of Alcibiades:

> "My family has always been opposed to tyrants (*τοῖς γὰρ τυράννοις*) (and every form of opposition to absolute power gets identified as "the people's party") (*πᾶν δὲ τὸ*

[254] About the general meaning of the *γημόροι* (Att. *γεωμόρος*) from the words *γῆ* (land, LSJ, *ad locum*) and *μείρομαι* (divide, LSJ, *ad locum*), see LSJ, *ad locum* "one who has a share of land, landowner".
[255] Powell 1938, *ad locum* proposes the translation "landed gentry".
[256] Hdt. 7.155.2. For the tyranny of Gelon see Berve 1967, 140-147 and for the Dinomenid tyranny in general, see Luraghi 1994, 273ff.
[257] Aristot. Pol. 5. 1312b, 10-16.
[258] Aristot. Pol. 5. 1316a32-33; Diod. 11.68.6. See the chapter on Syracuse.
[259] I will refer to the word with the ancient term *dynasteia* and not its translation in modern English 'dynasty', since the last indicates "a series of rulers or leaders who are all from the same family, or a period when a country is ruled by them" (Cambridge Dictionary) and can refer to every type of constitution based on a hereditary kingship, see also Walsh 2014, 166-167 and Stalley 1995, 346.
[260] Beekes 2010, *ad locum.*
[261] Bétant 1847, *ad locum*, Chantraine 1968, *ad locum.*

ἐναντιούμενον τῷ δυναστεύοντι δῆμος ὠνόμασται), so as a consequence we have retained the leadership of the masses"[262].

In the discussion of the famous Athenian politician in Sparta during the Sicilian expedition, which aims to convince the Spartans to send forces to Syracuse against the Athenians, Alcibiades parallelizes *dynasteia* to tyrannical forms of government, which are defined from the speaker as the opposite to democracy. The contradiction between *dynasteia* and democracy gets expressed, for example, also by Isocrates, who in his *Panegyricus* makes a reference to the period of the Athenian hegemony, during which Athens tried to guard the interests of the whole confederacy by supporting the *plethos* (people) and making war on the *dynasteiai*[263]. The difference between *dynasteia* and democracy is highlighted also in one of Democritus' fragments, where the philosopher in his "hymn" for democracy mentions that "poverty under a democracy (*ἡ ἐν δημοκρατίηι πενίη*) is much more desirable than the so-called happiness under a *dynasteia* (*τῆς παρὰ τοῖς δυνάστηισι καλεομένης εὐδαιμονίης*), as much as liberty is more desirable than slavery"[264]. "*Δυναστεύειν* is the exercise of power unrestricted by a constitution or code of laws", so Dover[265]. How is the term defined, however, in the anterior and contemporary sources of the Peloponnesian War?

When it comes to the other ancient sources, *dynasteia* is not frequently used by the precedent scholars of Thucydides. The earliest written evidence for the term can be found in the tragedy of Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus. During a discussion between the protagonist and Creon, the second mentions that:

"How, then, could royalty be sweeter to me to have (*πῶς δῆτ' ἐμοὶ τυραννὶς ἡδίων ἔχειν*)

than painless rule and influence? (*ἀρχῆς ἀλύπου καὶ δυναστείας ἔφυ;*)"[266]

According to Jordović, *dynasteia* in this passage "unambiguously refers to the rule of an individual, which is at the same time termed tyranny"[267]. I will agree with the scholar: the term does not indicate in this case a tyrannical regime of the few.

It is, also, interesting that Herodotus uses the verb *δυναστεύω* several times in his work, in order to express the power of the ruling men, who constitute the elite of a city and can have

[262] Thuc. 6.89.4.
[263] Isoc. 4.105.
[264] Democ. DK 68 B 251, 147 N. = STOB. IV 1,42, transl. mine.
[265] Dover 1970, 362.
[266] Soph. OT, 592-593.
[267] Jordović 2005, 28.

an influence also on the development of the political history of their region, like the example of the concurrence between Cleisthenes and Isagoras can show. In this case, the two powerful Athenian citizens (*δύο ἄνδρες ἐδυνάστευον*), both of them with ancestry of the Athenian nobility of the sixth century, were involved in a struggle for power between them after the overthrow of Athenian tyrant Hippias[268]. It is also notable that, when the historian speaks of the arrival of Aristagoras in Athens, in order to ask for help against the Persian Achaemenid Empire, Herodotus mentions that the choice of the city was not randomly, since Athens "was more powerful than any of the rest (*τῶν λοιπέων ἐδυνάστευε μέγιστον*)"[269]. In this case the term *δυναστεύω* indicates the superiority of power of a whole city and not of an individual. Even though *dynasteia* as a formed political constitution is obviously non-existent in the Herodotean thought, the use of the *δυναστεύω* as a verb combined with power, which can have sometimes also political shades, as Powell justly remarks[270], indicates that the idea of a few individuals or even a city, which dominate with a superior power exists already from the beginning of the fifth century, even if the term *dynasteia* is not defined yet.

Apart from Sophocles and Herodotus, I have not noticed any other scholar, antecedent of Thucydides, who uses the *dynasteia* or the verbal form of it in a political way. It can be a strange fact if someone considers that *dynasteia* refers many times to constitutions of the past, like the case of Cleisthenes in Herodotus, but also the cases of Thebes and Syracuse in Thucydides proved. On the other hand, there are several sources, contemporary and subsequent to our historian, which try to define the term and understand its meaning. The most important authors to define the concept of *dynasteia* are for sure Plato and Aristotle.

According to Plato, *dynasteia* can be parallelized to a tyrannical form of government[271], which derives from the past (the period of time, in which Plato refers, is not definable in the "Laws"), but has no political existence in the present of the Athenian reality of the Platonic times, even if it still exists in some cases among both Greeks and barbarians[272]. As for the characteristics of this constitution, the *dynasteia* appears in the list of Plato of the several constitutions after monarchy and before democracy (*καὶ μετὰ μοναρχίαν εἴποι τις ἂν οἶμαι τὴν*

[268] Hdt. 5.66.1; for other cases of the use of *δυναστεύω* in the aforementioned way, see Hdt. 6.35.1; Hdt. 6.39.2; Hdt. 6.66.2; Hdt. 9.2.3.
[269] Hdt. 5.97.1.
[270] Powell 1938, *ad locum*. When *δυναστεύω* is connected with persons, it means "have (political power)".
[271] Plat. Gorg. 492b. Dodds 1959, 295, comments on this passage that "these are two kinds of *ἀρχή*. *Δυναστεία* stands to oligarchy as tyranny stands to monarchy; it is a group of tyranny, and as such is opposed to the rule of law. The rule of the Thirty at Athens was a *δυναστεία*".
[272] Plat. Laws 3.680b.

ὑπὸ τῶν ὀλίγων δυναστείαν)[273], when the attribute *ὑπὸ τῶν ὀλίγων* indicates probably the existence of a few powerful men, who constitute the ruling power of the constitution. It is very interesting that in the "Laws" of Plato, the *dynasteia* seems to be the "father-constitution" of aristocracy and kingship (*ἀριστοκρατίαν τινὰ ἐκ τῶν δυναστειῶν ποιήσαντες ἢ καί τινα βασιλείαν*)[274].

One should mention at this point that the orator Lysias defines the ruling classes in Athens before the democratic period of the city[275], during which the government of Athens was constituted by magistrates appointed from the rich and well-born[276], as *dynasteiai*[277]. The parenthood of *dynasteia* with the traditional aristocratic and monarchical forms of government indicates for sure that this constitution is based on the power of some few rich and powerful men with absolute power, in the same way as *ἀριστοκρατία* is the constitution based on the rule of the "*aristoi*", the best-born[278]. I will not agree with the theory of Martin that "Platon unterscheidet sich von den übrigen Autoren, dadurch, daß bei ihm Reichtum als Voraussetzung für die frühe dynasteia und die Konnotation von Tyrannis fehlen"[279]. A constitution, so strictly connected with the aristocracy, i.e. the conservative elitist classes, is most likely directly connected with wealth too. Moreover the connection with the *basileia* confirms that Plato has probably a very similar concept of the term as Thucydides; he interprets *dynasteia* as a tyrannical form of constitution, based on the hereditary ruling power of the few wealthy men and totally opposed to the actual constitution of Athens, i.e. the democracy.

If one has to draw forth from Plato the meaning of *dynasteia* as a political constitution, from the text of Aristotle one can understand much easier and in a very detailed way how the

[273] Plat. Stat. 291. I will not completely agree with the comment of Rowe 2004, 220, who mentions that "the term *δυναστεία* (here 'holding of power') can be used by itself to signify an oligarchy". Even if in this case Plato does not highlight the tyrannical character of the constitution, I think that according to the general interpretation of the philosopher of this form of government, *dynasteia* cannot be compared with the lawful oligarchy, but indicates always a tyranny of few men.

[274] Plat. Laws 3.681d; see also Plat. Rep. 8.544d.

[275] The period of time is not defined in an absolute way, but I can suppose that Lysias speaks here of the tyrannical forms of government, which ruled Athens until the reforms of Cleisthenes at the end of the sixth century.

[276] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 3.1, all translations of the Athenaion Politeia of Aristotle are taken from Rackham 1952, *ad locum*.

[277] Lys. 2.18. See Ferrante 2000, 19, who comments on this passage that the *dynasteiai* are "le forme monarchiche ed oligarchiche".

[278] LSJ, *ad locum.*

[279] Martin 1979, 231.

philosopher understood this constitution and through his point of view also the idea that existed about this way of governing in the fourth century at least. According to the definition of the philosopher:

> "Another variety of oligarchy is when son succeeds father in office; and a fourth kind is when the hereditary system just mentioned exists and also the magistrates govern and not the law (*ἄρχῃ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἀλλ' οἱ ἄρχοντες*). This among oligarchies is the form corresponding to tyranny among monarchies and to the form of democracy about which we spoke last among democracies[280], and indeed oligarchy of this sort has the special name of dynasty (*καὶ καλοῦσι δὴ τὴν τοιαύτην ὀλιγαρχίαν δυναστείαν*)"[281].

In these few lines, Aristotle summarizes the characteristics of a *dynasteia*[282]; it is all about a form of an oligarchical constitution, which is based on the power of the few rulers and not on the sovereignty of the law, as it would happen in the case of a typical oligarchy[283]. This type of "collective dictatorship", as Stalley so accurately mentions[284], can be understood better through an example that Aristotle himself uses. Concretely, Aristotle defines the regime of the thirty tyrants imposed by the Spartans after their victory over Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404[285], a regime known for its cruel and oppressive tactics, as *dynasteia*[286]. If we consider that also the logographer Andocides defines in one of his speeches the regime of the Four Hundred Athenian oligarchs, which managed to take power in Athens in 411 and overthrow the democracy in the city[287], as *dynasteia*[288], one can

[280] Aristotle refers to his theory about the last type of democracy, which is based not on the sovereignty of law, but on the sovereignty of the multitude, which gets carried away from the demagogues, who at the end become the rulers of the *demos*, since they convince it with their demagogic skills (Aristot. Pol. 4.1292a, 4-39).

[281] Aristot. Pol. 4.1292b, 4-10. For other occurences of the term in the work of the philosopher, see also Aristot. Pol. 2. 1272b, 9-13; Aristot. Pol. 4.1293a, 26-35 and Aristot. Pol. 4.1298a, 29-33.

[282] I have to say that I am not able to understand the argumentation of Jordović 2011, 39, f.20 on the way that Aristotle, according to him, understands the idea of *dynasteia.* Inter alia, the scholar mentions that "it is not a simple omission or coincidence, therefore, that the author of the Politics fails to construct a more detailed concept of extreme oligarchy (i. e. dynasteia) which then could be used as foundation for the chapter on tyranny." The author continues his argumentation by saying that Aristotle could have used the extreme tyranny of the Thirty Tyrants as a "historical example for drawing parallels between extreme tyranny and extreme oligarchy, an opportunity that Aristotle misses". In my opinion, Aristotle is one of the most important sources for the concept of *dynasteia*, at least in the fourth century, since he has managed to make a relatively complete definition of the term, as I will show further down in my text.

[283] See the definition of Lord 1984, 275, who defines *dynasteia* in Aristotle as "a form of oligarchy characterized by the dominance of a few "powerful men" (*dynastoi*) and their families and retainers".

[284] Stalley 1995, 346.

[285] Xen. Hell. 2.3.1-2.

[286] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 36.1.

[287] See corresponding chapter.

[288] Andoc. 2.27.

understand that this term, which originally derived from the past decades, is used also in the fifth and fourth century, in order to describe tyrannical constitutions, which are governed not by one and only tyrant but by few important citizens.

Furthermore, Aristotle speaks also of the conditions, which can lead to an overthrow of a constitution and the establishment of a *dynasteia*. First of all, a dynasteia can rise, when the influence of one or more people on the city and its citizens manages to become stronger than the influence of the *demos*[289]. Secondly, when the rich men manage to become richer and their properties become wealthier[290]. Thirdly, when under oligarchical constitutions, the ruling class uses mercenaries instead of its own citizens for its expeditions in times of war because of the lack of trust between the governors and the *demos*; the lack of trust in the city-core may lead to the leader of the mercenary army to overthrow the constitution and establish tyranny or to some few important soldiers of the troop to establish a *dynasteia*[291]. Additionally, when under an aristocratic form of government a clique of citizens manages to bring upon some, even small ones, constitutional changes in the city, which gradually can cause bigger changes and even the overthrow of the constitution, like the example of Thurii in South Italy can prove[292]. Furthermore, *dynasteiai* rise also, when the existing constitution of the city does not try to involve ever more citizens in the public offices, but distributes them to the few; in this case ever fewer citizens receive a public salary for their contribution at the *koina* of the city and the conversion of an oligarchy to a *dynasteia* is very probable[293]. Last but not least, Aristotle mentions that, in order to avoid the conversion of aristocratic and oligarchic constitutions to *dynasteiai*, the governors of the afore-mentioned constitutions should be authorized to stay in power for brief periods and not long-lasting ones[294].

The modern interpretations

On the other hand, when it comes to the modern bibliography, I have to admit that the research on the term *dynasteia* in the fifth century is rather limited. I consider as the most important works on this subject the articles of Bearzot and Walsh. According to Bearzot, when the term *dynasteia* (including its derivatives *δυνάστης* and *δυναστεύω*) gets combined

[289] Aristot. Pol. 5.1302b, 5-18.
[290] Aristot. Pol. 5.1303a, 1-14.
[291] Aristot. Pol. 5.1306a, 13-27.
[292] Aristot. Pol. 5.1307b, 1-20.
[293] Aristot. Pol. 5.1308b, 1-10.
[294] Aristot. Pol. 5.1308a, 1-24.

with political movements and constitutions, expresses originally the idea of an authority, able to impose itself, but not necessarily in an arbitrary way[295]. This is also the way, in which Herodotus conceives this idea with the use of the verb *δυναστεύω*, which "esprime di norma l'idea della preminenza di un singolo o di un gruppo, dovuto a un potere di fatto, all'interno di una città (V 66; VI 35,3; 66,7; IX 2,11), senza che emergano peraltro risvolti di illegittimità, oppure, in un caso, quella della preminenza di una città, Atene, fra le altre (V 97,5)". If one follows this idea, consequently, the term *dynasteia* can express, according to Bearzot, many different aspects of power; the absolute power of an individuum, the hegemony of a single city on others, the political power on a territorial or dynastic base. According to Bearzot consequently, *dynasteia* appears to have also a lawful nature, when the word gets connected with constutions of a monarchic nature, like, for example, the one of the king Amyntas III, father of Philip.[296]

Bearzot admits, however, that dynasteia can be interpreted both as a tyranny of a single man, according to the example of Syracuse, and as the extreme illegal oligarchy, like Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle have noticed[297]. I can imagine that the scholar, in the case of Syracuse, refers to the tyrannical period of the city, during which the city was ruled by one leading figure, but I believe that the period of *dynasteia* in the Sicilian city concerns another period of its political history. Like already analysed, the reference of Athenagoras to *δυναστείας ἀδίκους*, which caused struggles and conflicts in the inside of Syracuse is probably connected with the existence of the so-called *Gamoroi*, the conservative elite of the city and not with the period of the tyrannical governing in Syracuse. Besides, if Thucydides had referred to the tyranny of one man when speaking of the politics of Syracuse, why would he then have spoken clearly of "*τυραννίδας […] καὶ δυναστείας ἀδίκους*"? I think that in this case the conjunction *καὶ* indicates the existence of two different forms of constitution. When it comes to the definition of *dynasteia* as an absolute oligarchy, Bearzot mentions that especially the illegality of this type of governing is expressed mainly through its contradiction to forms of government based on the concept of *isonomia,* and especially to democracy, like the texts of Democritus, the cases of Thebes and Thessaly and the discussion of Alcibiades can show[298]. In any case, *dynasteia* is considered from the ancient sources as an exceptional example, which cannot be considered as a constitutional form of government. The same opinion

[295] Bearzot 2003, 26.
[296] Isocr. Phil. 106-107.
[297] Bearzot 2003, 27.
[298] Bearzot 2003, 28.

expressed also Martin, who, following the Aristotelian way of thinking, argues that *dynasteia* cannot be considered as a constitution, because of its obvious parallelism with tyrannical forms of government[299]. I will agree with the observation of Bearzot and Martin: both Thucydides and Plato highlight the despotic and not constitutional character of *dynasteia*, when Aristotle characterizes this form of government as the last and most extreme form of oligarchy, characterized from the lack of laws.

The second important article on *dynasteia*, even if the scholar concentrates in this case on the concept of the term in Aristotle in particular, is for sure the one of Walsh. The author mentions that "*dunasteia* is reserved for when the oligarchy exercises its authority to a high degree. It is when men become supreme instead of the law that Aristotle recognizes *dunasteia*, the critical condition of *dunasteia.*"[300] *Dynasteia* is in other words in the Aristotelian thought "an abuse of authority" [301]. According to Walsh, this radical expression of oligarchy emerges after the failure of democratic regimes[302], as the tyrannies of the Four Hundred in 411 and of the Thirty in 404 in Athens can prove. What is here important for Walsh and is also important, in order to understand the difference of the ancient *dynasteia* with the subsequent ones, as I have already noticed, is the fact that "dynastic power is not characterized by successive, but by excessive rule[303]". D*ynasteia* is defined from Walsh as the equivalent of tyranny, even though in this case it is a tyranny of more than one man, which is outside the bounds of the constitutional, as Bearzot also noticed.

The opposition between *dynasteia* and democracy is highlighted also by Vlastos, who notices that the rule of law is the determinant factor, which distinguishes the non-isonomic states, where the rulers have the "ability to act without restraint of law and force their own arbitrary will upon the governed pushing them into a course of action for which they cannot be held responsible, since they lacked the power to accept or reject it for themselves", like the *dynasteia*, from a democratic one, "where power belongs to the people, and officials do not decide the policies of the state but administer the policies which the people decide"[304]. I

[299] Martin 1979, 228: „Unter verfassungstheoretischen Gesichtspunkten setzt Aristoteles die dynasteia mit der Tyrannis und der Herrschaft der Menge parallel: sie stehe im gleichen Verhältnis zur Oligarchie wie die Tyrannis zur Monarchie und die Herrschaft der Menge zur Demokratie. Folglich sei die dynasteia eigentlich gar keine Verfassung".
[300] Walsh 2014 169.
[301] Walsh 2014 171.
[302] Walsh 2014, 173.
[303] Walsh 2014, 174.
[304] Vlastos 1953, 360.

believe that the rule of law is the one to distinguish *dynasteia* also from the oligarchical forms of government. Even though oligarchies are not based on the sovereignty of the *demos*, they are for sure constitutions based on the use of good laws and this is one of the reasons for their connection with *eunomia*[305]. It has to be clear that oligarchy and *dynasteia* are two completely opposed forms of government and the reason for that is the importance that the rule of law has for the formation of the state. Indeed, Ostwald gives a very accurate definition of the term: "The narrowest kind of oligarchy is more properly called a "clique" (*δυναστεία*), in which wealth and a network of relationships are the self-perpetuating constitutional factor, it is a rule of men and not of laws"[306].

Conclusions: a despotic form of government of the past?

In these few pages I have tried to summarize the different theories of the modern bibliography on the idea of *dynasteia*, but, the information on this subject is limited, because of the fact that the term was handled to a limited degree already from the antiquity. Like already said, the main sources of *dynasteia* are Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, all sources of the fifth and fourth century, when the term refers mainly to forms of government of the prior centuries of the Peloponnesian War and this is for sure not a coincidence. According to me, this observation is directly connected with the fact that the ancient writers of the sixth century and some of the fifth were not so interested to define the diverse political systems in Greece, like Plato and mainly Aristotle do. Not even Thucydides is interested to define specifically the terminology of the diverse constitutions like it can be seen in several other chapters of my work. He speaks of this idea as something that the contemporaries already know and understand instantly. I think consequently, that *dynasteia* was defined and handled as a formed political term especially from the scholars of the end of the fifth and fourth century, even though the regime should have been developed mainly at the archaic period, during which the tyrannical forms of government were in their acme.

When it comes to the definition of the term, I think that the sources leave us no other choice than to understand *dynasteia* as a hereditary, non-constitutional form of government, which is based on the ruling power of some few wealthy men. It is equivalent to tyranny and, according to Plato, the father-constitution of aristocracy and kingship, when Thucydides highlights its opposition to *"isonomic"* constitutions based on the sovereignty of law, like

[305] See chapter on *eunomia*.
[306] Ostwald 2000a, 71.

oligarchy and democracy. In a few words, *dynasteia* is opposed to the rule of law and to the constitutional order. I will agree with the definition of the term by Graves as "a narrow oligarchy or *πολυκέφαλος τυραννίς* (a many-headed tyrannis)"[307]. When it comes to the period of its existence in the political scene of ancient Greece, I think that the examples of Thebes, Syracuse, but also the constant comparison of the term to traditional aristocratic and tyrannical forms of government, which belong mainly to the archaic period, indicate a form of government, which derives from the past. This fact does not exclude, however, the re-appearance of the *dynasteia* in the next centuries of Greek history, even though Plato insists that this narrow oligarchy has no political existence in the present of the Athenian reality. The tyranny of the Four Hundred in 411, as long as the one of the Thirty after the defeat of the Athenian army in the Peloponnesian War in 404, are parallelised from Andocides and Aristotle correspondingly with *dynasteiai*, since both of them are based on the tyrannical governing of few men with absolute power, who derive basically from the conservative oligarchic circles of the city. The case of Thessaly indicates also the presence of a *dynasteia* in the period of the Peloponnesian War. I believe consequently that *dynasteia* is probably a form of government developed in the archaic period, which re-appears in the fifth century under specific circumstances, which foster the overthrow of the *ἔννομοι πολιτεῖαι* (constitutions based on the rule of law) and the establishment of absolute forms of government, based on the ruling power of the *oligoi*; the extreme brutality of the war does not leave much space for the development of "healthy" constitutions in the Greek city-states.

In the final analysis, I think that even though Thucydides does not make a detailed terminological analysis of *dynasteia* as Aristotle does, his work is fundamental, in order to understand the concept of this narrow oligarchy not only in the period of the Peloponnesian War but also in the years before it. If we consider that the term is mentioned rarely in other sources before Thucydides, one can easily understand the importance of the *History* for the understanding of the term and its subsequent definition from Plato and Aristotle. I think that in this case, even if the work of our historian can be in no case characterized as a political study, Thucydides manages to contribute in a determinant way on the comprehension of the political system of *dynasteia* by the ancient Greek thinkers by offering his subsequent writers a relatively complete definition of the term and its political presence in the Greek political scene of the sixth and fifth century.

[307] Graves 1884, *ad locum.*

Chapter 4. Internal *political* division in the Greek polis of the fifth century. The Thucydidean concept of *hetaireia*

The Corcyraean Civil War

In the year 427, in the heart of the Archidamian War (431-421), a dramatic civil war exploded on the island of Corcyra[308]. Corcyra was traditionally a region of internal disunity: one should not forget the cruel conflict between the *metropole* Corinth and its colony Corcyra some years before the beginning of the Peloponnesian war (435-431), which ended with the defeat of the first[309]. The historical background of the island as a Corinthian colony had, on the one hand, as a consequence the influence of the oligarchical Corinth on the city; on the other hand, the alliance of the island with Athens, a treaty, which was also to the Athenians' advantage, given that the Peloponnesian war was arriving and the last needed Corcyra as an ally because of its potent navy[310], brought out the democratic character of the island. A situation like this developed consequently a fertile ground for internal conflicts already from the beginning of the war. The returning of the Corcyraean captives, who were captured by the Corinthians in the battleship of Sybota[311], which took place between both cities in the year 433, however, gave the chance to the different ideologies of the city to explode and lead the island to one of the cruellest civil wars in history. The captives, influenced by the oligarchic Corinthians, took the *proxenos* of Athens, Peithias, to trial by accusing him of intending to enslave Corcyra to Athens. Peithias got acquitted, started another trial against the five oligarchs, who he accused, but got killed together with other 60 members of the parliament of the Corcyraean *boule* by the afore-mentioned oligarchs, who managed to take also the control of the *ecclesia*.

The conflict may have finished with the victory of the democrats, but Thucydides is not really interested in the victor; much more than this, he is interested to enter in the deeper layers of the internal conflict of the island, in order to understand the real motives of such a bloodshed and in this way to comprehend – as much as possible – the human nature. This is why he dedicates a large part of his third book on the narration of the events in Corcyra. The most

[308] Thuc. 3.69-85.
[309] Thuc. 1.24-31.
[310] Thuc. 1.44.
[311] Thuc. 1.48-51.

interesting part of his narration, however, is concentrated on his so-called "pathology"[312], where the historian explains the consequences of the civil war on the behaviour of its participants and the way that this type of war managed to demonstrate the cruellest character of them. Thucydides delineates continuously the peculiarity of a war so awful that led even fathers to kill their own sons and beggars to get murdered inside of sanctuaries. The aim of this chapter of my work is to understand the consequences that this internal conflict had on the politics of Corcyra and through this example on the politics of the Greek world in general. Can one speak of an internal political division of the Greek polis after the civil war in Corcyra?

The *hetaireiai* and their characteristics

In his pathology inter alia Thucydides mentions the following:

> "The man who devised a successful plot was intelligent, the one who detected it still cleverer; but the man who thought ahead to try and find some different option was a threat to party loyalty (*τῆς τε ἑταιρίας διαλυτὴς*) and must have been intimidated by his opponents"[313].

In this passage, Thucydides speaks clearly of the existence of the so-called *ἑταιρεῖαι*[314] (from *ἑταῖρος*, i.e. comrade companion)[315]. Even if the term can indicate any form of association or 'brotherhood'[316], in the case of the civil war of Corcyra the word seems to have a political meaning. Thucydides speaks of the *hetaireiai* and their action as a self-evident fact, even if it is the first time in his work that he speaks of them. These types of associations did not only exist during the civil war but got also threatened by their partisans, who were not willing to be as cruel and violent as their co-ideologists. It is strange how Thucydides speaks for the

[312] Thuc. 3.82-83.

[313] Thuc. 3.82.5.

[314] At this point it is very important to clarify that the aim of this research is not to speak of every type of political association in the Greek world of the fifth century, but only of the *hetaireiai* and *synomosiai* under the Thucydidean point of view. I will quote only the words of Ziebarth 1896, 95, who, I think, has managed to summarize very successfully the difference of *hetaireiai* and *synomosiai* from all other forms of factions: "[…] so unterscheiden sie sich dadurch grundsätzlich von allen anderen Vereinen, dass sie meistens nur zur Erreichung eines bestimmten politischen Zweckes, also auf Zeit gegründet waren. Auch darin nehmen sie eine eigene Stellung ein, dass sie sich je nach Umständen mit einander vereinigen zu gemeinsamer Erreichung ihrer Ziele (Thuk. VIII 54)". For the several political factions, see among others especially the very detailed work of Whibley 1889 and additionally the ones of Calhoun 1913, Connor 1971, 3-32; Rhodes 2004, 185-206 and Vischer 1877, 153-204.

[315] See LSJ, *ad locum.*

[316] See LSJ 1996, *ad locum*, Beekes 2010, *ad locum*, Bétant 1847, *ad locum*, Chantraine 1968, *ad locum* for the different meanings of the term.

first time in his work of an association, which seems to have been formed completely during the civil war. How could one, however, arrive at the conclusion that Thucydides speaks of political clubs in this particular case?

At first, one should comprehend deeper the events of the civil war, in order to understand the character of these political clubs, which I will call factions[317] from now on. According to the historian:

> "Such was the savage progress of the civil strife (*στάσις*)[318], and it seemed all the worse because it was the first of its kind, though later practically the whole Greek world was in turmoil as everywhere there were rival efforts by the leaders of the populace (*τοῖς τε τῶν δήμων προστάταις*) to bring in the Athenians and by the oligarchs (*τοῖς ὀλίγοις*) to bring in the Spartans"[319].

This phrase, with which Thucydides starts his pathology, makes clear the character of the Corcyraean civil war; the city is divided into two parts, the *demos* (the populace) and the *oligoi* (the few), each part of which participated in the war with the help of the Athenians and the Spartans correspondingly. This development indicates that the civil war in Corcyra was deeply political since the two different political mentalities of Athens and Sparta have an important role during the war. The political character of the civil war is expressed also further down in the pathology:

> "Indeed, the ties of family became less close than those of party since party members (*καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ ξυγγενὲς τοῦ ἑταιρικοῦ ἀλλοτριώτερον ἐγένετο*) had no inhibitions about any

[317] I will agree with the argumentation of Connor 1971, 6, about his refusal to define political associations in antiquity as parties. Inter alia, Connor mentions that "for the modern party is a rather elaborate organization, operating primarily for the election of candidates; often it professes some ideology of doctrine; surely it outlines some program. The modern party is often a long-lived creature, adapting to new circumstances, and often outlasting any one campaign or any one issue. In ancient Athens where most state offices were filled by lot, where political affiliations were subject to rapid change, where political organization was often thought synonymous with conspiracy, such institutions simply did not exist". Party, in the meaning of "a formally constituted political group that contests elections and attempts to form or take part in a government (Oxford English Dictionary)" cannot correspond to the political groups of the fifth century; the term faction ("a small organized dissenting group within a larger one, especially in politics", Oxford English Dictionary) is more adapted to define political associations with no particular organisation and many times with conspiratorial aims.

[318] On the idea of *stasis* and the consequences of the civil war on the human nature see especially the very detailed works of Price 2004 and Gehrke 1985 and also Lintott 1993, 25-32; Fuks 1971, 48-55; Bruce 1971, 108-117; Macleod 1983, 52-68.

[319] Thuc. 3.82.1.

> venture. Their associations did not exist to promote welfare in accordance with established laws but to subvert the law for selfish advantage"[320].

Once more Thucydides uses *hetaireia* (this time as an adjective), in order to express the importance that these factions gained during the civil war; the partisan ties became more important than the family ones, since the cruelty of the war led the members of these factions to violent behaviours, in order to gain power and accomplish the interests of the faction. It is not the first time that the historian seems to take for granted the importance of these factions for the development of the civil war, even if these groups are not evident in his former books. When it comes to the intentions of the leaders of these factions, Thucydides mentions further down that:

> "The leaders in the various cities (*οἱ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι προστάντες*) would each of them adopt specious slogans (*μετὰ ὀνόματος ἑκάτεροι εὐπρεποῦς*) professing the cause either of 'political equality for the masses' (*πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς*) or 'aristocracy – the government of moderation' (*ἀριστοκρατίας σώφρονος*); they pretended in their speeches to be competing for the public good, but in fact in their struggle to dominate each other by any available means they brazenly committed all manner of atrocities and perpetrated even worse acts of revenge, with no regard for the constraints of justice and the public interest"[321].

I believe that Thucydides expresses in this part his "raw" opinion about the role that these factions had during the civil war; they were formed with the mask of a political direction when in reality they were only interested to serve their personal interests and not the interests of the commonweal. The slogans that each faction used, in order to couch their self-serving purpose, were directly combined with the political character of the two protagonists of the war, Athens, and Sparta, which were more than willing to intervene in the civil war and gain more benefits as possible from the Corcyraean bloodshed. Under these circumstances, the interpretation of the *hetaireiai* as a political model of faction is more than obvious; even if the purpose of these factions was to serve their personal interests like already said, the political character of them is incontrovertible. Consequently, how could we define the *hetaireiai* in the Thucydidean world and what was their character in the fifth century?

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[320] Thuc. 3.82.6.

[321] Thuc. 3.82.8. On a further analysis of the concept of *isonomia* in this case and in the work of Thucydides in general, see the chapter on *eunomia* and on the analysis of *aristocratia* and *sophrosyne* in the Thucydidean world, see the chapter on oligarchy.

In the research of the diverse meanings of the word in the work of Thucydides, one could get confused from the so diverse interpretations that *hetaireia* and its derivatives can have. The use of this idea in a political way can be noted, however, only in a few passages of the Thucydidean History. It is remarkable that *hetaireia* as a political faction gets mentioned in the first place from the historian during his narration of the Corcyraean civil war and it reappears again in his eighth book when Thucydides narrates the events of 411 in Athens and the coup of the 400. The total defeat of the Sicilian expedition in the year 413 left Athens economically and psychologically devastated. This disaster induced in the city the fear of a possible invasion from the enemies that they had in Sicily and Greece. This insecurity that was caused in Athens was the perfect excuse that incited the oligarchic circles of the city to "wound" the Athenian form of constitution. The way that these circles managed – with the help of Alcibiades inter alia – to overthrow the constitution and impose a parliament body of 400 with full authority is extremely long[322]. What is important at this point of the research is the way that Thucydides uses *hetaireia* in this historical context. It is characteristic that all three times that Thucydides uses the term in his eighth book he refers to the oligarchic circles of Athens, which planned and carried through the overthrow of democracy. When he speaks of the organisation of the coup from the Athenian generals barracked at Samos, he mentions that it was organized from the political associations on the island, which wanted the replacement of the Athenian democratic constitution with an oligarchical one.

> "[…] while those who were trying to establish the oligarchy (*οἱ δὲ ξυνιστάντες τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν*), after they had communicated this message to the masses, returned to examining Alcibiades' proposals among themselves and with a wider circle of their membership (*τοῦ ἑταιρικοῦ*)"[323].

The existence of the term *ὀλιγαρχία* with the idea of *ἑταιρεία* in the same phrase indicates for sure a connection of these political factions with an oligarchic ideology. The story continues with the establishment of oligarchy in Athens; the contacts of the oligarchic circles of Samos with the ones in Athens provoked the organization of the coup of 411 and the overthrow of democracy:

> "Peisander and his colleagues sailed along the coast, unseating the popular parties from power (*τοὺς δήμους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι κατέλυον*), as agreed. At some places they also got hoplites to join forces with them and arrived at Athens with these in support. There they

[322] See corresponding chapter.
[323] Thuc. 8.48.3.

found that most of their work had already been done by their associates (*τοῖς ἑταίροις*)"[324].

Once more the political factions seem to be connected with the overthrow of democracy and the oligarchic circles of the city, as also the example of the arrest of Alexicles from the Athenian soldiers at the period of the construction of the wall of Eetioneia, can show:

> "The hoplites in the Peiraeus who were working on the fortification of Eëtoneia […] made an arrest. They seized Alexicles, a general from the oligarchy (*στρατηγὸν ὄντα ἐκ τῆς ὀλιγαρχίας*) who was especially close to those in the political cabals (*πρὸς τοὺς ἑταίρους τετραμμένον*), led him off and confined him in a private house"[325].

Like already said, Thucydides uses the term *hetaireia* in a political sense in two different periods of the war; the civil war in Corcyra and the overthrow of the Athenian constitution in 411. However, he does not interpret the term in the same way in both circumstances. In the case of Corcyra, the *hetaireia* is referred to political factions in general, but no connection with an oligarchical ideology can be noted. On the other hand, in the case of the oligarchic coup in Athens, the term is combined clearly with the oligarchical circles of the city, which wanted to overthrow democracy. How does Thucydides, consequently, understand the *hetaireia* as a political association of the fifth century?

Hetaireiai **in the ancient literature**

In order to answer the afore-mentioned question, a research on the antecedent and contemporary sources is more than important. *Hetaireia* as a term appears in different meanings. Like already seen, the word, except for its political meaning, can stand for any type of association. This means that the term is used also before Thucydides, but in which sense actually? It is characteristic, that Herodotus, the "ancestor" of Thucydides, uses the term only once in his *Histories*[326] when he describes the story of the Cylonian Affair, i.e. the attempt of Cylon of Athens to overthrow the Athenian democracy and impose a tyrannical form of government[327]. During this attempt, Cylon gathered a company (*ἑταιρίην*) of men of like age in order to seize the citadel. The political character of the attempt gives for sure a political shade at the meaning of the word, but at this period of history one cannot speak of a

[324] Thuc. 8.65.1-2.
[325] Thuc. 8.92.4.
[326] I am not referring here to the adjective *ἑταῖρος*, which gets used in all cases with the meaning of 'friend'. See Hdt. 3.14; 3.51; 3.125; 5.95; 6.62.
[327] Hdt. 5.71.

real political faction; Herodotus narrates the story of one aspirant tyrant who wanted to take the power away from the state with violence and the company, which encircled him seems more a group of – maybe – unsatisfied citizens than an organized political association, which acts with the support of a part of the society. Apart from that, the word is mentioned only once in the work of Herodotus, as already mentioned, which means that it should have not been a very common word for the first half of the fifth century. One cannot characterize consequently the "Herodotean" *hetaireia* in the same way as the "Thucydidean" one, i.e. as an organized political faction, which acts with the support of a noteworthy part of the polis[328].

The main source before Thucydides does not mention the word in the same way as our historian consequently. But what happens with the contemporary sources of Thucydides? Plato, for example, mentions *hetaireia* several times, some of them in a clear political meaning. When he speaks of the cases of dissolution of the polity in his *Laws*, he offers to us a clear definition of *hetaireia*:

> "Whosoever enslaves the laws by making them subject to men, and makes the State subject to a faction (*ἑταιρίας*), and acts illegally in doing all this by violence and in stirring up civil strife,—such a man must be deemed the worst of all enemies to the whole State"[329].

The reference of Plato to the *hetaireiai* in this phrase could remind us of the way that the Athenian constitution was overthrown in 411. In this case, Plato speaks clearly of the existence of factions, which in some cases manage to act illegally and stir up civil strife. Adam comments on this idea of Plato that in Plato's Republic, when the philosopher speaks once again of the *hetaireiai*[330], he makes "an allusion to the political life of Athens and that "in the laws, he would suppress all such secret clubs and cabals with a strong hand"[331], which means that for Plato these factions not only existed but were also powerful in the political life of Athens:

> "But all the same if we expect to be happy, we must pursue the path to which the footprints of our arguments point. For with a view to lying hid we will organize societies

[328] Powell, 1938, *ad locum*, on the other hand, does not give any political meaning to the words as used in Herodotus: *ἑταιρηίη*, company; *ἑταῖρος*, friend.
[329] Plat. Laws 9.856b, transl. by Bury 1926, *ad locum.*
[330] See also Plat. Theaet. 173d.
[331] Adam 1969, 85.

and political clubs (*συνωμοσίας τε καὶ ἑταιρίας*), and there are teachers of cajolery who impart the arts of the popular assembly and the court-room"[332].

The period of the end of the Peloponnesian War and the years after can be even more characterized as a time of political division and a constant coming into being of political factions, as Xenophon narrates in his *Hellenica*[333]. In his second book, when the historian describes the establishment of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens in 404 and the conviction of Theramenes, one of the coup instigators, Xenophon speaks clearly of *ἑταῖροι*, when he refers to the oligarchic associates of the tyrannical form of government, imposed to Athens by the Spartans and the Athenian oligarchic circles[334]. According to Underhill, Xenophon refers to "the members of the oligarchic clubs through whose influence the Revolution of the Four Hundred had been effected"[335]. It is not a coincidence, according to me, that Xenophon, who with his *Hellenica* continues the narration of the Peloponnesian War after Thucydides, uses the same word, in order to describe the political clubs that were formed in Athens after the establishment of a tyrannical form of oligarchy in 404, in the same way that Thucydides described the political factions formed under an equivalent form of government in Athens, i.e. the establishment of the oligarchic constitution of the Four Hundred in the year 411. The existence of these political factions seems even more clear in the first half of the fourth century when Xenophon speaks clearly of the existence of two completely formed *hetaireiai* in Thebes, one anti-spartan with leader Ismenias and one oligarchic with leader Leontiades, who were at variance with each other.[336] Underhill comments on this passage that "these were political clubs or secret societies organized for party purposes, *ἐπὶ δίκαις καὶ ἀρχαῖς*, and naturally were more active in times of stasis."[337] One can see consequently an evolution of these factions from Thucydides to Xenophon; the more the time passes and the more the Greek cities get even more fragmented, the more formed and stable become these political clubs.

The interpretation of *hetaireia* as a political faction in the fourth century can be verified also in the text of the orator Isocrates. In his *Panegyricus*, Isocrates speaks of the glorified ancestors, which formed the generation of the Persian Wars, which:

[332] Plat.Rep. 2.365d.
[333] For the development of the *hetaireiai* in the fourth century see also Longo 1971, 13-29.
[334] Xen. Hell. 2.3.46.
[335] Underhill 1900, 62.
[336] Xen. Hell. 5.2.25, for the same use of the word in *Hellenica* see also Xen. Hell. 5.4.25.
[337] Underhill 1900, 185.

> "organized their political clubs (*τὰς ἑταιρείας*) not for the personal advantage, but for the benefit of the people"[338].

The *hetaireiai* mentioned here do not correspond to the political factions of the fourth century, but to political clubs of the past, which, according to Norlin, "are here no doubt idealized to point the contrast to the selfish intrigues of the present"[339]. The idealization of the period of the Persian Wars, a period of glory and patriotism for the Greek world, is commonly known in the Greek literature; according to this idea, the *hetaireiai* of the past should do not correspond to real political factions, but are compared to the factions of the present, which serve the personal interests of the partisans and not the commonweal, as the glorious idealized associations of the Persian wars once did; the same idea gets expressed also from Thucydides, when he speaks of the *hetaireiai* of the Corcyraean civil war[340].

Last but not least, one should not ignore in the research of *hetaireia*, the way that the word gets used from Aristotle. It is not a coincidence that the philosopher uses the term with the meaning of a political faction when he analyses his theory about the ways, in which an oligarchy can be overthrown. In two of these passages, he combines *hetaireiai* clearly with the political clubs developed in Athens in the period of the Thirty tyrants[341]. Actually, in his *Athenaion Politeia*[342] Aristotle clearly combines these political factions with the oligarchic circles of the city, who wanted the establishment of an oligarchical way of governing under the power of the Thirty Tyrants after the Athenian defeat in Aegospotami[343]:

> "The peace having been concluded on terms of their carrying on the government according to the ancestral constitution, the popular party (*οἱ δημοτικοὶ*) endeavored to preserve the democracy (*διασῴζειν ἐπειρῶντο τὸν δῆμον*), but the notables who belonged

[338] Isoc. 4.79, transl. by Norlin 1928, 167.
[339] Norlin 1928, 166.
[340] Thuc. 3.82.8.
[341] Aristot. Pol. 5.1305b, 23-24. See also Aristot. Pol. 5.1306a, 13-32. For the connection of *hetaireiai* with the attempt of undermining the democracy in the fourth century, see also Hyp. 4.8 and for later attestations see Plut. Lyc. 5.3.
[342] We cannot come to the same conclusion from the use of *hetaireia* in the *Athenaion Politeia* 20.1, in which the word appears more in the sense of a Comradeship and not in the form of a formed political faction. Rhodes 1981, 243 mentions that: "what we have in A.P. is simply a restatement of what he found in Herodotus, and provides no evidence for the existence of *ἑταιρεῖαι* (associations or 'clubs' of men who were on occasion prepared to cooperate for political purposes: see on 34. iii) in the time of Cleisthenes […]."
[343] Xen. Hell. 2.1.

> to the political factions (*ἐν ταῖς ἑταιρείαις*) and those exiles who had returned after the peace were eager for oligarchy (*ὀλιγαρχίας ἐπεθύμουν*), […].[344]"

It cannot be a coincidence that the *hetaireiai* receive a clear political meaning under these extreme political circumstances, which clearly remind us of the oligarchic coup of the Four Hundred and the *hetaireiai* formed in Athens by the oligarchic circles of the city, which organized the overthrow of democracy, as it appears in the work of Thucydides. There is obviously a connection of ideas between both ancient writers of the fifth and fourth century. The question, which derives from this observation, should be consequently the following: is Thucydides the first to conceive the *hetaireia* as a political faction?

Thucydides' innovation

The way, in which the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth century comprehends the idea of *hetaireia* can lead us to several conclusions about the existence and the characteristics of the political factions during the Peloponnesian War. When do these factions appear in the Greek literature and in which way do they get their final political character? I can say with relative certainty that, even if the first attestation of the word should be the one of Simonides of Ceos[345], the first comprehension of the term in a political way can be found in the *Histories* of Herodotus. This is very important for our research since it indicates the expanded use of the term as a political company of people in the fifth century. The difference between the use of *hetaireia*, however, between Herodotus and Thucydides is the one to determine the definition of these political factions. Even if in Herodotus the word has a clear political meaning, one cannot speak, like already said, of any identification of the *hetaireia* with formed political factions, which are fully organized and act with a certain plan; it seems more likely that the company of Cylon acts impulsively and without any kind of organisation.

On the other hand, the *hetaireiai* of Thucydides seem much more formed. It is important to note that the historian uses the term once in the period of the Corcyraean civil war and does not use it again until the coup of the Four Hundred. According to the theory of Ostwald, Thucydides wrote the part of Corcyra at a later time. Ostwald argues that "[…] this passage is generally agreed to have been composed long after the event. Thucydides may well be using

[344]Aristot. Ath. Pol. 34.3, ed. by me.
[345] Anth. Gr. 7.509: "*Σῆμα Θεόγνιδός εἰμι Σινωπέος, ᾧ μ' ἐπέθηκεν Γλαῦκος ἑταιρείης ἀντὶ πολυχρονίου*".

a vocabulary developed after 413 B.C. to describe a situation that existed in 427 B.C."[346]. The theory of Ostwald seems to get confirmed from Thucydides, since the historian, apart from the case of Corcyra, refers to the term and its derivatives in the sense of a political faction only in his eighth book, when he describes the oligarchic coup in Athens in 411. If this theory is true, then one should suppose that the *hetaireia* in Thucydides gets combined mainly with organized factions during the oligarchic coup of the 411 and that the reference of the historian to the term in his third book should not indicate the widespread use of the word during the period of the events in Corcyra. Even if this is correct, one should not ignore the existence and role that the political factions had during the civil war in Corcyra. Their political propaganda influenced the development of the war critically and led the island to a total massacre. The widespread use of the term in the works of contemporary and subsequent writers is consequently the result of this development. Thucydides is the first to define political factions in the Greek world and this is not irrelevant to the Peloponnesian War itself; this war, with the social and political crisis that caused to the Greek world, was the perfect field for the development of these factions and the internal political division of the Greek city-states.

One could say consequently that Thucydides was not the first to insert the term in the Greek literature, but was the first to use it more extensively as one of the consequences of the Peloponnesian War. Apart from the frequency of the use of the *hetaireia*, however, the character of these political factions in Thucydides is also of great interest. During the large history of the term in the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth century the *hetaireia* can be considered mostly as connected with the attempt to overthrow the Athenian democracy and consequently with the oligarchical circles of Athens, which led the city to a first overthrow of constitution in the year 411 and a second one in the year 404. This consideration can be observed not only from Thucydides, when he narrates the coup of the Four Hundred, but also from his antecedent Herodotus, who speaks of the attempt of Cylon to overthrow democracy (even if in this case the purpose of the coup perpetrator is to establish a tyranny and not an oligarchy), and from the subsequent writers, like Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle, all of them speaking of *hetaireia* as an oligarchic faction, which acts against the democratic constitution

[346] Ostwald 1986, 356 bases this theory on the passage Thuc. 3.82.1: "such was the savage progress of the civil strife, and it seemed all the worse because it was the first of its kind, though later (*ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε*) practically the whole Greek world was in turmoil […]." The certainty of Thucydides about the later events of the civil war could lead easily to the conclusion that this part of the war was written at a later time. For this theory see also Gomme 1956, 372 and Luschnat 1971, 1201.

of Athens. At this point one should, of course, consider the fact that, when Thucydides speaks of the political factions in the Corcyraean civil war, he does not give an oligarchical shade to them; actually, the historian highlights the different political mentalities and influences, which determined the development of this war. However, I believe that in this case, Thucydides wanted to give particular attention to the influence that Athens and Sparta – and consequently also their political mentalities – had on the civil war through these political factions. The afore-mentioned interpretation of *hetaireia* should not be considered, however, as the norm for the use of the term; the connection of *hetaireia* with attempted coups against democracy is more than obvious in the literature.

The most important common element of all these citations, in reality, is, however, the following: the *hetaireiai* are formed not in periods of political stability, but in periods of political crisis, in which the traditional political ideas are put in doubt. In times of peace, the political factions had no sense of existence in the Greek polis; they did not act as the modern political parties. Even in democratic societies, the factions have no role in the actual political life like it happens today. This fact does not indicate, however, that they did not exist, like the examples of Corcyra and Athens have demonstrated so clearly. The Greek city-states of the classical times were of course characterized by different political mentalities, which in times of peace simmered in the internal of the society and exploded only in periods of internal crisis, during which they could find a free field to actualise their political ideas. This is consequently one of the most important consequences of the Peloponnesian War for the Greek world of the fifth century. This war manages to lead several cities – including Athens and Sparta – to an internal crisis and to the doubt of traditional values, which were active for centuries; in this historical context, one could say that it was the Peloponnesian War itself, which formed the *hetaireiai* and gave them the political meaning, which they will maintain also during the fifth and the fourth century.

Synomosia: a synonym?

In the afore-mentioned text, I attempted to comprehend in-depth the idea of *hetaireia* in the Thucydidean world as a political faction, but the afore-mentioned term is not the only one to express the idea of political associations in the fifth century; of a similar meaning is also the word *συνωμοσία* (*synomosia*), which occurs in several passages of the Thucydidean *History*.

The word derives from the verb *ὄμνυμι* (swear, affirm with an oath, take a vow)[347] and in its connection with the conjunction *συν* can take the meaning of conspiracy, association, but also of political union[348]. The lexicological difference between *hetaireia* and *synomosia* is that the last is connected with the taking of a vow, which means that if someone wants to participate in an association of this type, should swear to be loyal to the association or political faction. The interpretation of *synomosia* as a political association can be found widely in the work of Thucydides. It is impressive that in most of the passages, in which the historian uses the term *synomosia* and its derivative *synomotes*[349], he uses it in the sense of a political conspiracy or association, which aims to overthrow the democracy. One could say that Thucydides uses the word mainly in two different historical circumstances: first of all during the events in Athens before the beginning of the Sicilian expedition, when he narrates the vandalism of the *hermai* and the social crisis that followed in Athens and secondly, when he describes the oligarchic coup in Athens in the year 411.

When it comes to the Sicilian expedition, like already said, Thucydides speaks of the *synomosiai*, when he describes the events of the year 415, the vandalism of the *hermai* and the affair of the Mysteries[350], which provoked the fear of the Athenian citizens that behind this act was hidden the plan of the oligarchic circles of the city to overthrow the democracy:

> "They took the matter (i.e. the vandalism of the hermai) very seriously, since it seemed like an omen for the expedition and at the same time to betoken a conspiracy for a political uprising and the subversion of popular rule (*ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ ἅμα νεωτέρων πραγμάτων καὶ δήμου καταλύσεως γεγενῆσθαι*)"[351].

The oligarchic shade of this conspiracy is more than obvious, according to me. The fear of the Athenians of a possible overthrow of the constitution is very common in Thucydides and is connected obviously with the power that the oligarchic circles of the city possessed

[347] Beekes 2010, *ad locum.*
[348] Betant 1847, *ad locum*; LSJ, *ad locum.*
[349] We cannot say the same about the use of the verb *συνόμνυμι*, which, in my opinion, is used strictly in the sense of "take a vow, make an alliance".
[350] See Thuc. 6.27-29 for the events.
[351] Thuc. 6.27.3, see also Thuc. 6.60.1 and Thuc. 6.61.1 for the same use of the word by the historian. See also Diod. 13.5.1: "[…] those in Athens who hated Alcibiades with a personal enmity, possessing now an excuse in the mutilation of the statues, accused him in speeches before the Assembly of having formed a conspiracy against the democracy (*ὡς συνωμοσίαν κατὰ τοῦ δήμου*)", all translations of Diodorus are taken from Oldfather 1989, *ad locum.*

traditionally[352]. In order to understand the historicity of these conspiratorial clubs, it should be enough to mention the important role that they seem to had had during the events of the assassination of Hipparchus from the Tyrannicides in the year 514, as Thucydides narrates. Inter alia, the historian speaks clearly of a *synomosia*, of which Harmodius and Aristogeiton seemed to be a part when they organized the assassination of the tyrant and the overthrow of the constitution[353]. With the domination of the democratic constitution in the Athenian political scene, the fear of a coup against the democratic way of governing showed up automatically, since the *synomosiai* became even more powerful in the city, as Thucydides describes. This fear got realized some years later when the several *synomosiai* really managed to dominate and establish an oligarchy of the Four Hundred:

> "But the conspirators (*τῶν ἐν τῇ ξυνωμοσίᾳ*) who were gathered at the meeting confirmed their original reaction and accepted the proposals now before them. They prepared to send Peisander and other envoys to Athens to negotiate about the return of Alcibiades and about overthrowing the democratic constitution (*τῆς τοῦ ἐκεῖ δήμου καταλύσεως*) there and to establish the friendship between Tissaphernes and the Athenians"[354].

Thucydides speaks clearly of conspiratorial clubs, which tried – and really managed at a later time – to overthrow the traditional democratic Athenian constitution. Once again the historian mentions the oligarchic character of these clubs. When he describes the effort of Alcibiades to convince the Athenian generals in Samos, who had already experienced the tyrannical behaviour of the new oligarchical government and wanted to oppose it, to trust him, the historian mentions the following:

> "An assembly was held in which Alcibiades blamed his personal situation on his exile and complained bitterly about his misfortunes. He also said a great deal about the political situation and instilled in them strong hopes for the future, while hugely exaggerating his own influence with Tissaphernes. His various intentions in this were: that those who controlled the oligarchy back at home (*οἵ τε οἴκοι τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν ἔχοντες*) would fear him the more; that the private associations would be led to break up (*αἱ ξυνωμοσίαι διαλυθεῖεν*); […]"[355]

[352] Characteristic example of a member of these oligarchic circles is the orator Andocides, who clearly admits in his work "on the mysteries" his complicity in the oligarchic *hetaireiai*, who were accused for the vandalism of the Hermai and the affair of the Mysteries, see Andoc. 1.61-64; 1.100.
[353] Thuc. 6.57.2.
[354] Thuc. 8.49, transl. ed. by me. For the same use of the term see also Thuc. 8.48.2; 8.54.4; 8.69.2; 8.73.2.
[355] Thuc. 8.81.2.

Thucydides speaks of the *synomosiai* as political associations in Athens, directly connected with the oligarchic circles of the city, whose aim was to overthrow the democratic way of governing. Which is, however, the way that other scholars of the fifth and fourth century use the term? In the research of the way, in which several scholars, anterior and contemporary of Thucydides, used the word, which I have accomplished, I have noticed that *synomosia* is normally used from the scholars in the meaning of an association or conspiracy and not in the meaning of a real political conspiratorial faction, which aims to overthrow the constitution[356]. This means that only Thucydides uses the term as a political faction with a conspiratorial character and this cannot be coincidental obviously. Thucydides is the only one to define *synomosia* as a form of political association in Athens, which derives from the traditionally very widespread oligarchic circles of the city with main aim the coup against the democratic constitution. If we consider that Thucydides uses both terms of *hetaireia* and *synomosia* as a political faction, which should be the difference between both types of association and why our historian feels the need to use a second term, in order to speak of the conspiratorial factions of Athens?

The difference between both terms according to the modern literature

Several modern scholars dealt with the question of the difference between *hetaireia* and *synomosia* in Greek literature. According to most of them (and according to me also), the most important works on the afore-mentioned terms are the ones of Calhoun[357] and Sartori[358]. Both scholars made a very detailed research on political clubs in antiquity, even though I have to say that Sartori focused more than Calhoun on the difference between *hetaireia* and *synomosia*, when Calhoun's work is more focused on political clubs in general. However, both of them made a circumstantial definition of the two terms. According to Calhoun, the word *hetaireia* indicates "a club of which the interests were chiefly political, and which was devoted either wholly or in part to the support of its members in politics and litigation"[359]. When it comes to the idea of *synomosia*, however, Calhoun believes that the term indicates

[356] See e.g. Herodotus, who does not even refer to the term, when Plato mentions the word two times, in order to speak of societies (Plat. Rep. 2.365d) and plots (Plat. Apol. 36b), but not in the way, in which Thucydides uses the term.
[357] Calhoun 1913.
[358] Sartori 1967.
[359] Calhoun 1913, 6.

an oath-bound companionship, which in the sense of a political club seems to be synonymous with the idea of *hetaireia*[360].

On the other hand, Sartori supports clearly the different meaning of *hetaireia* and *synomosia* in the Athenian political scene until the year 411 at least. In order to prove this difference, Sartori refers to the Dreros inscription, dated in the year 220 circa, in which the *hetaireia* and *synomosia* are used in two different ways[361]. In the text of the inscription, *hetaireiai* are described as official factions of the people when *synomosiai* are described as conspiratorial clubs of the city. Sartori mentions consequently that "ciò prova l' incompatibilità originaria di eteria e sinomosia, l'una essendo un organo riconosciuto dallo stato, l'altra una consorteria antistatale"[362]. I think that this is the main idea of Sartori about the different interpretation of the two terms; they are both political associations, even though *hetaireia* is recognized from the state when *synomosia* not. According to the scholar, if we consider that *synomosia* is an oath-bound association and that such oaths were sworn under extreme political conditions, then it should be no coincidence that the afore-mentioned type of political association was combined several times with revolutionary movements against the already-existing constitution; *Synomosia* indicates also lexicologically a conspiratorial faction, which acts exclusively in periods of political instability.

The *hetaireia*, on the other hand, has other characteristics, according to the scholar. The word does not indicate only political clubs but can indicate also an association of coeval citizens with common interests. From this traditional form of *hetaireia* derives also the political version of it[363]. This is why the *hetaireiai* are considered traditionally as associations recognized from the state[364]. Sartori believes that the explosion of the Peloponnesian War and especially the internal dispute in Athens of the vandalism of the Hermai, in combination with the defeat in Sicily and the consequent oligarchic coups of 411 and 404 had as a consequence the strengthening of the historical – already from the period of the political action of Thucydides son of Melesias[365] – oligarchic circles of Athens, which were now even more

[360] Calhoun 1913, 7.
[361] Inscr. Cret., I. p.84 n°1 = Syll³ 527.
[362] Sartori 1967, 30-31.
[363] Sartori 1967, 153.
[364] Sartori 1967, 31.
[365] Famous politician of the fifth century, who became the leader of the conservative faction of Athens, in order to oppose the increasingly popularity of Pericles, Plut. Per. 11.1.

available to combat against the democratic constitution[366]. As a consequence, the *hetaireiai* are normally combined with an oligarchic ideology. They are not, however, of the same nature as *synomosiai*. Sartori mentions that "[…] il vocabolo "eterie" indica per lo più quei circoli oligarchici che combattono la loro battaglia antidemocratica nei limiti di un' opposizione riconosciuta e tollerata dalla legge"[367]. The two terms *hetaireia* and *synomosia* start consequently as two different ideas in the Athenian political scene of the second half of the fifth century. This is obviously not the norm for the whole period of the war, however. The more power the Athenian democracy gained in the Athenian political scene, the more powerful became also the *hetaireiai*, which had to defend their political ideas, in order to continue to exist[368]. And the more power these *hetaireiai* got, the more conspiratorial they became, according to Sartori, which means that they resembled even more to the *synomosiai* the closer we get to the end of the war[369]. With the failure of the second oligarchic coup of the 404 the *hetaireiai* had no reason to exist and they disappeared from the political life of Athens; the oligarchic factions got completely weakened[370].

Several other scholars have dealt with the definition of the two terms, even though not so thoroughly as Calhoun and Sartori. When it comes to the interpretation of *synomosia*, Andrewes mentions that the *synomosiai* were political associations, which aimed not at the public good but at the benefit of their members[371]. The same opinion has Ostwald, who believes that the *synomosiai* "were intended for permanent social and private cooperation among friends in litigation and in furthering the political careers of one another"[372]. These political clubs, which were formed for the personal interests of their members, existed in order to thwart the democratic process by manipulating elections and lawsuits, as the events of the vandalism of the *Hermai* have shown, so Hornblower[373]. In order to prove this theory, Hornblower uses the phrase of Thucydides in 6.60.1 and the characterization of the attempt of a coup against the Athenian democracy in 415 (i.e. the famous vandalism of the *Hermai*) as a *ξυνωμοσία ὀλιγαρχική καὶ τυραννική* (a conspiracy involving oligarchy and tyranny), in order

[366] Sartori 1967, 154.
[367] Sartori 1967 71.
[368] Sartori 1967, 154.
[369] Sartori 1967, 72.
[370] Sartori 1967, 155.
[371] Andrewes 1981, 129.
[372] Ostwald 1986, 355.
[373] Hornblower 2008, 919.

to prove that this phenomenon was not ephemeral and that these political clubs aimed mostly at the overthrow of the constitution.

The *hetaireia*, on the other hand, has another historical background. Several scholars agree that the *hetaireiai* start as "dining or drinking clubs of congenial men, usually of roughly the same age and social standing."[374] Jones mentions that "they were private societies of upper–class males", i.e. the aristocratic elite, "devoted to social activity among themselves"[375]. "They met for drink, talk, amusement and political jobbery"[376], so Rhodes. According to Andrewes, the political character of the *hetaireiai* appears during the years of the Peloponnesian War, since wartime stress offered them the possibility to multiply and grow worse[377], even if there is also a theory, which claims that the *hetaireiai* may have existed also before the explosion of the war. In 1937 American excavators have discovered in the Athenian Agora 190 *ostraca* with the name of Themistocles, who got exiled from Athens in the year 471. The interesting part of this discovery was that these *ostraca* were not written by 190 different citizens, but rather were prepared by a small group of citizens, since only fourteen different hands can be detected on the fragments. The idea that behind these foundings could be hidden some sort of *hetaireia* is very tempting and has been supported continuously from the scholars[378], still, I would be very careful when speaking of the existence of *hetaireiai* at this historical period; the ancient literature does not leave much space for such conclusions.

In any case, the *hetaireia* takes a clear political meaning during the events of 411, i.e. the overthrow of democracy from the Four Hundred oligarchs and the reference of Thucydides to the political associations as *hetaireiai* during the Corcyraean civil war does not prove the contrary, so Ostwald; like already mentioned, the part of Corcyra seems to had been written at a later time from our historian[379]. The *hetaireiai* in a political sense should had been small groups of men, more tight-knit, sinister, and subversive than *synomosiai*, according to Hornblower[380], and "commonly on the fringe of the leisured class, whom a leading politician could employ as his agents"[381], each of which was held together more by personal

[374] Connor 1971, 26.
[375] Jones 1999, 224.
[376] Rhodes 2004, 197.
[377] Andrewes 1981, 130.
[378] See inter alia Connor 1971, 25-26 and Andrewes 1981, 129.
[379] Ostwald 1986, 356.
[380] Hornblower 2008, 919.
[381] Rhodes 2004, 197.

considerations than by political principles[382]. The reason for their existence lays in the ever-growing power of the democratic constitution, especially in Athens, which led these associations to become even tighter and organized, in order to confront their opponent constitution, which with the passing of time becomes a governmental power. As Jones mentions, "[...] from the very beginnings of the democracy, aristocrats, or at least some of them, had been in a permanent condition of emotional and ideological withdrawal. If the *demokratia* could not be fairly said to have created the clubs, at the very least it provided them with a powerful reason for their continuing existence"[383]. Whibley supposes that the threat of their democratical opponent may have led these *hetaireiai* also to communicate with each other and with similar clubs among the allies for the accomplishment of a common political strategy, even if this idea cannot be proved with absolute certainty[384].

Why does Thucydides use both terms in his *History*?

I think that the discussion of the political factions in the Greek world of the fifth century is of great interest. In the modern world, we have the tendency to put labels at the political constitutions of antiquity; we are used to characterizing Athens of the fifth century as democratic, Sparta as oligarchic, etc. But the Greek politics cannot be defined, in my opinion, by specified terms; the political history of Greece is much more complicated than this. Athens especially is considered nowadays as the establisher of the democratic ideas and way of governing, an ideology which is influencing modern politics till today. Few is said, however, about the oligarchic circles, which existed traditionally in the city and managed to overthrow the constitution twice, or about the corruption of the democratic electoral procedures, which were many times manipulated by political factions, as the example of the excavation of the ostraca in the Athenian Agora can prove. It is not a coincidence that in the period of the Peloponnesian War most of these political clubs flourished in Athens; Thucydides refers (except the case of Corycra) always to the Athenian democracy when he speaks of the *hetaireiai* and *synomosiai*. The Athenian democracy was the most fertile field for the development of these oligarchic clubs, which wanted the overthrow of the constitution and the conquest of power; like already seen, the democratic way of organization of the Athenian society left inevitably much free space at the oligarchs to act. From the research

[382] Sealey 1956, 242.
[383] Jones 1999, 227.
[384] Whibley 1889, 85.

above one can come to several conclusions about the way that these political factions developed and the importance that they had on the Greek politics of the fifth century.

First of all, it is obvious, according to me, that one cannot speak of an identification between *hetaireiai* and *synomosiai*, like Calhoun argues, at least at the first period of their political action. The hetaireiai should had started, according to several scholars, as clubs of coevals of the Athenian aristocratic elite, which, even if they acted collectively in a political way, as the passage of Herodotus on Cylon can show, they cannot be characterized as political factions with an individual organization and action till the oligarchic coup of 411. It is not a coincidence that the more the Peloponnesian War proceeds, the more the ancient writers focus on the development of the *hetaireiai* as political factions and the role that they played at the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404 in Athens, like Thucydides, Xenophon and Aristotle mention. From the ancient literature consequently one can understand that the *hetaireia* as a complete political faction got formed in periods of political crisis and in particular during the Peloponnesian War. In periods of such cruelty, traditional values are put easily in doubt and internal divisions can find plenty of space to evolve.

The *synomosiai*, on the other hand, have other historical origins. The obligatory vow that its members had to swear, in order to enter into the *synomosia*, transformed it automatically into a conspiratorial association and can be in no case compared with the *hetaireia* in its initial form. Herodotus does not even speak of *synomosiai*, when Thucydides mentions them twice in his work, both when he speaks of the two conspiratorial movements of the political factions against democracy, i.e. the vandalism of the *Hermai* and the oligarchic coup of the 411. No other Greek writer makes a similar reference to the term *synomosia* as a conspiratorial political faction; it may have been a choice of word exclusively Thucydidean, in order to describe such clubs.

Consequently, when it comes to the development of Athenian political history, one can easily understand that *synomosia* is used from Thucydides in the same historical circumstances as *hetaireia*, i.e. when the historian refers to the oligarchic circles of Athens that wanted to overthrow the Athenian democracy. It is, therefore, obvious that *hetaireiai* and *synomosiai* in the Thucydidean world receive a similar meaning, even if they start from different interpretations. In the eighth book especially, both terms alternate constantly when the historian describes the events of the oligarchic coup of 411; this means that for Thucydides at some point of the war both terms have the same meaning. I think that a war of such cruelty

does not leave much space for the formation of healthy political factions. The Peloponnesian War was for sure a reference point for the Greek world; after its end in 404 the Greek polis entered in a deadlocked crisis and collapses when the Macedonian King descended from the North. Under these circumstances, the commonweal comes in second place and the political factions got organized according to the personal interest of their members. This is the perfect time for the oligarchical circles to flourish and attempt the overthrow of democracy, which during the war got even more powerful and threatened, even more, their existence; according to me, if these associations should be called *hetaireiai* or *synomosiai* or whatever else, is, at this point of history, of least importance for our historian.

Chapter 5. Syracuse and its democratic period

The constitution of Syracuse in the ancient sources

Thucydides dedicates two books of his history at the expedition of the Athenians against Syracuse in the year 415 and their dramatic defeat; he considers it as one of the most important events of the war. During the narration of the events, the reader has the opportunity to gather also important information about the interesting development of the constitution of Syracuse during the period of the Peloponnesian War[385]. Even if in this case our historian does not speak of another one oligarchic constitution, but actually of a democratic one, the case of Syracuse and its form of government is so important that it could not be excluded from a research on the Thucydidean political thought. Aim of this part of my thesis, consequently, is to manage to understand as much as possible the nature of the Syracusan constitution and its potential connection with the Athenian democracy.

Syracuse was dominated traditionally by tyrannies[386]. We get informed, however, that, after the long period of the tyranny of Gelon and his heirs (485-466)[387], the city had a democratic period[388], like the greatest part of the cities in Sicily[389]. Several sources offer us important information about this change of constitution. First of all, Diodorus describes that after the overthrow of the tyranny of Thrasybulus (466)[390] the city entered into a democratic period:

> "From this time the city enjoyed peace and increased greatly in prosperity, and it maintained its democracy for almost sixty years, until the tyranny which was established by Dionysius (*καὶ διεφύλαξε τὴν δημοκρατίαν ἔτη σχεδὸν ἑξήκοντα μέχρι τῆς Διονυσίου τυραννίδος.*)[391]".

The Sicilian writer describes that the fall of Thrasybulus was accompanied by long celebrations, which included the construction of a colossal statue of Zeus the Liberator and

[385] On the Thucydidean narration of the events in Syracuse and in Sicily and Southern Italy in general, see the very detailed text of Zahrnt 2006, 629ff.
[386] On the long period of the Syracusan tyranny in the classical period, see the book of Berve 1967, 142ff. and 599ff. for the literary and bibliographical notes, as well as the works of Champion 2010 and Langher 1997, 1ff.
[387] On the tyrannical period of Gelon see the chapter on *dynasteia.*
[388] For the political history of Syracuse during the Peloponnesian War, see among others the very detailed work of Hüttl 1929, 53ff.; Asheri 1992, 147ff. (for the years before the Peloponnesian War) and Lewis 1994, 124ff (for the last period of the war).
[389] On the democratic period of the other Sicilian cities, see Finley 1968, 59.
[390] Diod. 11.72.2.
[391] Diod. 11.68.6.

by the insertion of the annual Festival of Liberation, during which the Syracusans made sacrifices and held games of distinction on the day on which they had overthrown the tyrant and liberated their native city.[392] We get informed also from Diodorus that Syracuse was democratic and additionally liberated and restored democracies in other Sicilian cities, which had also been under tyranny:

> "The Syracusans, having liberated their native city in this manner, gave permission to the mercenaries to withdraw from Syracuse, and they liberated the other cities, which were either in the hands of tyrants or had garrisons, and re-established democracies in them (*τὰς δὲ ἄλλας πόλεις τὰς τυραννουμένας ἢ φρουρὰς ἐχούσας ἐλευθερώσαντες ἀποκατέστησαν ταῖς πόλεσι τὰς δημοκρατίας*)."[393]

Aristotle in his *Politics* refers also to the overthrow of the tyranny and the domination of democracy:

> "Since according to him tyranny ought to change into the first and best constitution, for so the process would be continuous and a circle, but as a matter of fact tyranny also changes into […] democracy, as that of the family of Gelo at Syracuse (*καὶ εἰς δημοκρατίαν, ὥσπερ ἡ τῶν Γέλωνος ἐν Συρακούσαις*)"[394].

Democracy survived in Syracuse till Dionysius I, who imposed a tyrannical constitution in the city in the year 405.[395] Syracuse experienced subsequently a democratic period of 60 years. Of which type of democracy, anyway, are we speaking about?

On the characteristics of this constitution, not only Thucydides but also other sources provide important information. Thucydides mentions several times the existence of the *ecclesia*, which seemed to have the absolute power in the city. The historian informs us that at the time of the beginning of the Athenian expedition to Sicily, the Syracusans convened the Assembly (*γενομένης ἐκκλησίας*)[396], in order to discuss the news of the arrival of the Athenians. The *ecclesia* is convened again afterwards, when the Syracusans had to decide, if they should give absolute authority to the *strategoi*, which took part in the war against Athens[397]. Finally, Thucydides mentions another convention of the *ecclesia* of Syracuse in the seventh book,

[392] Diod. 11.72.2.
[393] Diod. 11.68.5.
[394] Aristot. Pol. 5.1316a 27-33.
[395] Diod. 13.95.1.
[396] Thuc. 6.32.3.
[397] Thuc. 6.72.

when the citizens of the city were in doubt if they should continue the war against Athens or not[398]. The convergence of an assembly for every important issue of the Syracusan society and especially the absolute authority that was given to this assembly could be proof of the democratic character of the city[399].

All of this aside, it seems that the assignment of magistracies was filled by election from the Assembly[400] and we know from Thucydides about the existence of the *δήμου προστάτης*[401], i.e. the leader of the people, phrase often applied to unofficial leaders of a popular party. We get informed also from Diodorus about the existence of *petalismos*, a political procedure introduced in Syracuse in 454/453, similar to the ostracism of Athens, in order to prevent the appearance of new tyrants. Leaders could now be exiled by a simple popular vote; the exile lasted five years (instead of ten in Athens) and votes were recorded on olive leaves rather than *ostraka*. However, we know that this system did not last for a long period[402].

Another characteristic of the Syracusan democracy could have been the fear of a possible overthrow of the constitution of the city, which is expressed from the speech of Athenagoras in the Syracusan *ecclesia*. The Syracusan leader of the commons acknowledges that periodically the constitution of Syracuse got destroyed many times from diverse *staseis* and was overthrown by tyrannical forms of government:

> "There you have the reason why our city is rarely at peace but inflicts a multitude of conflicts and struggles not so much on its enemies as on itself, including sometimes tyrannies and illegal regimes (*τυραννίδας δὲ ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ δυναστείας ἀδίκους*)"[403].

Even if this passage refers probably only to the tyranny of Dionysius that came after, according to several scholars [404], I believe that Thucydides through the words of Athenagoras delineates with this speech the opposition of the current constitution of Syracuse both with its past and – probably – its future forms of government. To the above-mentioned text should be added a passage of Diodorus, who describes how after the fall of tyranny and the

[398] Thuc. 7.2.1.
[399] See also Diod. 11.92.2 for the existence of *ecclesia* in Syracuse.
[400] Diod. 11.72.3.
[401] Thuc. 6.35.2; see also Thuc. 3.75.2; 3.82.1; 4.46.4; 4.66.3; 8.89.4 for the use of the expression by Thucydides.
[402] Diod. 11.86-87. On the *petalismos* see among others the article of Petruzzella 2010, as long as Wentker 1956, 56ff and Giangiulio 1998, 113ff.
[403] Thuc. 6.38.3.
[404] See Dover 1970, 303 (even though indecisively); Hornblower 2008, 412 and Caven 1990, 237.

establishment of democracy, the Assembly decided to exclude from the magistracies all the aliens, which had been admitted to citizenship under Gelon, either because they were judged to be unworthy, or

> "because they were suspicious lest men who had been brought up in the way of tyranny and had served in war under a monarch might attempt a revolution (*τυραννίδι καὶ μονάρχῳ συνεστρατευμένοι νεωτερίζειν ἐπιχειρήσωσιν*)"[405].

The fear of the Syracusans about a revolution of the – from the tyrannical period remained – 'undemocrats', a fear, which can be also observed in the democratic constitution of Athens[406], makes the antithesis between tyranny and democracy even more intensive. Syracuse had consequently a non-tyrannical form of constitution, which is characterized as democracy from all sources. However, is it comparable to the Athenian ideal of governing?

The problematic of this question is for sure of great complexity. In the seventh book, after the victory of Syracuse, Thucydides mentions the methods that Athens uses normally, in order to subjugate a city-state and the reason, why this way was not successful in the case of Syracuse:

> "For the first time they were coming up against cities that were similar in character to themselves – democratically governed, as they were (*μόναις ἤδη ὁμοιοτρόποις ἐπελθόντες, δημοκρατουμέναις τε, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοί*)[407], and strong in ships, horses and manpower; so they were unable to exploit any differences between them, either by imposing a change of constitution to help bring them over (*οὐ δυνάμενοι ἐπενεγκεῖν οὔτ' ἐκ πολιτείας τι μεταβολῆς τὸ διάφορον αὐτοῖς, ᾧ προσήγοντο ἄν*), or from any superiority of resources. They had themselves suffered repeated failures and even before the last reverse were already at their wits' end; and now that they had even been defeated with their fleet – something they would never have believed possible – it was that much worse"[408].

[405] Diod. 11.72.3.
[406] See p. 16-21.
[407] The expression *δημοκρατουμέναις τε, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοί* is used other two times in the work of the historian (5.29.1; 5.44.1), when he describes the alliances between Athens, Argos and Mantineia, which managed to succeed because of the democratic way of governing, which all of these cities had. Contrary to the expedition of Syracuse, in which the war was declared between two democratic cities, the common constitution was in the afore-mentioned case a reason for cooperation between the cities, especially because this time Athens was interested in an alliance and not in the subjugation of these cities, like in the case of Syracuse.
[408] Thuc. 7.55.2.

Thucydides uses actually a very interesting term, in order to describe the common characteristics between the two cities; he describes them – twice[409] – as *homoiotropoi*, a word, which seems to be an invention of the historian[410]. The term derives from the words *ὅμοιος* (similar) and *τρόπος* (way, manner) and indicates, in this case, two cities, which are "of like manners and life"[411], which means that Athens and Syracuse had obviously similar ways of living and governing[412]. First of all, both cities were under democracy and were both potent in their marine forces and the cavalry. Secondly, Thucydides mentions that, because of the similar constitution, the Athenians could not cause a change of constitution in Syracuse, which would lead to disunite the city and bring its citizens to the Athenian side. These two features of the Athenian democracy are here, as Hornblower says, "by a daring and compressed use of language, regarded as 'differences' (*διάφορα*), which normally help the Athenians, but not in their dealings with Syracuse (and perhaps other Sicilian cities as well)."[413] Athens cannot use this time its common methods of bringing a city-state to its side, methods, which the city used repeatedly with the Greek cities of the main Greek area. Syracuse is too similar to be subdued in this way.

Athenian or Syracusan democracy? The views of the modern scholars

Diverse opinions have been expressed by several scholars about this issue. Rutter, on the one hand, believes that comparing the Syracusan constitution with the Athenian democracy is out of the question[414]. Although sovereign power in Syracuse seems to be in the hands of the commons, there are many Athenian political bodies that are missing from the Syracusan democracy. There is a great lack of knowledge about the political decision-making, as long as other important areas of government such as the elections and competence of magistrates and the judiciary power. Of this opinion is also Hornblower, who, commenting on the above-mentioned passage, says that "one might try to save Th. by taking 'like themselves' to mean they resembled Athens in having a democracy of some sort (true), rather than that their type

[409] See Thuc. 8.96.5.

[410] See Sordi 1992b, 33ff. on the use of the term by Thucydides.

[411] LSJ, *ad locum*. See also Bétant 1847, *ad locum*, who translates it as "similis moribus". In the work of the historian ther term indicates indeed the similarity in the way of life between two groups of people (Thuc. 1.6.6), as long as the similarity of mentality (Thuc. 3.10.1) or even the similarity of origin (Thuc. 6.20.3).

[412] Thucydides clearly indicates not only a similarity of constitution but of way of living in general between Athens and Syracuse. This is not the place to analyse the idea, which Thucydides had of the similarity of the way of living between the two cities, but for more information on this topic, see the interesting article of Cuscunà 2004.

[413] Hornblower 2008, 651.

[414] Rutter 2000, 150-151.

of democracy closely resembled the Athenian type (false)."[415] In Hornblower's opinion, the constitution of Syracuse may have been democratic, but it is false to believe that this democracy followed the Athenian type.

At this point, one should refer also to a very important passage of Aristotle about the form of the Syracusan constitution after the Athenian expedition. Aristotle, referring to the changes instituted by Diocles[416] after the victory of the Syracusans over the Athenians, writes the following:

> "and at Syracuse the people having been the cause of the victory in the war against Athens made a revolution from *politeia* to democracy (*καὶ ἐν Συρακούσαις ὁ δῆμος αἴτιος γενόμενος τῆς νίκης τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους ἐκ πολιτείας εἰς δημοκρατίαν μετέβαλεν, […]*)"[417].

The philosopher characterizes the Syracusan constitution before 412 as *politeia* and only after 412 as a democracy. The discussion about what Aristotle means with the term *politeia* is of course very big, but briefly, it should be mentioned that according to the philosopher "*politeia* is, to put it simply, a mixture of oligarchy and democracy (*ἔστι γὰρ ἡ πολιτεία ὡς ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν μίξις ὀλιγαρχίας καὶ δημοκρατίας*)"[418]. These political definitions in the thought of Aristotle seem not so definite: in one passage he characterizes the constitution of Syracuse as democracy[419] and in another as *politeia*, which means that probably the character of the constitution of Syracuse was not absolutely clear even in the antiquity. Consequently, the comparison between the democracy of Athens and a type of constitution, about which our information is in great measure limited, should be made very carefully.

On the other hand, Dover, commenting the afore-mentioned passage of Thucydides (7.55.2), believes that obviously Syracuse "seemed to Thucydides democratic enough, in the Athenian sense, to justify the point which he makes here" and that Thucydides by referring to the two

[415] Hornblower 2008, 651.

[416] Diocles was a Syracusan citizen, who, after the victory of Syracuse against Athens, carried out important reforms at the Syracusan democracy. In particular he managed to accomplish an important revision of the legislative code, which took place in the period after the end of the expedition of Sicily and the Athenian defeat (412/11), according to Diodorus. The historian describes that a commission of *nomothetai* presided over by Diocles drew up the so-called Laws of Diocles (13.35), a reform, which changed the procedure for appointing magistrates from election to ballot (13.34.6). For more information of the reforms of Diocles, see Langher 1997, 101ff.

[417] Aristot. Pol. 5. 1304a, 27-29, transl. ed. by me.

[418] Aristot. Pol. 4.1293b, 33-34, transl. ed. by me. On the way, in which the philosopher uses this term, see Lintott 2000, 152ff. and Lintott 2018, 41ff. See also the very interesting work of Whibley 1913, 22ff.

[419] Aristot. Pol. 5.1316a, 27-33.

features of the Athenian democracy, which the city used, in order to bring other cities to its side, "clearly describes the consequences of the two respects in which Syracuse was like Athens."[420] In his opinion, Thucydides refers to this event, in order to highlight the similarity of the two constitutions. Of the same opinion is also Lewis, who believes that "for Thucydides, Syracuse appears to be more or less indistinguishable from Athens, in character and in institutions"[421].

Additionally, Champion believes that anyway "in 415 the Athenians […] had little to offer that could win over the Syracusan democrats"[422], which means that the two constitutions at this exact moment of their history should have been similar, even if the Syracusan democracy never arrived at the standards of the "Periclean" democratic constitution. Even so, however, we should note the very interesting opinion of O'Neil., who believes that "the Syracusans, like the Argives, seem to have been influenced more by the Cleisthenic democracy than the contemporary Athenian radical democracy, since, […] it was only in 412 B.C. (.i.e. with the reforms of Diocles) that the Syracusans themselves adopted final democracy"[423]. Syracuse may have been influenced by the traditional form of the Athenian political system (even if the city did never experience the "absolute" democracy) but did not follow the changes of the democracy in Athens during the Peloponnesian War. We should not forget that some years later Athens lived a period of extreme oligarchy, which means that an internal political crisis was already active in the city in the period of the Sicilian expedition[424]. According to the scholar, "on balance it would appear that the Syracusan government was a genuine democracy by Greek standards but not initially as 'radical' as the Athenian version".

Furthermore, Robinson believes that there should be no doubt about the democratic period of Syracuse for the period between 466 and 406 since the *demos* was the body of citizens, which controlled the state by choosing and controlling their leaders, passing and revoking laws, and deciding the highest matters of state policy.[425] This means that the Syracusan constitution worked "institutionally and ideologically as a thorough-going democracy, one to all appearances as forceful as contemporary Athens."[426] Robinson believes consequently that the

[420] Dover 1970, 431.
[421] Lewis 1994, 125.
[422] Champion 2010, 52.
[423] O'Neil 1995, 43f.
[424] On the political crisis of Athens and the rise of the oligarchy of the Four Hundred, see the equivalent chapter.
[425] Robinson 2000, 204.
[426] Robinson 2000, 205.

Syracusan constitution was obviously democratic, because it had the main characteristic of the democracy – the sovereignty of law – and that the two constitutions – the Athenian and the Syracusan – should have been equivalent, even if they had some different characteristics.

Last but not least, Finley believes also that the Syracusan democracy looked like the Athenian one. He believes, however, that there are fundamental differences between the two constitutions[427]. The fact that all important decisions are in the hands of the *ecclesia,* indicates by itself the existence of a democratic constitution, which follows the Athenian model. Apart from this, other institutions of the state, like the *petalismos,* should have been also copied from the Athenian democracy. On the other hand, however, the scholar notes that the fact that "the council and the civil officials were not chosen by lot as in Athens, but were elected, a procedure which in the Greek view introduced the aristocratic principle and therefore constituted a limitation on full democracy"[428] indicates that the Syracusan constitution was not a typical democratic form of government like the Athenian one. Apart from this, there was also no "pay for office, and this again reduced the participation of the poorer classes in the daily running of affairs". According to Finley, the fact that Aristotle classified the Syracusan constitution as a *politeia* rather than a democracy should indicate that the democracy of the city should have been a 'moderate' one and not a 'radical', like the Athenian one. I think that Finley summarized greatly the core of the Syracusan constitution: it is a full democracy, but cannot be identified absolutely with the Athenian type of constitution.

The definition of oligarchy and democracy through the speech of the Syracusan Athenagoras

In order to understand better the nature of the Syracusan constitution and its similarities with the Athenian one, one should mention the following episode from the Thucydidean narration. Just before the arrival of the Athenians in Syracuse, the rumours about the upcoming war and the intention of the Athenians to attack Sicily caused great concern among the Syracusans. In the *ecclesia,* which was convened in the city, Hermocrates and Athenagoras expressed their opinions about the rumours that were spread in Syracuse, discussing if the citizens should consider them seriously and take measures against Athens. Athenagoras the *δήμου*

[427] Finley 1968, 61.
[428] Finley 1968, 62.

προστάτης[429], i.e. the leader of the popular party, who, in opposition to Hermocrates, rejects the rumours of an upcoming attack of the Athenians[430], refers, among others, also to the constitutions of oligarchy and democracy and makes a very interesting definition of the two forms of government, in order to convince the audience that the last one is the best form of constitution.

The speech of Athenagoras is actually a "hymn" to democracy. The orator himself expresses his preference and respect to the Athenians, which are characterized as "clever and experienced people (*ἄνθρωποι δεινοὶ καὶ πολλῶν ἔμπειροι*)"[431]. The esteem of Athenagoras for the Athenians seems strange for a Syracusan orator, but it can be justified if we consider a fact, which Thucydides describes in the seventh book, i.e. the existence of a part of citizens of Syracuse, who supported the Athenians and wanted their victory.[432] Who precisely these citizens are, is not made clear from the historian[433], but the existence of some Syracusans, who were on the side of the Athenians, could indicate the presence of several political movements in the inside of the city, a usual fact for the city-states of the main Greek area, in which the different parties had a significant role in the political arena. Athenagoras starts his argumentation with the following rhetorical question:

> *"*Or is it that you don't want to be equal before the law with the majority? Yet how could it be right that people should not be valued on their merits, like for like? (*ἀλλὰ δὴ μὴ μετὰ πολλῶν ἰσονομεῖσθαι*[434]*; καὶ πῶς δίκαιον τοὺς αὐτοὺς μὴ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀξιοῦσθαι;*)"[435].

For once more it appears the idea of *ἰσονομία*, which in the work of the historian expresses the equality of the citizens in front of the laws (see 3.62.3 and the *ἰσόνομος ὀλιγαρχία* of the

[429] Thuc. 6.35.2.

[430] On the comparison of the speeches of the two Syracusans, see among others Mader 1993; Bloedow 1996; Scardino 2007, 538ff. and Frank 1984 and on the speech of Hermocrates in particular see Westlake 1969, 174ff.

[431] Thuc. 6.36.3.

[432] See Thuc. 7.48.2: "There was also a party in Syracuse that wanted to surrender to the Athenians (*καὶ ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἐν ταῖς Συρακούσαις βουλόμενον τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις τὰ πράγματα ἐνδοῦναι*) and they were getting messages to him urging him not to withdraw." and 7.49.1 "[...] there was a significant element there who wanted their affairs to come under Athenian control and kept sending him messages not to withdraw ([…] *καὶ ὅτι ἦν αὐτόθι πολὺ τὸ βουλόμενον τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις γίγνεσθαι τὰ πράγματα καὶ ἐπικηρυκευόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν ὥστε μὴ ἀπανίστασθαι*, […])". Nicias believes that the Athenians should remain in Syracuse, because of the support from the inside of the city.

[433] Dover 1970, 425 believes that it could have been the "some of the wealthy citizens of Leontinoi who in 422 had become citizens of Syracuse and had not broken away among the earlier malcontents (v. 4.3f.) and were now hankering after an independent Leontinoi" (see 5.4).

[434] The verb *ἰσονομέομαι* is used only one time in the work of Thucydides. It usually appears as a noun (*ἰσονομία*).

[435] Thuc. 6.38.5.

Thebans), and is connected mainly – but not always – with democracy[436]. In this case, Athenagoras uses the idea of *ἰσονομία* as an adjective of democracy and highlights that it would not be just if the citizens of a city would not have the same rights. Dover mentions that "*ἰσονομία*, the situation in which all have the same rights, is one face of democracy; *δημοκρατία*, 'power in the hands of the majority', is another."[437] This is the one face of democracy, i.e. that all citizens have the same rights. The other face of democracy, the sovereignty of the commons, is the second argument of Athenagoras, which will be referred further down.

Continuing his speech, Athenagoras defines the constitutions of democracy and oligarchy, in order to come to the conclusion that democracy is the best government. The rhetoric skills, which are used for this purpose, are of great interest. The orator with the constant use of contradictions manages to highlight the diversities between the two forms of constitution and bring out the virtues of democracy. First of all, he mentions that:

> "It will be said that a democracy is neither wise nor fair and that those who own property are the people most likely to rule well (*φήσει τις δημοκρατίαν οὔτε ξυνετὸν οὔτ' ἴσον εἶναι, τοὺς δ' ἔχοντας τὰ χρήματα καὶ ἄρχειν ἄριστα βελτίστους*)"[438].

Athenagoras starts his argumentation with the rumour that he wants to reverse, i.e. that democracy is not a just constitution and that the rich have the right to govern. According to Hornblower, this idea contributes to the standard justification of oligarchy and reminds us of the speech of the Thebans at Plataea[439]. The Thebans, in order to justify themselves about their attack on Plataea at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War[440], mention that some few Plataeans, the first in money and heritage (*οἱ πρῶτοι καὶ χρήμασι καὶ γένει*), invited them to attack the city, with a view to restoring the traditional institutions of it.[441] Obviously, the idea, which existed in the oligarchic circles, is that the rich are the most appropriate to take decisions. The reason for the characterization of the rich as the most prudent is not referred

[436] On the idea of *isonomia* in Thucydides, see the chapter on *eunomia.*
[437] Dover 1970, 304.
[438] Thuc. 6.39.1.
[439] Hornblower 2008, 413.
[440] Thuc. 2.2.2.
[441] Thuc. 3.65.2.

from Thucydides directly, but as Hornblower mentions, the idea behind it is that the rich had a personal interest to take wise decisions, "because they have more to lose."[442]

The next sentence of the speech of Athenagoras is actually the definition of the two opposite constitutions, democracy and oligarchy:

> "But I say first that "democracy" is the name of the whole and "oligarchy" the name of only a part (*ἐγὼ δέ φημι πρῶτα μὲν δῆμον*[443] *ξύμπαν ὠνομάσθαι, ὀλιγαρχίαν δὲ μέρος* […])"[444].

The use of the antonym *ξύμπαν* and *μέρος* highlights, even more, the contradiction between the two forms of government. The democracy is based on the whole of the commons, whereas oligarchy is based on a part of it; this is the main difference of two leading constitutions of the Peloponnesian War. In my opinion, it is not coincidental that Thucydides uses in this passage the word *ὀλιγαρχία*, in order to define the constitution of oligarchy. The reference to oligarchy with its actual name – a relatively rare fact in the work of the historian[445] – highlights, even more, the antithesis between the two constitutions.

Athenagoras proceeds with the analysis of the two ways of governing. First of all, he remarks on democracy that:

> "[…] while the rich are the best guardians of property, the wise would be the best counsellors, and the majority the best judges of what they hear (*ἔπειτα φύλακας μὲν ἀρίστους εἶναι χρημάτων τοὺς πλουσίους, βουλεῦσαι δ' ἂν βέλτιστα τοὺς ξυνετούς, κρῖναι δ' ἂν ἀκούσαντας ἄριστα τοὺς πολλούς*); and all these, considered separately and together, have an equal share in a democracy (*καὶ ταῦτα ὁμοίως καὶ κατὰ μέρη καὶ ξύμπαντα ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ ἰσομοιρεῖν*)"[446].

The orator makes a threefold division, which, in Hornblower's opinion "is not intended to be mapped into the usual threefold scheme of monarchy, oligarchy, democracy"[447], like we may well think at first reading. The scholar continues his comment saying: "here the three elements of rich, wise, and many are all contributory elements in a properly working

[442] About the idea that the rich have the most to lose in terms of sacrifice of property, see Hornblower 2008, 413.
[443] In this case *δῆμος* should be translated as democracy, according to me.
[444] Thuc. 6.39.1, tranls. ed.
[445] On the use of the term by the historian, see the corresponding chapter.
[446] Thuc. 6.39.1, transl. ed. by me.
[447] Hornblower 2008, 413-4.

democracy"[448], which means that Athenagoras differentiates the rule of the commons as the only "protagonists" in a democratic city and introduces a threefold division of the governmental institutions, which, as Dover mentions, correspond to administration, deliberation, and decision[449]. The administration of the finances in a democracy is given to the rich (*πλουσίους*), because they are the best administrators of the money (*φύλακας ἀρίστους χρημάτων*), the deliberation about the important issues of the city is given to the wise men (*ξυνετούς*), which are the best counsellors (*βουλεῦσαι ἂν βέλτιστα*), but the decisions are taken (*κρῖναι ἄριστα*) by the commons (*πολλούς*), after they have heard the advice of the wisest.

The use of the verb *ἰσομοιρέω* in this context is particular. The historian uses this word two times in his whole work[450], but only once, in order to describe a political constitution. The meaning of the word is "aequam partem habere" (have the same part), according to Bétant[451] and according to Liddell and Scott "have an equal share"[452]. We should not confound it with the idea of *ἰσονομία,* the equality in front of the laws, a common idea for the Greek political thought. In this case, Athenagoras speaks of an equal share, which means that obviously, all the classes of the democracy share an equal position in the state. I will agree with the opinion of Classen, who mentions that the citizens of the city share the same duties and benefits of the public life „und zwar „*ομοίως κατὰ τὰ μέρη*", sowohl nach der angedeuteten Verschiedenheit der Lebensstellung, καὶ "*ξύμπαντα*", wie auch alle vereinigt, namentlich in der Volksversammlung."[453] Dover is of the same opinion and comments that Thucydides with *ἰσομοιρεῖν* intends to say that "in a democracy (a) each of the three categories is allowed to play the part which, in his view, it is right that it should play, (b) each individual has the same privileges and opportunities as every other member of the same category, has the same protection under the law as everyone else"[454], (which means that every citizen has an active role that depends on his social class) and a passive role (which means that he can enjoy the same benefits as every other citizen of the city). The use of this verb in this special point is made, in my opinion, in order to demonstrate the justice of the democratic constitution, which

[448] Hornblower 2008, 414.
[449] Dover 1970, 305.
[450] See Thuc. 6.16.4 for the other use of *ἰσομοιρέω* in the speech of Alcibiades. For the use of the noun *ἰσομοιρία* (equal share), see Thuc. 5.69; 7.75 but still not combined with democracy or other constitutions.
[451] Bétant 1847, *ad locum.*
[452] LSJ 1996, *ad locum.*
[453] Classen 1882, 73.
[454] Dover 1970, 305.

does not get influenced from the economic or social level of the citizens but distributes the same rights and duties to all the members of the community.

The threefold division is very important for our knowledge about the characteristics of the Syracusan constitution. I do not think that it is a coincidence that Athenagoras makes a more complicated – and for sure diverse – definition of democracy. In the work of the historian democracy – and especially the Athenian example – is always presented as the constitution based on the sovereignty of law and the role of the rich or the wise men in the city, in general, is not highlighted. The *Funeral* of Pericles in the second book is the best example of it. Pericles defines the Athenian democracy in the following way:

> "Democracy is the name we give to it, since we manage our affairs in the interests of the many not the few (*καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται*); but though everyone is equal before the law in the matter of private disputes, in terms of public distinction preferment for office is determined on merit, not by rank but by personal worth; moreover, poverty is no bar to anyone who has it in them to benefit the city in some way, however lowly their status"[455]

In the speech of the Athenian politician the sovereignty of the commons and the equality between the citizens are out of discussion, but Pericles adds also another characteristic, which is not considered in the speech of Athenagoras: the obtainment of public magistracies succeeds as a reward of merit and has no connection with the social class of the citizens and additionally the poverty is not a barrier for someone, who is able to serve the state. Pericles eliminates the social classes as a criterion for the participation of the citizens to the political life, contrary to Athenagoras, who highlights the role of the diverse classes (the rich, the wise, the commons) as important for the good functioning of democracy.

To sum up, in the case of Syracuse, the democracy is obviously based on the sovereignty of the commons, which are the only political body to take decisions; the administration and the deliberation of the matters of the Sicilian city-state, however, are given to other political bodies. The beatification of the democracy in the speech of Athenagoras was made for the Syracusan type of constitution and not for the democracy of the Greek world in general.[456] This is a very important point to consider when one reads the speech of the orator and wants to research on a great scale the whole history of Sicily. Sicily is always a particular example.

[455] Thuc. 2.37.1.

[456] See, inversely, Hornblower 2008, 414, who mentions on this passage that "it is true that Pericles is purporting to describe actual Athens […], whereas Athenagoras is generalizing in the Herodotean manner".

Finally, Athenagoras explains why oligarchy is so different than democracy:

> "An oligarchy shares the dangers with the people but wants more than its share of the benefits – it actually wants to take and keep them all (*ὀλιγαρχία δὲ τῶν μὲν κινδύνων τοῖς πολλοῖς μεταδίδωσι, τῶν δ' ὠφελίμων οὐ πλεονεκτεῖ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ξύμπαντ' ἀφελομένη ἔχει*)"[457].

This is the main difference between oligarchy and democracy: while democracy distributes equally responsibilities and rights to all citizens, in an oligarchy the commons have to confront the dangers, whereas the *oligoi* enjoy the most of the benefits for themselves. According to Hornblower, "this – the many risk making a sacrifice of their lives – is the reply to the Theban oligarchic argument that the rich have the most to lose in terms of sacrifice of property."[458] Hornblower refers to the famous speech of the Thebans against the Plataeans in the third book, in which inter alia the Thebans say that the prime men of the city of Plataea opened the gates to the Thebans, even if they "had more at stake (*καὶ πλείω παραβαλλόμενοι*)"[459]. Athenagoras overrides the oligarchic idea and demonstrates that democracy is the justest constitution because the benefits are shared with the whole body of the citizens and not only to the rich ones.

The speech ends with the following phrase:

> "And that is what the powerful and the young among you are bent on – something impossible to achieve in a great city (*ἃ ὑμῶν οἵ τε δυνάμενοι καὶ οἱ νέοι προθυμοῦνται, ἀδύνατα ἐν μεγάλῃ πόλει κατασχεῖν*)."[460]

Which are exactly these *δυνάμενοι καὶ νέοι*, is not clear from the text. Were they the oligarchic party of the city, which was obviously powerful and wanted the overthrow of the constitution? Or were they the men of power, who possibly derived from the tyrannical period of Syracuse, which obviously continued to be powerful even at the democratic period of the city? We cannot be sure about it, but from the text, we can surely understand that there was a political group in the city, which wanted the overthrow of the democracy, a will that got accomplished when in the year 405 Syracuse passed from democracy to her old way of governing, i.e. tyranny.

[457] Thuc. 6.39.2.
[458] Hornblower 2008, 415.
[459] Thuc. 3.65.3.
[460] Thuc. 6.39.2.

Consequently, the speech of Athenagoras is a very important passage, because it can be read in different ways. On the one hand, we should read it as a definition of the Syracusan way of governing, which obviously was a democracy, i.e. a constitution based on the sovereignty of the commons; even the way, in which Hermocrates and Athenagoras held their speeches, can remind us of the typical discussions of the Athenian assembly and the way that the different issues of the state were discussed in front of the *ecclesia*[461]. According to Lewis, the demagogue Athenagoras is described in terms very similar to those applied to Cleon and the Syracusan *demos* can be exhibited as no less unstable than that of Athens[462]. The similarity of Athenagoras with Cleon will be noted also by Andrews, who mentions that "the similarity between Cleon and Athenagoras reaches beyond "facile argument, personal invective, and self-advancement," in that both speakers have deftly exploited fundamental principles of democratic ideology"[463]. According to the scholar, Athenagoras (in opposition to the demagogic techniques of Pericles) "aims to foster among his audience a grave distrust and suspicion of his political rivals, including Hermocrates". Anyway, I will agree with Andrews, that Athenagoras' speech serves "to assimilate a democratic Syracuse to democratic Athens, to telling effect in the overall narrative"[464].

In this case, one can speak, however, of a different type of democracy from the respective constitutions in the main Greek area and especially from the Athenian model. Syracuse, placed on the remote island of Sicily, received obviously some influence from the main Greek cities but still developed its own political life with different laws and political mentality. The distance between the island and the main Greek area probably did not leave space for the same extremely intense bound that existed between some city-states in continental Greece. The diversity of the island with the Greek city-states is appointed also from Thucydides, who in his first book delineates that the Sicilian tyrants, whose power attained its greatest height, were the exception in the "map" of the Greek tyrannies, which traditionally were only concerned for themselves and not for the public good[465]. Sicily is different from the cities of the main Greek area and this is why it remains always a separate

[461] See Bloedow 1996, 142.
[462] Lewis 1994, 125.
[463] Andrews 2009, 12.
[464] Andrews 2009, 4. On this idea, see also Connor 1984, 171, who also believes that Athenagoras' speech evokes the one of Cleon and that "his speech is the demagogue's characteristic blend of facile argument, personal invective, and self-advancement. We have travelled to Syracuse and found Athens".
[465] Thuc. 1.17.

example to examine and should be researched in a different way than every other geographical place, which emerges from the work of Thucydides.

On the other hand, we could not ignore the involvement of the writer in the above-mentioned speech. This is, of course, a factor that has to be considered in the whole work of Thucydides, but in my opinion, it should be considered even more in the case of Sicily, because we have no idea, if Thucydides had ever visited the island. This means that if Thucydides had never been in Sicily, he could not have been present in the speech of Athenagoras like he has (probably) been in the *Funeral* of Pericles. A fact like that indicates that even if the historian gathered a great amount of information about the events in Sicily, he could not have transcribed the original speech and thus the intervention of his own vision in the text is unavoidable and maybe stronger than in other places of the work[466].

Conclusions: A different type of democracy?

The question about the constitution of Syracuse is for sure of great complexity. On the one hand, the reference of the three scholars (Thucydides, Aristotle, Diodorus) to a democratic period of Syracuse is a relatively important sign that this democracy really existed. On the other hand, many characteristics of this constitution are not clarified from the ancient sources, a fact that demonstrates a great lack of knowledge about this subject. Even if several ancient scholars dealt on a great scale with Sicily, we cannot know how many of them had really visited the island and had the opportunity to gather information personally. A proof of it is referred from Nicias, when he tries to convince the Athenians to avoid the expedition in Sicily: Nicias is of the opinion that even if the Athenians manage to win the war, they will never achieve to maintain the power on the island because of the long distance between the two places and of the big number of its citizens.[467] Consequently, the communication between Athens and Sicily should have been limited and obviously the Athenians were not

[466] We should not forget that the historian should have been in this period of the writing of his work in Peloponnese, to which he refers in the fifth book (5.26.5), where he narrates: "It so turned out that I was banished from my own country for twenty years after the Amphipolis campaign and thus had the time to study matters more closely; and as consequence of my exile I had access to activities on both sides, not least to those of the Peloponnesians". On this declaration of Thucydides on the years of his exile, see the interesting theory of Canfora 1970, 109ff. and Canfora 2006, 15ff., who sustains that "the traditional view – that it is Thucydides who in 5.26.5 describes himself as having spent twenty years in exile—is doubtful" and that the autobiographical information in 5.26.5 regarding the exile of the writer to the Peloponnese actually is about Xenophon, who had in fact spent his period of exile in the Peloponnese, and not Thucydides.

[467] Thuc. 6.11.1.

completely informed, what really happened on the island, in order to understand that an expedition of this size would lead to such an immense defeat.

Furthermore, the constitutions developed in Sicily were for sure influenced by the main Greek area, but they had still different characteristics from them. Syracuse should have been influenced by Athens in some way; it is not a coincidence that a city, which had traditionally tyrannical forms of constitution, decides to establish a democratic constitution in the period of the great acme of the democratic Athens. The similar characteristics of the two constitutions additionally, like the system of *petalismos*, could be a proof of the fact that the constitution of Syracuse was influenced by the Athenian one. However, this fact does not mean that the two constitutions were equivalent; the lack of information and the confusion that probably existed already from the antiquity about the constitution of Syracuse (see Aristotle) does not permit us to arrive at absolute conclusions about this subject. Consequently, Syracuse should have been democratic but the individual characteristics of this constitution need to be examined very carefully.

Additionally, I find very interesting the way, in which the speech of Athenagoras gets presented by Thucydides. Apart from the fact that it offers us important information on the constitution of the city, the speech of the Syracusan can be considered also as a hymn to democracy, but still to a different type of democracy than the Athenian one. Raaflaub believes that the speech of Athenagoras is one of the very few passages, which offers really positive comments about democracy in the work of the historian in opposition to the Funeral of Pericles, whose statements "are defensive and ideologically exaggerated, and prove illusionary in the rest of the work"[468]. Thucydides chooses the example of Syracuse, in order to present a model of a democratic constitution, which is based on the sovereignty of the *demos*, but assigns the administration and the deliberation of the matters of the state to the citizens, which are capable of such a responsibility: the rich are the best guardians of property, the wise the best counselors and the majority the best judges. Every social class has consequently its own incumbent, which contributes to the good functioning of a healthy democratic constitution and all together have an equal share of the benefits, which the state offers. In opposition to the Athenian model, where the obtainment of public magistracies has no connection with the social class, in which every citizen of a democratic society belongs, in

[468] Raaflaub 2012, 221.

the case of the Syracusan democracy, the social and economic differences between the citizens are fundamental for the good functioning of the constitution.

One should note at this point that after the death of Pericles and the exile of Thucydides, the historian becomes very critical on the way that the Athenian democracy gets formed and the errors that it committed, like the one of the decision to start a disastrous expedition against Sicily. The more 'moderate' form of democracy of Syracuse, where the wise and rich have an important role at the decision-making of the state, was an interesting case for our historian, who lived with his own eyes the exile of himself from the city, which he even served as a General during the Peloponnesian War.

To sum up, our effort to define Thucydides in an absolute way as "oligarchic" or "democratic" is in my opinion very difficult, not only because the scholar makes great effort to remain objective in his narration, but especially because he seems not a sympathizer neither of the traditional Athenian democracy nor of the radical oligarchy[469] and the case of Syracuse demonstrates it in a clear way. He defends the form of government of his own city till the end, but he has to criticize its disadvantages, especially when the Athenian *demos* becomes a victim of demagogues and politicians, who are not able to assure the commonweal of the city. Through Athenagoras he finds consequently a way to present another form of democracy, which maybe in this period could have worked better than the Athenian one.

[469] See Introduction.

Chapter 6. Athens under the Four Hundred. The rise of the oligarchy in Athens and the political consequences for the city

In the last books of his history, Thucydides describes extendedly the political changes that will happen in Athens during and after the expedition of the city to Sicily and its defeat and complete destruction of its navy forces. In 415, when the Athenian assembly decides to start the extremely risky expedition against Syracuse[470], the Periclean period of the city belongs already to the past and the political crisis of the Athenian democracy becomes ever clearer. Under these circumstances the traditional oligarchic circles of the city find the possibility to exploit the internal crisis in Athens and cause the rise of an oligarchical constitution, which will govern with absolute authority over the Athenian *demos*[471]. Aim of this part of my thesis is to understand first of all the historical background of the rise of power of the Athenian oligarchs, the nature and characteristics of this new form of oligarchic constitution and the importance of these political changes for the continuation of the war and the city of Athens in particular.

The fear of a possible overthrow of the Athenian democracy

One of the main subjects of the sixth book of Thucydides is the fear of a possible overthrow of the Athenian constitution, which gets expressed in different ways and is combined with the general political crisis inside the Athenian state but also with the – not only military, but also political – war between Athens and Sparta, a war of political ideas and mentality. This fear will have a decisive role in the development of the Athenian state and in the overthrow of the Athenian democracy some years later.

In order to understand the important role that this fear played in Athens, one should start with the speech of Nicias in the Athenian assembly, when he tried to convince the Athenians that a war against Syracuse would be destructive for them. Among other Nicias mentions:

> "So the issue for us, if we are wise, is […] how best to keep a sharp watch on a state, which as an oligarchy has active designs on us (*πόλιν δι' ὀλιγαρχίας ἐπιβουλεύουσαν ὀξέως φυλαξόμεθα*)"[472].

[470] Thuc. 6.24.
[471] For a very accurate description of the events, see Whibley 1913, 192.
[472] Thuc. 6.11.7, transl. ed. by me.

In this passage, the fear of an overthrow of the constitution gets used as political propaganda, in order to change the decision of the Athenians to realize an expedition against Sicily. Which is the state that could be hostile to Athens and its constitution, anyway, and how much truth exists in the words of Nicias?

The passage is for sure not clear enough. Nicias does not denominate the city under oligarchic government, which has designs on the Athenians, even if the unnamed city should be in all likelihood Sparta like Hornblower also believes[473]. Dover wonders if Nicias in this passage wants to say that Sparta "is trying to foment an oligarchic conspiracy in Athens, or that Sparta is hostile because she is an oligarchy, or that her hostility is particularly important and dangerous because she is an oligarchy".[474] Kohl thinks that Nicias hints on Spartan co-operation with Athenian oligarchs and that the affair of the Herms, soon to be described, makes this expression of fear plausible[475]. We cannot be sure about the exact meaning of the words of Nicias from this passage. In all respects, the idea is the same that will be expressed further down in the sixth book: the stability of the Athenian constitution is in danger and the oligarchic faction of Athens seems to "threaten" the city with a possible overthrow of it. This danger will get more intense with the upcoming vandalism of the *Hermai*, which will increase the political crisis in the Athenian society.

In 6.27 Thucydides describes the destruction of the facades of the *Hermai*, a fact that brought much concern to the city and was held as a bad sign for the expedition against Sicily that was about to start. According to Thucydides,

> "they took the matter very seriously, since it seemed like an omen for the expedition and at the same time to betoken a conspiracy for a political uprising and the subversion of popular rule (*τοῦ τε γὰρ ἔκπλου οἰωνὸς ἐδόκει εἶναι καὶ ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ ἅμα νεωτέρων πραγμάτων καὶ δήμου καταλύσεως γεγενῆσθαι*)".[476]

For this vandalism, Alcibiades was to be accused, as the historian narrates. The Athenian politician, known for his anti-populist style of life, but also for his particular demagogic competences, was obviously a threat for his political opponents, who found the chance to proclaim that - with Alcibiades' involvement of course -"the affair of the Mysteries and the

[473] Hornblower 2008, 332.
[474] Dover 1970, 235.
[475] Kohl 1977, 56.
[476] Thuc. 6.27.3.

mutilation of the Herms had been committed with a view to the overthrow of the democracy (*ὡς ἐπὶ δήμου καταλύσει*)[477]".

The vandalism of the *Hermai* brought on the surface the already existing fear of the Athenians about a possible overthrow of the Athenian constitution. The event was held by the citizens of the city as very serious and dangerous for the safety of democracy. The question about the real reasons for this act is of course very complicated and in great measure unanswered. Ostwald mentions that we shall never know the true motives of those involved in the vandalism and the fact may well be that this event "had no political purpose" and was "merely the unmotivated result of youthful drunkenness and exuberance."[478] In reality, there is no direct connection between the vandalism of the *Hermai* and a potential *stasis* against democracy. Which is the reason consequently for the frustration of the Athenians after the episode of the *Hermai*?

In order to answer this question, one should understand the burden of the fear of a possible overthrow of the constitution for the Athenians. This fear has some references to the past, as long as to the future of the history of the city and it is not only combined with the vandalism of the year 415. The fear of a *δήμου κατάλυσις* in the Athenian city-state is expressed already in the first book, when Thucydides narrates the events before the explosion of the Peloponnesian War and in particular the expedition of the Lacedaemonians in Phthiotis, in order to help their related Dorians, who were attacked from the Phocians in the year 457[479]. After their victory, the Lacedaemonians on their way home got "trapped" in Boeotia because of the Athenians, who controlled the marine, as long as the overland street to Peloponnese[480]. For their decision to stay in Boeotia a big part played the fact that some Athenians "[...] were secretly urging their involvement in Athens, hoping to put an end to popular rule there and stop the construction of the long walls (*ἐπῆγον αὐτοὺς κρύφα, ἐλπίσαντες δῆμόν τε καταπαύσειν καὶ τὰ μακρὰ τείχη οἰκοδομούμενα*)".[481] Shortly after, the Athenians "in the belief that the Spartans were at a loss how to find their way back, and to some extent also because of their suspicions about plots to overthrow the people (*καί τι καὶ τοῦ δήμου*

[477] Thuc. 6.28.2, transl. ed. by me.
[478] Ostwald 1986, 326.
[479] Thuc. 1.107.2.
[480] Thuc. 1.107.3.
[481] Thuc. 1.107.4.

καταλύσεως ὑποψίᾳ)"[482], attacked the Lacedaemonians in Boeotia with all their forces but at the end without success[483].

In the narration of this episode of the Thucydidean history, the fear of an overthrow of the Athenian democracy, which is cultivated by some citizens of Athens, who seem available to help the Spartans, is mentioned two times (*δῆμόν καταπαύσειν; τοῦ δήμου καταλύσεως ὑποψίᾳ*). The reason for this "betrayal" should have been the building of the Long Walls, which finished in 456[484], and which, according to Gomme, to these desperate oligarchs, "the Long Walls meant […] the permanent domination of the democracy, by making Athens dependent on the sea".[485]

The episode is rightly characterized by Hornblower "as one of the very few pieces of solid evidence for anti-democratic feeling and activity at Athens between Cleisthenes in the late sixth century and the oligarchic coup of 411 B.C."[486] I guess, that Thucydides, in the first books of his work, avoids to refer to the citizens, who were against democracy in the internal of Athens – a reality that obviously existed ever in the city –, because he could have been probably much more interested to describe with every detail the structure of the Athenian democracy in the time of Pericles. This could be the reason, for which we have so little information on this fear in the first books. After the death of Pericles however, Thucydides focuses more on these tendencies of a possible *stasis* against the democracy, which will arrive at their peak with the events of 411. With the narration of the *δήμου κατάλυσις* of the oligarchs in the eighth book, the fear of the Athenians becomes true and the Athenian constitution gets finally overthrown with the establishment of the 400 oligarchs as the only government of the city with absolute authority.

In order to highlight the importance of this fear, Thucydides makes a throwback to the history of Athens and to the tyrannical period of Hippias and Hipparchus[487]. The historian narrates that the memories of the oppressive tyranny of Peisistratus and his sons and furthermore the fact that the tyranny had been brought to an end not by the city itself but by the Spartans, left

[482] Thuc. 1.107.6.
[483] Thuc. 1.108.1.
[484] Thuc. 1.108.3.
[485] Gomme 1945, 314.
[486] Hornblower 1991, 171.
[487] Thuc. 6.54-59.

the Athenians in a constant state of fear, making them regard everything with suspicion[488]. Further down Thucydides adds that:

> "The Athenian people had taken this very much to heart and were mindful of all they had learned of these events from hearsay. They were therefore now fiercely suspicious of those who stood accused in the affair of the Mysteries, and they thought it was all part of some conspiracy involving oligarchy and tyranny (*καὶ πάντα αὐτοῖς ἐδόκει ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ ὀλιγαρχικῇ καὶ τυραννικῇ πεπρᾶχθαι*)."[489]

In this passage is expressed in a few words the exact fear of the Athenians during the period of the tyranny of the Peisistratids; they were afraid of a *ξυνωμοσίᾳ ὀλιγαρχικῇ*[490] *καὶ τυραννικῇ*. Oligarchy and Tyranny are used as equivalent forms of government, in order to clarify the reason for the fear of the Athenians[491]. Hornblower characterizes the selection of these two words from the historian as "a virtual hendiadys" and believes that they "mean something like undesirable oligarchy"[492]. The same opinion has Dover, who mentions that "a modern historian of the archaic period would not speak of oligarchy and tyranny in the same breath; but after a century of democracy the concept of the tyrant as popular champion had faded […], and the Athenians regarded oligarchy and tyranny indifferently as the antithesis of democracy"[493]. In fifth-century Athens, in which democracy was the dominating constitution, oligarchy and tyranny seem to be identified; they are both held as dynastic forms of government.

The afore-mentioned fact is expressed also from Alcibiades, who after his persecution, resorted to Sparta and tried to convince the Lacedaemonians to start an expedition against the Athenians, who had already started their expedition against Sicily:

> "My family has always been opposed to tyrants (and every form of opposition to absolute power has the name of democracy) (*πᾶν δὲ τὸ ἐναντιούμενον τῷ δυναστεύοντι δῆμος ὠνόμασται*), so as a consequence we have retained the leadership of the masses".[494]

The word *δυναστεύω* is not used by chance in this passage. Bétant translates it as "dominationem obtinere (to have the dominion)"[495], and Liddell-Scott as "hold power or

[488] Thuc. 6.53.3.
[489] Thuc. 6.60.1.
[490] The adjective is used for the first time in Greek, according to Hornblower 2008, 453.
[491] For the association of the two forms of government, see the interesting remarks of Seaford 2000, 34f.
[492] Hornblower 2008, 453.
[493] Dover 1970, 337.
[494] Thuc. 6.89.4, transl. ed. by me.

lordship, be powerful or influential"[496]. We should not confound the meaning of the verb with its noun *δυναστεία*, which is used mainly from Thucydides, in order to express a specific form of a tyrannical constitution, i.e. a narrow oligarchy[497]. In this case, Alcibiades uses this verb, in order to highlight the opposition to democracy; he makes a definition of the last, as a constitution, which stands against despotic forms of government. According to Dover "it is not, however, an arbitrary definition; *δυναστεύειν* is the exercise of power unrestricted by a constitution or code of laws (cf. iii. 62.3), and in such conditions those who are outside the *δυναστεία* necessarily acquire a community of interest."[498] What is interesting in this passage is that tyranny, oligarchy and all other forms of government are presented as equivalent tyrannical in front of democracy, the constitution based on the sovereignty of law.

Consequently, the whole narration of the vandalism of the *Hermai* is for sure a very important event of the war, since it clarifies the internal crisis of the Athenian constitution, which will get worse after the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily. The Sicilian expedition did not cost to Athens only the defeat from the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War but led the city also to a big political crisis, which gets expressed basically from the oligarchic coup of the year 411. However, the story of the vandalism should not be considered as a particular event of the war; on the contrary, it is a part of a series of events, which prove the existence of constant fear of the Athenians against a possible overthrow of their constitution. We could say that this fear is equivalent to the *phobos* of the Spartans for the Helots[499]: in the same way the Athenians are afraid of a *stasis* in the internal of the city against their democratic way of governing. This is the "Achilles' heel" of Athens during the Peloponnesian War.

The Coup

In the eight book of the Thucydidean narration of the Peloponnesian War, the obvious protagonist are the events in Athens of the year 411[500], i.e. the overthrow of the democracy and the ascent of an authoritarian oligarchic government, consisted of 400 citizens. The

[495] Bétant 1843, *ad locum.*
[496] LSJ 1996, *ad locum.*
[497] See the corresponding chapter.
[498] Dover 1970, 362.
[499] See the corresponding chapter.
[500] On the exact chronology of the events, see the article of Lang 1967 and also the very interesting analysis of Sartori 1951, 73ff.

narration is very long[501]. Thucydides describes usually with great detail the events that he considers as very important for the continuation of the war; the oligarchic coup in 411 is for sure one of them. We could say that the events are divided into three periods. In the first part Thucydides describes the way that the Athenian democracy gets overthrown, in the second part how the oligarchy gets established and in the third how it falls. During this narration Thucydides manages to present the development of the Athenian political system after the disaster in Sicily and the way that this defeat led the city of Athens to an authoritarian way of governing. In the following text, I will try to understand in depth this new political development and its importance for the Athenian state in general.

The overthrow of democracy and the establishment of an oligarchy

Two years after the Athenian defeat in Sicily (411) Athens experienced the overthrow of its traditional form of government. The historical moment of this overthrow is for sure not incidental. After the Sicilian expedition, the Athenians were economically and psychologically devastated. The total defeat of them induced in the city the fear of a possible invasion from the enemies, which they had in Sicily and Greece.[502] This insecurity, which was caused in Athens, was the perfect excuse that incited the oligarchic circles of the city to "wound" the Athenian form of constitution. We have, fortunately, two main accounts of the events in Athens in the year of 411; the one of Thucydides of course, which will be our main source and the one of Aristotle in his *Athenaion Politeia*, which cannot be left apart in an analysis of the oligarchic period of Athens. It is very interesting the fact that the narrations of the two writers are very different at some points since each of them describes the events from different perspectives. I will agree with Caspari that "for the earlier stages of the revolution Aristotle is generally to be preferred to Thucydides", but "for the climax of the movement, and still more so for its catastrophe, Thucydides is the superior authority"[503]. This is why one should read carefully both accounts, in order to reconstruct the whole episode. Further down in my text, I will cite the Thucydidean narration with small interruptions, when necessary, in order to present also the Aristotelian version and its different perspective.

[501] For a more detailed description of the events, see among others Kagan 1987, 131ff.; Ostwald 1986, 344ff. and Hignett 1952, 268ff.
[502] Thuc. 8.1.
[503] Caspari 1913, 14. For the narration of the events in Athens from the Aristotelian point of view, see Moore 1975, 258ff.

One of the main protagonists of these events is once more Alcibiades, who at this period was near to the Persian Satrap Tissaphernes. By coming in contact with the Athenians soldiers that were barracked at Samos, an island right in front of Asia Minor, the Athenian politician convinced them that he could guarantee the friendship of Tissaphernes first and then of the Persian King himself, if they would support an oligarchical form of governing[504]. And indeed Thucydides informs us that Alcibiades had a great influence on Tissaphernes and he truly convinced him at the beginning to stay on the side of the Athenians[505], even if the continuation of the story proved that the help of the Persian King was an illusion. This is when Peisander, an Athenian general, returns to Athens with some of his co-citizens, in order to organise the overthrow[506]. Speaking at the Athenian *ecclesia*, Peisander tries to convince the citizens of the city that the only way to gain the trust of the Persian King and to defeat the Lacedaemonians is to bring back Alcibiades and modify the Athenian Constitution into a more moderate one (*εἰ μὴ πολιτεύσομεν τε σωφρονέστερον*[507]) giving the power to the few (*ἐς ὀλίγους μᾶλλον τὰς ἀρχὰς ποιήσομεν*).

In this first speech of Peisander, the aim of the new government is made clear. Andrewes comments that "the phrase used here suggests a system in which the assembly would retain its powers and existing membership, but eligibility for office, no doubt including the council, would be restricted."[508] Even if the authoritarian character of the new constitution is not declared yet, Peisander proposes to the Athenian assembly a clearly more oligarchical way of governing, as we can understand from the expression *ἐς ὀλίγους*. According, to Thucydides, this was not an innovation that delighted the Athenians[509], but the fear of the upcoming

[504] Thuc. 8.47.2-48. On Alcibiades and his "alliance" with the Persian King, see Marsh 1932.
[505] Thuc. 8.52.
[506] Thuc. 8.49.
[507] Thuc. 8.53.3, "unless we govern ourselves more prudently". *Σωφρονέστερον* here in the meaning of "under an oligarchical form of government". For the connection of *sophrosyne* with oligarchy, see the chapter on oligarchy.
[508] Andrewes 1981, 125.
[509] Thuc. 8.54.1. On the enforced acceptance of the new government by the Athenians, see also Diod 13.34.2 (and Diod. 13.36.1-4), when he describes the overthrow of democracy and the ascent of the Four Hundred in Athens. The historian in 13.34.2 mentions that "the Athenian people, being disheartened, of their own accord renounced the democracy, and choosing four hundred men they turned over to them the administration of the state", which means that, according to Diodorus, it was the Athenians that decided for the change of constitution because of their disappointment after their defeat in Sicily, even though they were of course not satisfied with this change. See also Aristot. Ath. Pol. 29.1, who mentions that, when after the Athenian disaster in Sicily the Lacedaemonian side became very strong owing to the alliance with the king of Persia, the Athenians were compelled to overthrow the democracy and set up the government of the Four Hundred (*ἠναγκάσθησαν κινήσαντες τὴν δημοκρατίαν καταστῆσαι τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν τετρακοσίων πολιτείαν*). At this point one should note also the text of Xenophon (Hell. 2.3.45), who mentions actually that the people of Athens voted for the government

Peloponnesians was even bigger and in this way the Athenian democracy, hundred years after the abolition of tyranny, fell (*καὶ κοινῇ βουλευσάμενοι καταλύσουσι τὸν δῆμον*)[510].

After the fall of democracy in Athens, Peisander returned to Samos and started his campaign for the establishment of oligarchic governments both in Samos and in other Greek islands. When he returned to Athens, constitutional changes in the city had already started from the oligarchic circles; the coup instigators[511] had already shown their cruel face by killing the ones, who considered as political enemies of the coup. All of this aside, the oligarchic circles had declared that public salary would be paid only to the ones that would offer military service *(οὔτε μισθοφορητέον εἴη ἄλλους ἢ τοὺς στρατευομένους)* and that not more than five thousand citizens would have participated in the government, chosen according to their personal abilities, their property and their personal skills *(οὔτε μεθεκτέον τῶν πραγμάτων πλέοσιν ἢ πεντακισχιλίοις, καὶ τούτοις οἳ ἂν μάλιστα τοῖς τε χρήμασι καὶ τοῖς σώμασιν ὠφελεῖν οἷοί τε ὦσιν)* [512]. Apart from this, the coup instigators had weakened the *boule* and the *ecclesia* by deciding that the two important bodies of the Athenian democracy would be still convened, but that no decision could have been taken without the approval of the ones to organize the coup *(ἐβούλευον δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι μὴ τοῖς ξυνεστῶσι δοκοίη)*, who also provided the speakers and reviewed in advance what they were to say[513].

The fear of these extreme changes of the oligarchs, which was spread in the city, led to the division of the Athenian citizens: under the constant fear of being killed in case of contradiction to the instigators, the trust between the people disappeared and no one could

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of the Four Hundred, "being advised that the Lacedaemonians would trust any form of government sooner that a democracy" and not because they tried to gain the help of the king of Persia. On this subject, see also Isoc. 8.108, who even suggests that the people themselves desired the oligarchy under the Four Hundred because of the depravity of the popular orators; I believe however that this should be considered actually rather as a rhetorical artifice of the orator instead of a general truth. For other references on the government of the Four Hundred in the ancient literature, see Dem. 20 48; Xen. Hell. 2.3.30 (on Theramenes and his involvement in the oligarchy); Lys. 13.70 (accusing Agoratus that he did not kill Phrynichus (Athenian general, who took a leading part in establishing the oligarchy) like he sustained); Lys. 30.7; Lys. 6.27; Aristot. Rh. 3.18.6; Lys. 20.1 (defending Polystratus, one of the Four Hundred).

[510] Thuc. 8.54.

[511] Thuc. 8.65.2, *τινὲς τῶν νεωτέρων*, as characterized by Thucydides. About the meaning of *νεωτέρων* in this case, I will agree with Hornblower 2008, 943 about the ambiguity of the meaning. Hornblower translates the word in two ways, 'new/revolutionary' and 'young', meaning that the persons to kill Androcles did not only participate in the coup, but were also at a young age.

[512] Thuc. 8.65.3, transl. ed. by me.

[513] Thuc. 8.66.1. For the first extreme reforms of the Four Hundred see also the narration of Aristot. Ath. Pol. 29.

express his political opinion publicly.[514] Andrewes and Hornblower[515] both expressed the idea that Thucydides uses an exaggerated tone, in order to describe the events of the coup by presenting the coup instigators as "a monolithic group of extremists"[516]. Even if this is true, one cannot dispute the fact that Athens lived in 411 an extreme change of constitution, which led the traditional institutions of Athens in a deep crisis and caused to its citizens the sentiment of insecurity about the future of their city[517].

The new constitution will be however formed definitely when Peisander will turn back from Samos. From the moment that Peisander took the helm, the principal intention of the coup instigators[518] was made clear once and for all[519]. Peisander convened the *ecclesia*, which elected ten men with the authority to recommend the form of the new constitution (*δέκα ἄνδρας ἑλέσθαι ξυγγραφέας αὐτοκράτορας*)[520]. The decisions of the commissioners declared the nature of the new government: on the one hand it got decided that every Athenian could submit a proposal without being punished (*ἐξεῖναι μὲν Ἀθηναίων ἀνατεὶ εἰπεῖν γνώμην ἣν ἄν τις βούληται*); in this way the reaction of the Athenians about the reforms would be calmed. On the other hand, it got decided that all tenure of office under the existing constitutions would be at an end (*μήτε ἀρχὴν ἄρχειν μηδεμίαν ἔτι ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κόσμου*). Apart from that, into the Athenian state was inserted the body of Four Hundred citizens[521], which would exert power with full authority. In the city got imposed a regime of authoritarian governance: no pubic salary would be paid anymore (*μήτε μισθοφορεῖν*)[522] and the body of the Five

[514] Thuc. 8.66.2-5.

[515] See Andrewes 1981, 163 and Hornblower 2008, 946.

[516] Andrewes 1981, 163.

[517] See the very interesting work of Bearzot 2013 25ff., who concentrates her attention on the techniques (extremely cruel many times) used by the coup instigators, in order to overthrow democracy.

[518] On the protagonists of the coup apart Peisander, see Thuc. 8.68. It would be interesting to research further the motivation of the Four Hundred for the overthrow of the constitution, i.e. if they were driven by private ambitions or political beliefs. I will not try to analyse this question further however, since the evidence, which Thucydides offers to us is rather limited. On this argument, see the interesting account of Lintott 1982, 152.

[519] Thuc. 8.67.

[520] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 29.2 speaks of thirty *ξυγγραφείς.* On this difference between both ancient scholars, see Cary 1952, 56ff.

[521] About the way of defining the Four Hundred governors Hornblower 2008, 952 needs to compare it with the way that Aristotle describes this selection: "Ath. Pol. 31.1 has a simpler arrangement for producing the Four Hundred: forty to be chosen from each of the ten tribes, selected by the members of that tribe. This was meant to look more reassuringly constitutional and less revolutionary than the procedure described by Th., who is much more likely to be right. […].The number four hundred was surely intended to recall the four pre-Kleisthenic Ionian tribes."

[522] Rhodes 2012, 537 expressed the idea that one motive for changing to oligarchy was the desire to save money.

Thousand, would be convened only when it would seem appropriate (*καὶ τοὺς πεντακισχιλίους δὲ ξυλλέγειν ὁπόταν αὐτοῖς δοκῇ*).

At this point, we should note one of the main differences between the Thucydidean and Aristotelian narration. While in the history of Thucydides the new government started with the establishment of the body of the Five Thousand, which however got replaced immediately from the Four Hundred, in the Aristotelian version it seems that the Five Thousand were destined to hold power in the future, but for the time the Four Hundred would be the body to govern[523]:

> "The Council to consist of four hundred members according to the ancestral regulations (*βουλεύειν μὲν τετρακοσίους κατὰ τὰ πάτρια*), forty from each tribe taken from a preliminary list of any persons over thirty years of age that the members of the tribe may elect. These to appoint the officials, and to draft a proposal about the form of oath to be taken, and to take action about the laws and the audits and other matters as they may think good."[524]

In this case, the main difference between the two authors is the fact that Aristotle makes a more modest narration of the events, when it comes to the oligarchy in Athens when Thucydides is for sure more direct and objective. He declares from the beginning that the body of the Five Thousand was actually a *σχῆμα πολιτικὸν* (a political pretence)[525], in order to calm the masses, who opposed to the change of the constitution, when Aristotle describes in a detailed way[526] this new body without making a mention on the fact that it did not really exist. Only at the end of his description of the events in Athens in 411 the philosopher changes idea and mentions that the Five Thousand were elected *λόγῳ μόνον* (only nominally)[527], which means that the non-existence of the Five Thousand was widely known at the end. What is clear however from both accounts is the fact that the Four Hundred were considered from the beginning of the coup as the leading political body in the formation of

[523] Caspari 1913, 9 believes that Aristotle "did not know how the Four Hundred were really constituted". For the problematic difference of the establishment of the Five Thousand in the two accounts see also Stevenson 1936, 51ff.
[524] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 31.1.
[525] Thuc. 8.89.3.
[526] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 29.5-30.
[527] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 32.3.

the new government and the one to govern during the four months[528] of the oligarchic period of Athens.

The consequence of the afore-mentioned changes in the politics of the Athenian state is that the traditional Athenian institutions like the *boule* and the *ecclesia* changed completely character, the sovereignty of the assembly got abolished and the council of the Five Hundred got occupied by violence by the instigators, who designated *prytaneis* from their classes[529] and made the usual sacrifices of the *boule.*[530] Thucydides describes also the cruelty of the new administration, which put to death, imprisoned and banished the ones, which were held as political enemies. Last but not least, the oligarchs made overtures to Agis, King of the Spartans, in order to make peace with him now that they were in command and could not be impeded by the not trusty Athenian public (*τῷ ἀπίστῳ δήμῳ*)[531].

It is strange that Thucydides does not describe with more detail all reforms that the government brought about in the city of Athens, when on the other hand he is used to describing with every little detail military events of the war, as justly several scholars remarked[532]. He merely says that the new government "made major changes to the whole system of administration by the people (*πολὺ μεταλλάξαντες τῆς τοῦ δήμου διοικήσεως*)"[533]. To sum it up, the historian remains basically to the fact that the Four Hundred took absolute control of the city, demonstrated a violent policy towards their political enemies and tried to gain the friendship of the king Agis in Sparta, which ended futile, since Agis got convinced that the citizens of Athens would not abandon so easily their former freedom (*οὐδ' εὐθὺς οὕτω τὸν δῆμον τὴν παλαιὰν ἐλευθερίαν παραδώσειν*).[534]

Aristotle, on the other hand, makes a more detailed description of the reforms of the new government. Among others, Aristotle mentions that the Council would consist of members over thirty years of age holding office for a year and without emolument[535]. He denominates

[528] On the duration of the constitution of the Four Hundred, see Aristot. Ath. Pol. 33. Thucydides does not refer to the duration of the new government.
[529] Justly Andrewes 1981, 181f., notes that the use of *πρυτάνεις* by the coup instigators need not imply the traditional Athenian tribal prytanies, but maybe the name for their presiding officers. This and their usual sacrifices are, according to Andrewes, "conventional, as opposed to the large changes they are then said to have made *ὕστερον.*"
[530] Thuc. 8.70.1.
[531] Thuc. 8.70.1-2.
[532] See Andrewes 1981, 182; Hornblower 2008, 963.
[533] Thuc. 8.70.1.
[534] Thuc. 8.71.1.
[535] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 30.2.

also several magistracies, which the new Council would include, like the Generals, the Nine Archons, the Sacred Remembrancer, the Company-commanders, Officers of the Horse, et.al. The philosopher speaks also of some future changes of the government, according to which four Councils would be formed from persons of the stated age, but the in-service *boule* would be selected by ballot[536]. Aristotle describes, furthermore, all the new tasks and responsibilities of the Council with great detail[537] and it is indeed remarkable that Thucydides does not make a more detailed description of a constitution so important for the development of the history of his city.

According to Erbse[538], the deficient description of important events from Thucydides can be justified from the fact that the historian "schreibt nicht Verfassungsgeschichte, sondern setzt die Fakten in Beziehung zu den menschlichen Plänen"[539]. I will agree with this idea: Thucydides is not primarily interested in writing constitutional history; more than that he wants to understand, how the development of the political ideas influenced the way that its protagonists behaved. We could say that he is the painstaking scholar not of the events themselves but of the motivations of the participants of the war that cause these events. This is a very important observation about the way that Thucydides writes his history, which one should consider for the analysis of the development of the political history in Greece during the Peloponnesian War.

The new constitution, however, was destined to be soon overthrown. The reaction to this authoritarian government started from Samos and the Athenian military troops, which were barracked there. After the hard competition between those who, convinced by the coup instigators, wanted to impose the oligarchy on the army (*οἱ δὲ τὸ στρατόπεδον ὀλιγαρχεῖσθαι*)[540] and the ones against the authoritarian way of governing of the Four Hundred, who wanted to impose the democracy on the city (*οἱ μὲν τὴν πόλιν ἀναγκάζοντες δημοκρατεῖσθαι*)[541], the *ecclesia* of Samos[542] decided to refuse the new way of governing and

[536] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 30.3.
[537] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 30.4-31, for detailed information on the Aristotelian description of the new government and on a comparison between the accounts of Thucydides and Aristotle see among others Rhodes 1981, 362ff. and Sartori 1951, 52ff.
[538] On this opinion, see also Andrewes 1981, 168, who thought that the narration of the historian is insufficient as a report of what was decided and he believed that there must have been some formal enactment about the Five Thousand, who have been referred to already at 65.3.
[539] Erbse 1989, 17.
[540] Thuc. 8.76.1.
[541] Thuc. 8.76.1.

to establish once and for all the democracy on the island. The contribution of Alcibiades in this was very important for the after overthrow of the oligarchy in Athens: he prevented the Athenians of Samos from sailing against the oligarchs in Athens and in the meantime sent a message in the city representing the Athenian military by declaring that the governors could keep the Five Thousand as governing body but the body of the Four Hundred should be abolished[543]. The authoritarian oligarchy of the Four Hundred was not destined to last long in the traditionally democratic Athens.

The Fall of the Four Hundred and the mixed constitution in the modern debate

In the next paragraphs of the *History*, the historian describes the debilitation of the Four Hundred and the ascent of a new form of government[544]. The message of Alcibiades spread the hope to some moderate oligarchs, who were not anymore satisfied with the existing constitution. In this way the body of the coup instigators got divided into the extremists, who supported a more absolute form of government and the moderates, who wanted the return to a more democratic form of constitution. The extremists barricaded in Piraeus, a fact that led the leader of the moderate group of the instigators Theramenes and his supporters to react, destroy the wall and demand a more democratic way of governing by giving the lead of the city to the Five Thousand. These internal conflicts in connection with the defeat of the Athenians during the battleship between them and the Peloponnesians in Eretria led the Athenians to convene the *ecclesia* and abolish the constitution of the Four Hundred by creating a new form of government for the city.

First of all, the assembly decided[545] that the *arche* of the Four Hundred would be abolished and in its position would be set the body of the Five Thousand[546], consisted only by the ones, who could be equipped at their own cost *(τοῖς πεντακισχιλίοις ἐψηφίσαντο τὰ πράγματα*

[542] One should not forget that some time before the democrats of Samos, with the collaboration of Athens, had managed to overthrow oligarchy on the island and impose a democratic way of governing (8.21). The democratic faction of the city had to be obviously very powerful in that period.
[543] Thuc. 8.86.
[544] Thuc. 8.89-96.
[545] Thuc. 8.97. On the fall of the Four Hundred see also Diod. 13.38.1, who mentions that "the Athenians dissolved the oligarchy of the Four Hundred and formed the constitution of the government from the citizens at large (*Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν ἐκ τῶν τετρακοσίων ὀλιγαρχίαν κατέλυσαν καὶ τὸ σύστημα τῆς πολιτείας ἐκ τῶν πολιτῶν συνεστήσαντο*)".
[546] Donini 1969, 15 believes that the number Five Thousand is not realistic and that the number of the Athenians participating in the new constitution should have been much more. There are actually references, which speak of a much larger number of citizens (9000), who participated in the new government (Ps.-Lys. 20.13). On this theory, see also Sartori 1951, 65ff.

παραδοῦναι (εἶναι δὲ αὐτῶν ὁπόσοι καὶ ὅπλα παρέχονται)[547]. All of this aside, no public salary would be paid *(καὶ μισθὸν μηδένα φέρειν μηδεμιᾷ ἀρχῇ).* Thucydides informs us, that several other assemblies were convened, which inter alia inaugurated *nomothetai*, i.e. lawmakers, a fact that indicates that the new constitution, in opposition to the one of the Four Hundred, should have been based on laws. No more information is given from the historian about other decisions of these assemblies; the historian mentions merely that the assembly passed also other constitutional measures *(καὶ τἆλλα ἐψηφίσαντο ἐς τὴν πολιτείαν)* without nominating

[547] This new form of government is one of the most difficult chapters of the Greek constitutional history. Harris 1990, 258, for example basing his argumentation on epigraphic evidence (256-258) argues that "we have every reason to believe that the Constitution of the Five Thousand found in chapter 30 of the Constitution of the Athenians is the constitution that Thucydides says was instituted after the fall of the Four Hundred and was "a moderate blending in respect to the few and to the many." In this case "the many" were the Five Thousand who had the right to vote in elections, to hold both elective and sortitive offices, and to serve on the Council". At this point I should note that the Five Thousand of the Athenaion Politeia (30) were actually the ones, who organized the structure of the new authoritarian government of the Four Hundred, which means that this event of the Aristotelian work refers to the beginning of the coup in Athens and not to its overthrow. Of the same opinion is also Vlastos 1952, 189, who also believes that "the Constitution of the Five Thousand", outlined in Chapter 30 of the *Athenaion Politeia*, came into force in the interval between the overthrow of the Four Hundred in Semptember, 411 B.C. and the restoration of democracy, soon after the battle of Cyzicus (Arpil, 410)". See also Harris 1990, 258, who argues that "we have every reason to believe that the Constitution of the Five Thousand found in chapter 30 of the Constitution of the Athenians is the constitution that Thucydides says was instituted after the fall of the Four Hundred and was "a moderate blending in respect to the few and to the many". On the same idea see also Ferguson 1926, 72ff. and Ehrenberg 1922, 613ff. I understand the way of thinking of the afore-mentioned scholars, since the constitution, which arises after the fall of the Four Hundred is without exact definition from no one of the ancient scholars and someone could easily think that Aristotle speaks in such a detailed way of the Five Thousand, because it was the perfect mixture of democracy and oligarchy and this is why it should fit perfectly as the governing political body of the difficult phase between the Four Hundred and the restoration of democracy in Athens. I cannot however agree with this opinion. A look at the text of Aristotle can easily show that the scholar dedicates a separate paragraph (even if it is a small one and without details) on the events after the fall of the Four Hundred and that when he speaks of the Five Thousand, he obviously refers to the first political body established in the city after the fall of democracy and before the accession of the Four Hundred. In sum, even if Aristotle (30) mentions that the political body of the Five Thousand was established not for the first period of the Athenian oligarchy but for the future (a fact that could give an evidence that it could have come into force in the period of the mixed constitution), I cannot honestly find any really trustworthy evidence in the texts of our two main sources of the events in Athens in the year 411, which can reinforce the afore-mentioned idea. See also Rhodes 1972, 188, who also argues that "there was little connection between this intermediate constitution and the 'future' constitution of *Athenaion Politeia* 30)". Last but not least, I will have to mention the opinion of Fritz and Kapp 1950, 182, who draws the conclusion that the assumption mentioned by several scholars, "that the constitution following the overthrow of the Four Hundred was identical with the constitution described by Aristotle in Chapter 30 of the present treatise is at variance with the fact that Aristotle does not count this constitution in his enumeration of constitutions in Chapter 41 (in which the successive constitutions after the restoration of democracy in Athens are mentioned), implying that this constitution was never actually applied, and also with Thucydides' account of the events which followed the overthrow of the Four Hundred". I think that the mixed constitution, which arose after the fall of the Four Hundred was actually a new form of government, destined to lead to a full democracy some years later and could not have been determined by the oligarchs, who organized the coup and aimed at the estrangement of the Athenian *demos* from its democratic roots.

which ones exactly. Nevertheless Thucydides mentions that the new constitution was a mixture between the few and the many *(μετρία γὰρ ἥ τε ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ξύγκρασις ἐγένετο)* and that the city, for the first time in the life of our historian, was well-governed (*εὖ πολιτεύσαντες*), a fact that managed to enable the state to raise up her head after her manifold disasters[548].

There has been a lot of discussion from several modern scholars about the characteristics of this new constitution for one simple reason; Thucydides is too laconic about the constitution that arises after the fall of the Four Hundred. Actually, we have two basic characteristics of the new form of government. The first one is that the new constitution is based on the power of Five Thousand *hoplites*, i.e. the well off upper social class, who would be able to pay the costs of its own equipment and not receive a public salary. The second is that the constitution of the Five Thousand is a mixed constitution between the *ὀλίγοι* and the *πολλοί.* This lack of information has caused a very large discussion between De ste Croix and Andrewes about what should have been the real nature of this constitution, which is interesting to be analysed briefly.

The main contradiction of the two scholars has been the question about if Athens after the overthrow of the Four Hundred returned to an absolute form of democracy or to a rather mixed constitution. De ste Croix expressed the idea that Athens after the fall of the Four Hundred returns to its former democratic constitution. He bases his theory on a very large argumentation, which I will mention here shortly. First of all, he believes that "since it was a general assembly of all citizens in which supreme political power ultimately resided, and the oligarchic features of the new constitution could be abolished or modified at any time at the pleasure of the assembly, the constitution would be basically democratic."[549] The repeated convening of the *ecclesia* and its obvious sovereignty in defining the new constitution is, according to the scholar, a proof of the return of Athens to the democracy.

Secondly, he mentions that the reference of Thucydides to a mixture between the Few and the Many does not imply the identification of these groups with oligarchy and democracy, like several scholars supported. According to him, the Few and the Many should be understood in a social sense; the Few should be the upper propertied classes when the Many should be the

[548] On the enthusiasm that Thucydides demonstrates for this new government, see the Introduction.
[549] De ste Croix 1956, 2.

lower poor classes, who of course would be the first to want full democracy[550]. The new constitution consists of citizens from all social and economic classes, which indicates a clear democracy. The exclusive participation of the *hoplites* in the new government should be also a proof of the return to democracy, according to De ste Croix. The scholar claims that the *thetes*, i.e the lowest social Athenian class, were anyway excluded from political rights in the Athenian democracy and therefore could not legitimately be described as having any share at all in the constitution; it was in effect, according to him, very little difference between the constitution of the Five Thousand and full democracy[551].

Last but not least the fact that, besides Thucydides and Aristotle[552], there are no other ancient sources, which mention the existence of the constitution of the Five Thousand, is another sign for De ste Croix of the re-democratisation of Athens: since the city returned to its former traditional democratic constitution, why should an already known and usual way of governing be even worthy of mention by the ancient scholars?[553] According to him: "Here for once Thucydides has declared himself plainly, in favour of what we can only call a moderate or modified democracy, a democracy which accepted certain oligarchic elements as a temporary measure but retained the power to abolish those elements and did before long abolish them, without resort to violence."[554] Even if the new constitution had some oligarchic elements, the base of it was the sovereignty of the people, which should indicate beyond any doubt a democratic way of governing.

The theory of De ste Croix has been supported from several scholars. First of all, Sealey believes that the theory of Ste. Croix about the function of the Five Thousand should be accepted and that after the Four Hundred the new regime was a modified democracy, in which "the aim of the plans was economy: political office was to be restricted to men of wealth because these could undertake political office without receiving public pay"[555]. Donini is also of the same opinion. The scholar mentions that the new government should have been probably a democracy with oligarchic elements rather than an oligarchy with democratic elements[556]. The mixed constitution should have been consequently a moderate democracy

[550] De ste Croix 1956, 7.
[551] De ste Croix 1956, 10.
[552] Aristot. Ath. Pol. 30.1; 32.3.
[553] De ste Croix 1956, 11,13.
[554] De ste Croix 1956, 21.
[555] Sealey 1967, 120ff.
[556] Donini 1969, 24.

especially if we consider the fact that the assembly, which is the main body of democracy, had a principal role in this new constitution and that the oligarchic elements of this new form of government were actually temporary and could be abolished at any time.

On the other hand, against this theory stand several modern scholars, like Andrewes. In his note, he claims that there has been a change of constitution in Athens, but not a complete re-democratization of it. In this new constitution it seems that the electorate broadens from Four Hundred to Five Thousand people, a mixed body of oligarchs and democrats, in other words the mixture of the different interests of the Few and the Many[557]. According to Andrewes, „to include in the ‚few' *ὁπόσοι καὶ ὅπλα παρέχονται* does not indeed make the Five Thousand a democracy, even a modified one, but it does remove their regime very far from what a Greek of that time would ordinarily understand by oligarchy, and here we clearly stand on the middle ground of compromise"[558]. Consequently, the new constitution is a middle way between the constitution of the Four Hundred established by the coup of oligarchs and the traditional democratic way of governing in Athens; the city did not arrive yet in full democracy.

The same idea supports also Rhodes, who inter alia points out that the democratic element of the new constitution is the fact that the power passes from the *boule*, previously consisted of the Four Hundred, to the *ecclesia*, now consisted by the mixed Five Thousand *hoplites*. This is not, however, evidence of full democracy; even in this composition the assembly was always limited and one should not confound this mixed form of constitution with the democracy established in Athens in the summer of 410 some months later shortly after the battle of Cyzicus[559]. According to the scholar "the transition from the intermediate regime to the full democracy was comparatively smooth"[560]. Last but not least, Lintott argues that a return to full democracy directly after the oligarchy of the Four Hundred is difficult to accept, since "the limitation of public office to men of hoplite status was to some extent part of the earlier democracy. At best one could argue that the difference between the intermediate

[557] Andrewes 1981, 323-24.
[558] Andrewes 1981 324.
[559] See Thuc. 8.98.4, where the historian with the very laconic phrase „this was how […] the oligarchy and the internal conflict in Athens came to an end (*τούτῳ μὲν τῷ τρόπῳ [...] ἡ ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις ὀλιγαρχία καὶ στάσις ἐπαύσατο*)" indicates the fall of the Four Hundred and the end of the *stasis* between extreme and moderate oligarchs (see Hornblower 2008, 1038f.). On the end of the oligarchic period of Athens and the restoration of democracy see among others Rhodes 1972, 117ff.; Hignett 1952, 280ff.; Ferguson 1926, 75 and Meritt 1932, 106-109 (especially for the epigraphic evidences of this period).
[560] Rhodes 1972, 126.

regime and the democracy lay in membership of the council being limited to men of hoplite status".[561]

It is remarkable that this passage of the Thucydidean history caused such a large discussion between the scholars. As far as I am concerned, the opinion of De ste Croix has too little evidence to rely on. Thucydides does not give any clear evidence of the characterization of the constitution of the Five Thousand as a democratic one and it should be more logical to believe that Athens would return to its former constitution gradually – like the city actually did in the year 410, according to Aristotle. Even the constitution of the Four Hundred was not imposed from day to day; the citizens of Athens had to be prepared, in order to accept it. This is why I think that, without having more evidence, it is very risky to support the re-democratization of Athens in such an extremely fast way.

But why should the text of the historian cause such a large discussion between the scholars? The answer is simple and is always the same one that I noticed in other parts of my thesis: Thucydides' text can be characterized many times by 'polyinterpretability' like Hornblower justly remarks[562]. According to him, "some of Th.'s most important political judgments present great difficulties of interpretation, and can be taken in more than one way". However, the historical truth should not be the only subject of study to research in the text of the historian; equally (if not more) interesting is the way that Thucydides writes his history and the motivations behind it. Like the historian himself mentions:

> "But it was no easy matter, after a span of a hundred years or so since the tyrants were overthrown (*ἐπειδὴ οἱ τύραννοι κατελύθησαν*), to deprive the Athenian people of their freedom (*ἐλευθερίας παῦσαι*), when not only had they never been subjects (*καὶ οὐ μόνον μὴ ὑπήκοον ὄντα*) but for more than half of that period they were themselves used to ruling others (*ὑπὲρ ἥμισυ τοῦ χρόνου τούτου αὐτὸν ἄλλων ἄρχειν εἰωθότα*)"[563].

Until its decision to declare the war against Syracuse in 415, Athens is the sovereign power in the Greek world. The ever-growing power of the city provoked its arrogant behaviour, about which the reader of the text of Thucydides gets already prepared in the description of the Melian dialogue in 416, during which the Athenians declared their sovereignty over the

[561] Lintott 1982, 153.
[562] Hornblower 2008,1036.
[563] Thuc. 8.68.4.

Greek city-states and conquered the island[564], but takes its final form, when the Athenians decided to start an extremely risky expedition against Syracuse, a very powerful city far away from their own. The narration of the constitution imposed by the Four Hundred, consequently, is not only written, in order to describe the constitutional changes in Athens in 411, but also in order to show the consequences of the former arrogant behaviour of the Athenians. In this case, Athens experienced an "earthquake" of its cultural and political ideals, based on its democratic way of governing. The historical truth about the constitutional history of the Greek world through the work of Thucydides is therefore important, but its research has, in my opinion, a limit, because we will never be able to understand completely its development. On the other hand, I think that if one tries to follow the way of thinking of Thucydides, without being obsessive about the truth behind it, he will be able to comprehend not only the motivations of the protagonists of the Peloponnesian War but also the changes that this war caused to the city-states. The Greek world after the Peloponnesian War will never be the same again.

The aim of the Thucydidean narration

The overthrow of the Athenian democracy and the rise of the authoritarian constitution of the Four Hundred is for sure one of the most interesting passages in the history of Thucydides and can lead us to several conclusions about the development not only of the Athenian politics but also of the Peloponnesian War in general. Reading the narration of the historian, one can immediately understand the particularities of its account in comparison with the other large account of the overthrow of the Athenian democracy, i.e. the one of Aristotle. Like already said the two main accounts of the events in 411 in Athens are very different from each other and serve different purposes. Lang mentions on the different accounts of the two scholars that:

> "All of the details and steps of the revolution which Aristotle records have documentary basis or legislative significance, while all those included by Thucydides are those which were proved by the end result of the revolution to have been actual and effective actions"[565].

On the one hand, the account of Aristotle seems more 'pragmatic'. The philosopher narrates the events of the coup much more analytically than Thucydides and offers more detailed

[564] See Thuc. 5.84-114.
[565] Lang 1948, 289.

information about the new constitution. However, he is not interested in narrating the social effect that this coup had on the Athenian *demos*. He does not refer to the fear or the disappointment that these extreme constitutional changes caused by a body of citizens used to a democratic way of governing. His narration is so "diplomatic" that someone could characterize his version of the story more favourable to the oligarchs, even though Rhodes justly, according to me, notes accurately that Aristotle "probably chose to use this material because of the details which it offered rather than because of its political slant"[566].

On this subject, the account of Thucydides is much more detailed. The historian describes the sentiments of the Athenians in front of these historical changes for their city, their fear and delusion for the overthrow of their traditional form of government, the terror spread in the city because of the rigid administration of the new constitution and the "civil war" which exploded in Athens at this moment of the extreme social crisis. Harris mentions very accurately that Thucydides describes the change of constitution as "coup d'état accomplished by terror and intimidation" when Aristotle describes it as "a smooth and orderly transition from one regime to another".[567] Harris even mentions that Thucydides invented details or exaggerated certain facts, in order to give a more dramatic tone to the events of 411 and present them as a coup d'état, when the political reforms of the Four Hundred could have happened actually under much calmer conditions[568]. Even though this opinion is interesting, I cannot say that I can agree completely with this idea, because for a traditional democratic city like Athens, the political changes of the 411 should have brought much fear and dissatisfaction and even if the narration has a dramatic character, I do not think that it is much exaggerated. I believe that Taylor recapitulates in a great way the differences between the two accounts:

> "Thucydides gives a detailed background and context to the constitutional change and includes in it elements of terror and propaganda (8.65). Aristotle, on the other hand, provides little context beyond nothing that the people 'were compelled to abolish the democracy' and did so 'because of the belief that the King of Persia would be more likely to fight with them if they had an oligarchical constitution' (29.1)"[569].

[566] Rhodes 1981, 362.
[567] Harris 1990, 244.
[568] On this idea see also Taylor 2002, 94, who also believes that Thucydides' dramatic picture of the events does not exclude the fact that the Athenians were actually ready for this political change.
[569] Taylor 2002, 92.

All this information about the psychological consequences of the new government on the *demos* of Athens is completely ignored by Aristotle and one could ask why the philosopher does not enter deeper in the Athenian society and its reaction in front of this extreme change of government. First of all, one should mention that between the two ancient scholars, Thucydides was the one to be present at the events. I imagine that Aristotle could have known the detailed information of the coup, but he could not have known the exact sentiments that these events caused at the citizens of Athens.

Apart from that, one should also mention that Thucydides is concentrated many times more on the consequences of the acts of the protagonists of the war on themselves, than on the events, like already said. It is not the first time, in which our historian leaves out some events and concentrates his narration on the impact that the development of the war had on the persons, who participated in it. Several examples of his history prove this fact; the Melian dialogue, for example, is characterized by the detail, with which the historian describes the authoritarian behaviour of the Athenians. During the description of the civil war in Corcyra, Thucydides also dedicates a large part to the negative sentiments that this civil war caused at the citizens of the island. It is obvious once more that Thucydides is not interested to write constitutional history and analyse in great detail all the reforms of the new government. He is more interested to analyse the reasons for such extreme political changes, to describe the consequences that the events had on the society itself and to comprehend the importance of these events for the development of the Peloponnesian War in general.

In conclusion, even if we are rather unfortunate in this case since the narration of Thucydides ends not long after the events in 411, one can easily understand the importance of the political changes in Athens for the continuation of the war and its end (narrated fortunately by Xenophon). This extreme political crisis, which hit Athens after its defeat in Sicily, worked as precursor, could someone say, for the final defeat of the city from the opposed forces of the Lacedaemonians in Aegospotami (405)[570]. A political crisis of this measure indicates a fragile society, which seems rather weak to deal with a strong enemy, like Sparta. The importance of the consequences of the Sicilian expedition for the city of Athens will be noticed from the historian itself already in his second book:

> "That was not so much a mistake of judgement about the enemy they were attacking as a failure on the part of those sending the men abroad to follow up this decision with further

[570] Xen. Hell. 2.1.

> support for them. Instead they engaged in personal intrigues over the leadership of the people and so blunted the effectiveness of the forces in the field and for the first time embroiled the city at home in factional turmoil (*καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν πόλιν πρῶτον ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐταράχθησαν*)"[571].

Athens started the war as the military and financial superpower of the Aegean, finished defeated and under a great social and political crisis and, even after the liberation of the city from the Lacedaemonians, was destined to not find never again its former glory. The Sicilian expedition cost the city too much.

[571] Thuc. 2.65.11

Chapter 7. The term *oligarchy* in the work of the historian

Forms of Oligarchy

As last part of my thesis, I left a chapter, which in some way contains all the diverse oligarchies, to which Thucydides refers in his narration. In the forthcoming text, I will mention a list of all the possible examples of oligarchic ways of governing, as described by our historian, by adding some extra information to the cases of oligarchy, which were not already analysed during my thesis. Aim of my research is, as has always been in my work, first of all to gather more information possible on the oligarchic states of the Greek world of the fifth century, as presented in the work of our historian, and secondly to come a bit closer to the way, in which Thucydides understood oligarchy as a political condition of his times. In my thesis it was made clear – or at least I hope so – that a researcher of the development of the political history of Greece during the Peloponnesian War should be very careful on the real meaning of the term *ὀλιγαρχία* and its synonyms; oligarchy can have many names and shades in the work of the historian. After all, what is oligarchy for Thucydides?

The proper term: *ὀλιγαρχία*

At this point, I will have to make a really important observation: the use of the term *ὀλιγαρχία* is rare in the work of the historian except for his last book. Concretely, Thucydides uses the term 8 times in the rest of the work and 31 times during the narration of the events in Athens in 411[572]. The few times that Thucydides refers to the proper term are not obviously equivalent to the times that Thucydides describes the different forms of an oligarchic way of governing; in my thesis, I pointed out all the passages, in which the historian speaks of oligarchic constitutions. It is however impressive that in most of the cases he does not use the exact word, but describes them in other ways, mainly using the adjective *ὀλίγοι*[573], when on the other hand he chooses in some few cases to use the proper term. In which passages uses consequently the historian the precise term of *ὀλιγαρχία* and what can we understand from this research about the idea that Thucydides himself had about this way of governing?

[572] See for exact passages Thuc. 8.47.2; 8.48.3-5; 8.54.1; 8.63.3-4; 8.64.1; 8.64.5; 8.66.5; 8.68.3; 8.72.1-2; 8.73.1; 8.73.4-5; 8.75.1-2; 8.76.1; 8.81.2; 8.89.1-3; 8.91.3; 8.92.4; 8.98; 8.98.1 and 8.98.4.
[573] Viz. inter alia Thuc. 2.37.2; 3.39.6; 3.82.1; 5.81.2; 5.84.3-85.

The typical form

Like already said, *ὀλιγαρχία* is not one and precise form of constitution in the work of our historian. He uses the word, in order to describe several forms that this constitution takes during the Peloponnesian War. The first to be analysed is for sure the typical form of oligarchy, i.e. the oligarchic constitution, which, even if its characteristics change from city to city, is always based on the sovereignty of laws. I have already researched thoroughly in separate chapters two basic forms of law-abiding oligarchies of the Thucydidean *History*. The first is for sure the *ὀλιγαρχία ἰσόνομος*, i.e. a law-abiding government, in which all citizens have equal rights, but not equal political power, which Thucydides mentions when he narrates the episode of the indictment of the Thebans in 426[574]. The other one is the oligarchy *επιτήδεια*, i.e. the oligarchy of the Spartan type, adapted to the Lacedaemonian mentality of life[575].

What our historian comprehends as an oligarchy, can be understood also from the examples further down, according to me. As already seen, in the sixth book, at the discussion of the Syracusian *ecclesia* before the arrival of the Athenian naval in 415, the pro-democratic Athenagoras makes a definition of the two main constitutions of the Peloponnesian War, democracy and oligarchy[576]. He defines democracy as the best constitution, which distributes equally the responsibilities and rights to all citizens, while oligarchy as the government of the few (*ἐγὼ δέ φημι πρῶτα μὲν δῆμον ξύμπαν ὠνομάσθαι, ὀλιγαρχίαν δὲ μέρος*), by which the commons have to confront the dangers, whereas the *oligoi* enjoy the most of the benefits for themselves (*ὀλιγαρχία δὲ τῶν μὲν κινδύνων τοῖς πολλοῖς μεταδίδωσι, τῶν δ' ὠφελίμων οὐ πλεονεκτεῖ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ξύμπαντ' ἀφελομένη ἔχει*).[577]

A similar definition will be made by Thucydides in the eighth book when the historian describes the events, which led to the fall of the Four Hundred and the split among the Athenian oligarchs, a part of which expressed openly their will to give the power to the Five Thousand than the Four Hundred:

[574] Thuc. 3.62.3, For a more detailed analysis of the idea of *isonomia* in Thucydides, see the chapter on *eunomia*.
[575] See corresponding chapter.
[576] For a more detailed analysis of the speech of Athenagoras, see the chapter on Syracuse.
[577] Thuc. 6.39.

> "Most of them[578] were drawn through personal ambition into a mode of behaviour that is sure to end up destroying any oligarchy that emerges from a democracy (*ὀλιγαρχία ἐκ δημοκρατίας γενομένη*). Right from the first day they not only all fail to consider themselves equals, but each thinks he deserves the very first place himself (*πάντες γὰρ αὐθημερὸν ἀξιοῦσιν οὐχ ὅπως ἴσοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολὺ πρῶτος αὐτὸς ἕκαστος εἶναι*). Whereas under a democracy an election is held and a person can bear the result more easily, telling himself that he was not defeated by his peers (*ἐκ δὲ δημοκρατίας αἱρέσεως γιγνομένης ῥᾷον τὰ ἀποβαίνοντα ὡς οὐκ ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐλασσούμενός τις φέρει*)"[579].

The naturalness, with which the historian uses the expression *ὀλιγαρχία ἐκ δημοκρατίας γενομένη* seems a bit strange since there are no other examples of an oligarchy emerged from a democracy in the *History* of the historian. Andrewes mentions on this passage that this expression is used by Thucydides as a psychological explanation for the split among the Athenian oligarchs[580]. In any case, Thucydides expresses in this passage his idea on the difference between democracy and oligarchy once more: oligarchy is defined by the fact that everyone wants to have the first place when by a democracy all citizens are equal and for this reason the vote results are accepted easier, since nobody feels inferior.

The extreme forms

It is very interesting, as already said, that the term *ὀλιγαρχία* has, according to the historian, many different shades and does not always correspond to law-abiding forms of government. Characteristic example in the Thucydidean *History* is for sure the authoritarian oligarchy of the Four Hundred in Athens in 411[581]. Furthermore, in the sixth book, when Thucydides describes the vandalism of the Hermai in Athens before the Sicilian expedition, our historian refers to the already existing internal crisis in Athens and the fear of a possible overthrow of the constitution; this fear will be realized in 411 with the coup. Inter alia the historian mentions that the vandalism of the Hermai and the ambiguous behaviour of Alcibiades (who was accused that he desecrated the Eleusinian Mysteries) caused the suspicion of the Athenians, who remembering the tyrannical period of the Peisistratids, were afraid that the events of 416 were part of some oligarchic or tyrannical conspiracy (*ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ*

[578] I.e. the oligarchs, who tried to overthrow the oligarchy of the Four Hundred.
[579] Thuc. 8.89.3.
[580] Andrewes 1981, 300-301.
[581] See corresponding chapter.

ὀλιγαρχικῇ[582] *καὶ τυραννικῇ πεπρᾶχθαι*[583]). In this passage oligarchy and tyranny are considered as equivalent forms of government, a really strange idea, since the two constitutions are extremely different between each other; oligarchy is usually held as a law-abiding constitution based on the power of the few when tyranny represents an absolute form of government[584]. In any case, the reference to oligarchy next to tyranny is very important, in order to understand that oligarchy in the world of Thucydides is not one single thing. In this passage, it is considered as an authoritarian form of constitution and it is not considered this way by chance; some years later the oligarchic circles of the city will indeed overthrow democracy and impose a "tyrannical" form of oligarchy. Last but not least, Thucydides refers also to another case of extreme oligarchy, when he speaks of Megara and its constitution in 424, of which I will speak at length in the following pages.

The Megarian *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα*

The case of Megara is of great interest, in order to understand the political changes in Greece during the Peloponnesian War. The city of Megara has a very interesting political history. Its geographical place between Athens and Sparta had as a consequence the constant contact of Megara with both cities, which tried continuously to take advantage of its strategic place. Indeed Megara is attested as an ally of both Leagues, of the Peloponnesian[585] and the Delian[586], in different periods of its history till the fourth century, when the city attempted to maintain neutrality among its larger neighbours and more distant powers[587]. It is not a coincidence that the Athenian-Megarian relationships are considered by several scholars the major factor responsible for the outbreak of the war.[588] This particular story of Megara caused also a variable political development in the city, which is characterized by several political changes. Megara has been traditionally oligarchic, but this fact did not impede also the establishment of other political constitutions in the city. In the seventh century Megara is governed by the tyranny of Theagenes[589], which – as Plutarch narrates[590] – gets replaced by

[582] The adjective *ὀλιγαρχικός* is here (and in Andoc. 4.16) first found in Greek (see also Ostwald 2000b, 387 and 395, n. 2).
[583] Thuc. 6.60.1.
[584] For a more detailed analysis of this passage, see the chapter on Athens.
[585] Diod. 12.5.2.
[586] Thuc. 1.103.3; Diod. 11.79.1-3.
[587] See Legon 1981, 257ff.
[588] On this argument see inter alia the article of Wick T.E. and Wick T.T. 1979.
[589] Thuc. 1.126.3.
[590] Plut. Quaes.Gr. 18.

an extreme violent democratic constitution, which caused a great discussion between the modern scholars, about if it has been indeed a real democracy or not[591]. It seems that Megara returned to its traditional oligarchic constitution till 427 when the democratic faction seized power and had the leading oligarchs exiled. A renewed *stasis* in Megara three years later led the city to an extreme form of oligarchy, the character of which will be our main subject of discussion in the next pages of my thesis.

Thucydides narrates the conflict in Megara, which exploded between the two opposite political sides of the war, including the two powerful cities, Athens and Sparta, in the year 424[592]. The story starts with the attack of the Athenians against the city, supported from the

[591] The ancient sources do not allow us, unfortunately, to have a clear image of the political situation in archaic Megara and especially of the radical political changes in the city after Theagenes. Aristotle refers three times in his politics to Megara, but he does not make clear always, of which period he speaks. The philosopher, for example, in 5.1302b, 27-31, speaks of the existence of a democracy in Megara, which got overthrown, when "they (the democrats) had been defeated owing to disorder and anarchy (*δι' ἀταξίαν καὶ ἀναρχίαν ἡττηθέντων*)". Aristotle speaks again of Megara in 1304b, 34-39, when he says that "the democracy at Megara was put down in a similar manner; the people's leaders in order to have money to distribute to the people went on expelling many of the notables, until they made the exiles a large body (*οἱ γὰρ δημαγωγοί, ἵνα χρήματα ἔχωσι δημεύειν, ἐξέβαλον πολλοὺς τῶν γνωρίμων, ἕως πολλοὺς ἐποίησαν τοὺς φεύγοντας*), and these came back and defeated the people in a battle and set up the oligarchy (*οἱ δὲ κατιόντες ἐνίκησαν μαχόμενοι τὸν δῆμον καὶ κατέστησαν τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν*)". Both passages, however, have been disputed by the modern research, since it is not always easy to understand, if Aristotle speaks of the "democracy" established after Theagenes or the one, which preceded the extreme oligarchy of 424 (on this discussion, see also the very detailed note of de Luna; Zizza; Curnis 2016, 289f.). At this point one should consider also the text of Plutarch (Plut. Quaes.Gr.18), who mentions that when the Megarians expelled Theagenes, *ἐσωφρόνησαν κατὰ τὴν πολιτείαν* (i.e. had a moderate constitution). Plutarch is not clear, which characteristics this "moderate" constitution really had (see also the very interesting theory of Birgalias 2008, 116ff. that the constitution of Megara at this period can be characterized as an *isonomia*). An important source of these political changes in Megara is also Theognis, a Megarian aristocrat and contemporary of the facts, who speaks of a new *demos* in the city, which becomes the dominating political group in Megara, consists mainly of land-owners (v. 53-57) and merchants (672-679, 1202) and is administrated by *demagogues* (41-42). This is not the right place to speak more detailed about the political changes in archaic Megara. On the modern bibliography on this subject anyway, the discussion of the constitution, which arose after Theagenes and the question on if it was a real democracy or not and on if the passages of Aristotle refer to this one or to the political changes of 424, see among others Legon 1981, 104ff.; Newman 1902, 265; Oost 1973, 193ff.; Robinson 1997, 114ff.; Williams 1903, 4ff.; Walter 1993, 102ff.; O'Neil 1995, 21f. and Highbarger 1927, 197, n. 15 (who believe that the passages of Aristotle refer to the constitution of the city after the tyranny of Theagenes) and on the other hand Gehrke 1985, 106ff. (who believes that Aristotle speaks of the events in 424). I will agree with the majority of the afore-mentioned scholars that Aristotle refers to the democracy of the sixth century and not to the one of the fifth and this is why I will not consider the text of the philosopher as a source of the characteristics of the Megarian democracy from 427 to 424. For the opposite opinion, see Forsdyke 2005, 74ff. who claims that "it is extremely unlikely that there was democracy in sixth-century Megara".

[592] I think that, in order to understand the help from the Spartans in the city of Megara, one should mention at this point that Megara was traditionally in good relationships with the Lacedaemonians and in bad relationships with the Athenians. An evidence of this fact is the so-called Megarian decree, a set of economic sanctions levied upon Megara in 433/ 432 by the Athenian 'Empire' shortly before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. The Lacedaemonians tried to convince the Athenians to cancel the decree, a request, which Athens rejected (Thuc.

democratic faction of Megara[593], continues with the involvement of Brasidas in the war[594] and the attack of the Boeotians against the Athenians in the city[595] and ends with the retreat of the Athenians and Spartans without getting involved in a battle between them and the return of the oligarchic exiles from Pegae[596], who settle down a so-called *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα*[597]. During this conflict, we can observe the change of the constitution of Megara from its former law-abiding constitution to an extreme oligarchy. How can we define the constitution of the city during the Peloponnesian War and what sort of constitution is this *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα* exactly?

The first subject to be analysed is the definition of the constitution of Megara in 424 before the *stasis*, which Thucydides does not specify. The narration starts with the collaboration of Athens with the democratic faction of the city, in order to avoid the attack of the oligarchic exiles of Megara, who were sent to Pegae:

> "The same summer the Megarians in the city, pressed by the hostilities of the Athenians, who invaded their country twice every year with all their forces, and harassed by the incursions of their own exiles in Pegae, who had been expelled in a revolution by the majority of the people (*οἳ στασιασάντων ἐκπεσόντες ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους*), began to ask each other whether it would not be better to receive back their exiles, and free the town from one of its two scourges."[598]

From the text, it seems that the city is divided into two parts, the one part on the side of the *πλήθος*, which exiled a part of the oligarchs to Pegae and the other on the side of these oligarchic exiles. These two sides could hypothetically represent the two political factions of the city. After a sort of *στάσις* it seems that the oligarchs were exiled to Pegae from the *πλῆθος*. This revolution, which is described in this passage, could possibly refer to a revolution of the democratic faction against the oligarchic one and to an – at least – small period of dominance of the democratic faction in the city of Megara in the years before the

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1.139.1). For more information on the Megarian decree, see among others Bonner 1921; Brunt 1951; de Ste. Croix 1972, 225ff.; French 1976; and MacDonald 1983.

[593] Thuc. 4.66-69.

[594] Thuc. 4.70-71.

[595] Thuc. 4.72.

[596] On the dating of the Megarian *stasis* and the banishment of the oligarchic exiles informs us Thucydides, who in 3.68.3 mentions that the city of Plataea after its destruction from the Lacedaemonians in 427, was offered for a year to the Megarians, who were exiled for political reasons (*κατὰ στάσιν ἐκπεπτωκόσι*) from their city. These should be the same persons, who will turn back from Pegae and in 4.74 will establish the *oligarchia ta malista*.

[597] Thuc. 4.74.3.

[598] Thuc. 4.66.1.

stasis. The use of the word *πλῆθος* in this case indicates the majority of the citizens of Megara, which could mean that the majority had – in this case at least – the political and military power in the city[599]. Apart from this, the fact that the oligarchic exiles of Megara collaborated with the Lacedaemonians after the destruction of Plataea should indicate an oligarchical political direction of them and consequently, a banishment of them from their city could indicate the dominance of the democratic faction in Megara.

On the other hand, Thucydides refers to *οἱ τοῦ δήμου προστάται*[600], that is the leaders of the democratic faction[601], who came in collaboration with the Athenians, because of the fear that the *δῆμος* will abandon them and that the oligarchs would return from Pegae. This is evidence of the existence of a democratic political faction in the city of Megara, but it does not prove with absolute certainty the dominance of it. In particular the fact that this faction is willing to concede the city to the Athenians could be a proof that the democratic faction in Megara was not dominant in the city. In any case, we have little information on the short-lived democracy, which could have dominated in the city of Megara, which means that it is not easy to draw absolute conclusions about the form and the character of the democratic period of Megara.

The problem of the constitution of Megara appears also in modern literature. Gomme asserts that the narration of Thucydides indicates a democracy in Megara, although the leaders of the democratic faction did not carry the majority with them.[602] This opinion is supported also from Legon, who writes that: "The period from 427 to 424, when the oligarchs returned and the democracy collapsed, is the first clearly attested democratic regime in Megarian history, and possibly, the first period of popular government since the fall of the "unbridled democracy" in the early sixth century."[603] Legon speaks of a small period of a democratic government in Megara, which could have been characterized by the fact that "the Megarian assembly was more active than it had been during the centuries of oligarchy"[604]. On the other

[599] Legon 1968, 214 believes also that the victorious faction in this strife should have been democratic, "at least in the sense that it had prevailed with the support of the *demos*, and relied upon a continuance of that support to maintain itself against an oligarchic reaction".
[600] Thuc. 4.66.3.
[601] The use of *οἱ τοῦ δήμου προστάται* with the meaning of "the leaders of the democratic faction" is usual by Thucydides, see 3.75.2; 3.82.1; 4.66.3; Gomme 1956, 528, also believes that in this case Thucydides means "the leaders of the popular faction, not the leaders of the majority of the people; for they clearly did not carry the majority with them".
[602] Gomme 1956, 528. Of the same opinion is also Hornblower 1996, 231f.
[603] Legon 1981, 236.
[604] Legon 1981, 237.

hand, De Ste. Croix[605] leans on the text of Aristophanes[606], in which seems that in Megara in this period existed the political body of *probouloi*, a body that is directly connected by Aristotle with oligarchy[607]. This is for de Ste. Croix the proof that Megara had never a democratic period. Consequently, in my opinion, it is extremely difficult to define clearly and absolutely from the text of the historian, if Megara had really a democratic period or not.

The other important event of this period is the returning of the oligarchic exiles in Megara and the establishment of a type of oligarchy, which Thucydides calls, *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα*:

> "When these men assumed office (*οἱ δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐγένοντο*), however, they called for an inspection of arms, divided up the companies and picked out those they identified as their personal enemies and the ones who seemed most complicit in the dealings with the Athenians, about a hundred men in all, and forced the people to hold an open vote on them. When they were convicted they executed them, so restoring the city to an extreme form of oligarchy (*καὶ ἐς ὀλιγαρχίαν τὰ μάλιστα κατέστησαν τὴν πόλιν*)"[608].

It would be interesting to understand, how this type of constitution can be defined. The form *τὰ μάλιστα* and *ἐς τὰ μάλιστα* is used from Thucydides in order to express that something happens "in the highest degree"[609]. Consequently, this *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα* should be an oligarchy in its highest degree, that is to say, an extreme oligarchy. The historian does not give us more information about this type of constitution, but we can see some similarities between the description of this form of oligarchy in our text with the ways of government of other absolute constitutions in Athens[610]. The review of the infantry that the oligarchic exiles made in Megara, for example, is similar to the review that the Thirty Tyrants made of the Three Thousand that composed the number of citizens in Athens after the establishment of the tyranny, as Xenophon describes[611]. All of this aside, Hippias' method of reviewing the

[605] De Ste Croix 1972, 243, n. 25.
[606] Aristoph. Ach. 755.
[607] See e.g. Aristot. Pol. 4.1298b, 29 and 4.1299b, 31.
[608] Thuc. 4.74.3.
[609] See LSJ, s.v. *μάλα* and Classen 1879, 122. For representative examples of the use of *τὰ μάλιστα* in Thucydides, see Thuc. 1.92, where the historian uses this superlative, in order to highlight the friendliest feelings of the Spartans towards Athens (*προθυμίαν τὰ μάλιστ'*) because of the fundamental contribution of the second one to the Persian wars and the victory of the Greek cities. See also Thuc. 5.16.1, where Pleistoanax and Nicias are characterized as the main aspirants to power in Athens and Sparta (*σπεύδοντες τὰ μάλιστα τὴν ἡγεμονίαν*) after the death of Brasidas and Cleon. For other occurrences in the Thucydidean work, see Thuc. 4.76.3 5.25.3; 5.43.3; 6.104.2 and 8.6.3.
[610] See Gomme 1956, 536.
[611] Xen. Hell. 2.3.20, "As for the Thirty, they held a review, the Three Thousand assembling in the market-place and those who were not on "the roll" in various places here and there; then they gave the order to pile arms, and

army men during the procession of Panathenaia after the killing of Hipparchos from Armodios and Aristogeiton[612] was not so different from the act of the Megarian oligarchs. Beside this, the Thirty tyrants forced the infantry and cavalry of Eleusis to make an open voting in order to condemn the citizens of the city, who were caught from the Thirty Tyrants[613], a tyrannical practice that was used also from the oligarchs in Megara, when they forced the *demos* of the city to condemn the citizens who had collaborated with the Athenians. Obviously all these facts cannot define the *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα* of Megara. We speak of different constitutions and periods. However, from the similar devices of governing, which can be observed in the different constitutions that were mentioned, but also from the cruelty, which the oligarchs demonstrated towards their political enemies, when they managed to dominate in the city, we could maybe come to the conclusion that the oligarchy of Megara was closer to a tyrannical constitution than to a lawful oligarchy. Unfortunately, we do not have any other evidence of this constitution[614], besides from the fact that it lasted for a long period[615] and that by the time that Thucydides wrote these words, this extreme oligarchy had already fallen[616].

It is obvious from the afore-mentioned text that the political history of Megara in 424 is not so clear. Even though Thucydides describes the military history of the city, he is – once again – not interested to make an extensive political analysis, a fact that does not help us to understand how the political history of the city was really developed. However, the

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while the men were off duty and away, they sent their Lacedaemonian guardsmen and such citizens as were in sympathy with them, seized the arms of all except the Three Thousand, carried them up to the Acropolis, and deposited them in the temple", transl. by Carleton 1918, *ad locum.*

[612] Thuc. 6.58, "Without betraying anything of the crisis in his expression he (Hippias) pointed to a certain spot and told them to go there leaving behind their arms. They did so, thinking that he had something to say to them, whereupon he ordered his bodyguards to remove the weapons and immediately picked out the men he held responsible along with anyone else carrying a dagger (the practice being to parade only with shield and spear)".

[613] Xen. Hell. 2.4.9-10, "On the following day they summoned to the Odeum the hoplites who were on the roll and the cavalry also. Then Critias rose and said: "We, gentlemen," said he, "are establishing this government no less for you than for ourselves. Therefore, even as you will share in honours, so also you must share in the dangers. Therefore you must vote condemnation of the Eleusinians who have been seized, that you may have the same hopes and fears as we." Then he showed them a place and bade them cast their ballots therein, in plain sight of everybody (*εἰς τοῦτο ἐκέλευε φανερὰν φέρειν τὴν ψῆφον*)", transl. by Carleton 1918, *ad locum.*

[614] Note at this point also the passage of Diod. 12.67.1, who also speaks of Brasidas, who advanced against Megara, expelled the Athenians from Nisaea and then he set free the city and brought it back into the allegiance of the Lacedaemonians. Unfortunately, Diodorus does not speak of the constitutional changes in the city of Megara and of the new oligarchical form of constitution, which was established in the city.

[615] See Thuc. 4.74.4, who mentions that "and never was there a change of constitution arising from internal conflict that was brought about by so few and lasted so long". See also Thuc. 5.31.6, where the historian clearly speaks of an oligarchy in Megara in 421, three years after the *stasis* in the city.

[616] See Hornblower 1996, 244, who bases this conclusion to the aorist *ξυνέμεινεν.*

description of this scene in the text of Thucydides demonstrates once more how powerful the political factions were in the cities and how much these factions were influenced by the two big forces of this war. Once again we observe the political bond between the different political factions in the Greek city-states and their political relatives, Athens and Sparta, a bond that overcomes sometimes also the interest of the city-state, like we have seen in Megara, when the leaders of the democratic faction invited the Athenians to conquer the city, in order to avoid the return of the oligarchic exiles from Pegae. According to Trever, this attitude was too characteristic in most of the Greek city-states and "was largely responsible for the tragic failure of Greek politics"[617].

Besides this, the case of Megara is also important, in order to understand the different types of constitution that existed in the Greek city-states. Megara has been traditionally a city characterized by internal conflict and the continuous change of its forms of government. When it comes to the oligarchy established in the city in 424, unfortunately, we cannot be sure from this passage of the Thucydidean history, which were the characteristics of the *ὀλιγαρχία τὰ μάλιστα*, like already said. However, what I find as the most interesting part, in this case, is that the Greek world is riddled with different types of constitutions, which arise from the different cities and their history. Consequently, when we speak of oligarchy in the Greek world, we can never speak of one type of oligarchy, but of many different types, which change depending on the different history of every city. I think that Thucydides with his type of narration and his description of so many different types of oligarchy in his work makes this observation even clearer.

A controversial case: the constitution of Melos

As last example of an oligarchic constitution, I left the case of Melos, which cannot be really included in one of the afore-mentioned categories, since the information that we have on its characteristics is extremely incomplete. The Melian dialogue is one of the most interesting and important episodes in the work of Thucydides and constitutes by itself an important subject, which can cover many pages of historical analysis. The attack of Athens against Melos in 416 and the effort of the Athenians to force the citizens of the island to enter in the Athenian League, a demand expressed in the most violent and authoritarian way has interested thoroughly the modern research and has demonstrated once and for all the

[617] Trever 1925, 128.

changeover of the Athenian League to an Athenian hegemony[618]. One of the several subjects, which arise from this passage, is also the problematic constitution of the city of Melos.

Melos, the island of Cyclades, was colonized by Lacedaemonians[619]. During the Peloponnesian War, the Melians seem to be aloof and to not want to join the Delian League[620]. About the history of the island limited information has survived and the lack of much information about Melos limits also our knowledge about its constitution. The facts that we have about the constitution of the island are restricted and basically, derive from the description of Thucydides. The Aristotelian collection of *politeiai* should have included a Constitution of the Melians (fr. 564), but we know almost nothing about the Melian political institutions[621]. The most important source about the constitution of the island is, consequently, the text of Thucydides, who mentions that:

> "The Melians did not bring this delegation before the people in assembly but told them to explain the business they had come on to the authorities and the smaller ruling group (*οἷς οἱ Μήλιοι πρὸς μὲν τὸ πλῆθος οὐκ ἤγαγον, ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις λέγειν ἐκέλευον περὶ ὧν ἥκουσιν*). So the Athenian envoys addressed them as follows. 'We see that our discussions are not to take place before the popular assembly (*ἐπειδὴ οὐ πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος οἱ λόγοι γίγνονται*) – no doubt to prevent us from deceiving the people at large with one continuous presentation of persuasive arguments that would go unchallenged (for we do realise that this is the point of your bringing us before this smaller body) (*γιγνώσκομεν γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτο φρονεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους ἀγωγή*)"[622].

Our historian narrates that the Athenian ambassadors were asked to discuss with a smaller group of citizens in Melos and not with the *demos*, even if the topic of discussion was actually of vital significance for the future of the island. It seems also that the Athenians reacted ironically to the fact that the Melians did not bring the subject for discussion at the Assembly, as a democratic state would do. The text itself does not define clearly the constitution of Melos, but if we analyse it deeper, we could come a bit closer to the assumption that Melos could have been an oligarchy[623].

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[618] Thuc. 5.84-116.

[619] Hdt. 8.48: "the Melians, who are from Lacedaemonian stock (*Μήλιοι μὲν γένος ἐόντες ἀπὸ Λακεδαίμονος*)", transl. mine.

[620] Thuc. 2.9.4; 3.91.2-3.

[621] For more information about Melos, see IACP, *ad locum.*

[622] Thuc. 5.84.3-5.85.

[623] Of the same opinion is also Lane 2014, 81.

First of all, we should make a deeper lexicological analysis of some terms that the historian uses in the text. The Melians refuse to present the Athenians to the *πλῆθος* but ask them to express the reasons for their presence in Melos *ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις*. At first sight, we read about the existence of three political (?) groups in the city: the *πλῆθος*, the *ἀρχαί,* and the *ὀλίγοι*. Certainly, we cannot be sure about the role and function of these groups, because the text does not offer us this information, but we can try to research a bit further the above-mentioned words, in order to come a bit closer to the constitution of Melos.

The *πλῆθος* is defined by Bétant in this passage as the "vulgus", i.e. the mass, the people, the multitude.[624] The denial of the Melians to present the Athenians in front of the mass, could indicate the existence of an assembly[625], which, like Andrewes believes, "summoned rarely and only for certain purposes or at the will of the council"[626] and of whose decision the Melians were obviously afraid, like the Athenians highlight right afterwards[627]. On the last argument, Hornblower mentions that: "perhaps the oligarchs did not feel sure of carrying their fellow-citizens with them, and this is part of the reason for the secret negotiations".[628] The scholar identifies the Melians of this passage with the oligarchs, which avoided the meeting of the assembly because of their insecure feeling about its decision.

Instead of the *πλῆθος*, the Melians bring the Athenians in front of the *ἀρχαί* and the *ὀλίγοι*. The *ἀρχή*, in this case, is, in Bétant's opinion, "qui magistrate fungitur"[629], i.e. the one that practices a magistracy, which means that obviously the *ἀρχαί* are the magistrates. Of the same opinion is also Parker.[630] Which are those magistrates, however? In Andrewes' opinion: "*ἀρχαί* in Greek would include the council, often the most powerful organ in an oligarchy, as well as magistrates in the more familiar sense".[631]

[624] Bétant 1847, *ad locum.*
[625] For the use of the word *πλήθος* as the assembly see Chantraine 1968, *ad locum*: *πλήθα*, "assemblée" ou "majorité de l' assemblée"; LSJ 1996, *ad locum*: Hdt.3.81, *τὸ ὑμέτερον* π., *τὸ π. τὸ ὑμέτερον*, freq. of the popular assembly. For the use of the word *πλήθος* as the assembly in Thucydides, see Parker 1824, *ad locum*: Thuc. 1.72, *ἐς τὸ πλῆθος εἰπεῖν*, to speak to the assembly; Bétant 1847, *ad locum*: *πλήθος, vulgus*, i.e. the mass, the people, the multitude.
[626] Dover 1970, 159.
[627] Thuc. 5.85.
[628] Hornblower 2008, 230.
[629] Bétant 1843, *ad locum.*
[630] Parker 1824, *ad locum.*
[631] Dover 1970, 159

The *ἀρχαί,* however, should not discuss alone the proposals of the Athenians: they are accompanied by the *ὀλίγοι*. Bétant defines these *ὀλίγοι* as the "optimates"[632], i.e. the adherents of the best men, the aristocratic party, the aristocrats. Andrewes defines them as "the privileged voters"[633], i.e. the aristocrats of the city, which obviously were powerful because of their aristocratic heritage and wealth. It is remarkable the contrast between the *πλῆθος* and the *ὀλίγοι* that is highlighted by the Athenians right afterwards[634], when they comment the decision of the Melians to bring them in front of the few: the Athenians use this word, in order to highlight the few citizens that will decide about the fortune of the island (*ὀλίγοι*), in contrast to the multitude (*πλῆθος*), which should be the one to decide according to the ideals of the Athenian democracy. Consequently, the two above-mentioned groups, the *ἀρχαί,* and the *ὀλίγοι*, were responsible in this case to discuss with the Athenians and decide about the submission or not to them and not the *πλῆθος*.[635]

Can we identify, consequently, the above-mentioned groups with political institutions? It is hard to answer this question, as long as to determine absolutely the constitution of the island. The possible existence of an assembly, a fact that should exclude tyrannical or dynastic forms of the constitution and in the same time the absence of the absolute domination of this assembly, especially in matters of negotiation and submission of the city to Athens, could indicate the existence of an oligarchical constitution. Additionally, the use of the expression *ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις* can be parallelized with *ἔς τε τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὸν δῆμον*[636] in the case of the democratic Argos. During the negotiations between Argos and Corinth for a peace treaty in 421, the democratic Argives[637] bring the proposals of Corinth for discussion to the *ἀρχαί*, i.e. the magistrates and the *δῆμος*, i.e. the assembly, in contrast to the "oligarchic" Melians, which bring the proposals to the *ἀρχαί* and the *ὀλίγοι*. The contrast between *δῆμος* and *ὀλίγοι* from Thucydides in these passages and the fact that Argos was a democracy could indicate that the Melian constitution could have been the opposite of democracy, i.e. an oligarchy. If we include to all these facts also the blood relation between Melos and Sparta, as we have already seen, and the continuation of the good relationships between the two city-states, which gets emphasized especially during the announcement of the decision of the

[632] Bétant 1847, *ad locum.*
[633] Dover 1970, 159. See also Canfora 1991, 47, who agrees with Andrewes on the oligarchical character of the Melian institutions.
[634]Thuc. 5.85.
[635] Thuc. 5.112.
[636] Thuc. 5.28.1.
[637] On the democracy of Argos, see among others Piérart 2000, 297ff.

Melians to stay independent, basing to the help of their blood relatives Spartans[638], one could come to the (insecure) conclusion that Melos could have been oligarchic.

Unfortunately, we have no other evidence on the Melian constitution during the Peloponnesian War, like already said, and this fact does not permit us to understand absolutely if the constitution of Melos was oligarchic or not[639]. I will try anyway to enrich our knowledge about the Melian form of government by making parallelism with other examples of the Thucydidean history, which have some similarities with the case of Melos. In the fourth book for example, when the Lacedaemonian ambassadors went to Athens, in order to sign peace, the Lacedaemonians ask from the Athenians to speak with some few commissioners (*ὀλίγοις δὲ ἀνδράσι ξύνεδροι*)[640] and not with the *demos*, a fact that provokes the reaction of Cleon and ends with a non-agreement of the two cities. Hornblower believes that "presumably the Spartans wanted the *boule* or Council of 500 to take a hand, in what they surely knew was the usual way, cp. V. 45.1, where a preliminary diplomatic audience before the Council is treated as normal"[641]. Even if it this procedure does not seem completely unknown in the Athenian democracy, it is important at this case that Thucydides uses the same word, i.e. *ξύνεδροι*, which he uses, also when he speaks of the Melian commissioners[642] and that the Spartans, an oligarchic state, asked in this case for the same procedure, as the Melians.

A similar example can be seen once more in the work of the historian. During the afore-mentioned negotiations of the city of Argos with Corinth for the peace treaty, the Corinthians decide to discuss only with a part of them and not the Assembly (*πρός τινας τῶν ἐν τέλει ὄντων Ἀργείων*) and ask the Argives to appoint a few individuals with plenipotentiary powers, excluding in this way the *demos* from the negotiations of peace (*ἀποδεῖξαι δὲ ἄνδρας ὀλίγους ἀρχὴν αὐτοκράτορας καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὸν δῆμον τοὺς λόγους εἶναι*)[643]. If we consider that Corinth was an oligarchic state, when Argos was in this period democratic[644], one can make

[638] Thuc. 5.112.2.
[639] Reger in IACP, *ad locum* is of the same idea: "The presumption was that Melos was oligarchically governed; but we cannot tell whether that was the normal situation or the result of the Athenian attack".
[640] Thuc. 4.22.2. The word *ξύνεδρος* from the prefix *σύν* (in company with, together) and the word *ἕδρα* (seat) means "sitting within a council" (see LSJ, *ad locum*), one who sits by, associate ("consessor", see Bétant, *ad locum*). On the use of the term *ξύνεδροι* in Thucydides, see Hornblower 1996, 179, who mentions that "this word just means people who sit with/together and has no technical sense in Th.".
[641] Hornblower 1996, 179.
[642] Thuc. 5.86.
[643] Thuc. 5.27.2.
[644] See for both cities, IACP, *ad locum.*

easily the parallelism with the case of Melos, in which once again the "oligarchic" side decides to assign the decision-making to the few and not the many.

Consequently, the dialogue of the Melians with the Athenians gives us the chance to investigate the Melian constitution and to come a bit closer to the conclusion that it could have been oligarchic. The evidence, which Thucydides offers to us, could indicate the existence of a political structure based on an oligarchical model in Melos, but we cannot say for sure that the city was oligarchically governed. It is also interesting, as Thucydides narrates, that it should have existed a sort of *stasis* between a pro-Athenian and an anti-Athenian faction[645] in Melos, which indicates some sort of political instability on the island. I believe, however, that this "division" of the citizens should have been the result of the approaching Athenian attack and total destruction of Melos, a fact that the islanders could foresee; no further conclusions can be drawn from this fact according to me. The lack of substantial evidence is the reason, why the bibliography on this matter is almost non-existent. The subject is very interesting, but the material instruments to research it are not enough.

Sophrosyne and *Aristocracy* in the Thucydidean world

The use of *sophrosyne*

What I find extremely interesting on the way, in which Thucydides speaks of the diverse oligarchic forms of government during the Peloponnesian War, is the fact that the historian refers to this constitution with diverse denominations. I have already analysed thoroughly the oligarchic character of *eunomia* and *dynasteia*[646]. Another important example in the work of the historian is the connection of oligarchy with the idea of *σωφροσύνη*. *Sophrosyne* can have many different interpretations in the work of our historian. The term means literally "soundness of mind, prudence, discretion"[647]. In a political sense, however, it represents a moderate form of government[648] and is generally combined with the constitution of Sparta and with oligarchy in general[649].

[645] Thuc. 5.116.3.

[646] See corresponding chapters.

[647] See LSJ and Bétant 1847, *ad locum*. For this interpretation of the term and its derivatives, see the following passages: Thuc. 1.32.4 and Thuc. 3.37.3 (transl. as a "sense of responsibility"), for *σωφρονίζω*, see Thuc. 6.78.2 and Thuc. 8.1.3 and for *σώφρων*, see Thuc. 1.37.2; 1.42.2; 1.80.2; 1.120.3; 3.42.5; 3.43.5; 3.58.1; 3.59.1; 3.82.4; 4.18.4; 4.28.5; 5.101; 5.111.2; 6.6.2; 6.29.2; 6.41.2.

[648] It is of course not the right moment to research further the way, in which the main authors, who influenced and got influenced from Thucydides conceived the idea of *sophrosyne*; this would be a separate thesis and North

First of all, it is not a coincidence that the Spartan way of governing is combined several times with *sophrosyne* in the work of the historian. In the first book, for example, the Spartans are characterized as *σώφρονες* from the Corinthian Ambassadors in the Conference of the Peloponnesian League (*σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχετε*)[650]. This adjective will be given also to the king Archidamus, who is characterized later in the first book of Thucydides as *ἀνὴρ σώφρων*[651]. Finally, Archidamus in his speech in the Spartan *apella* before the beginning of the war, when he tries to convince the Lacedaemonians to not start a war against Athens arbitrarily, makes a large speech about the Spartan way of life, which inter alia gets characterized also by *sophrosyne*:

> "Moreover, the city we live in has always enjoyed freedom and fame. So what these traits really amount to is enlightened self-discipline (*σωφροσύνη*)"[652].

According to Rademarker, through the words of Archidamus *sophrosyne* gets presented as a "typically Spartan asset"[653]. As North notes, "Spartan sophrosyne […] has two principal facts: the tendency to maintain the status quo in external affairs and internally, the repressive discipline and restraint essential to a militaristic regime"[654]. North justly notes also that Thucydides avoids the word in the speeches of Pericles and when he commends his restraint, he uses the adjective *μέτριος* (moderate)[655] and not *σώφρων*[656]. This is a remarkable fact,

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1966 has analysed already deeply the different shades of this idea in the Greek world. It is, however, very interesting that the Greek literature of the Thucydidean period does not concentrate on the political meaning of *sophrosyne*, as our historian does. Herodotus uses its derivative *σωφρονέω* in the meaning of "become sane" and *σώφρων* as "reasonable", "rationally (Powell 1938, *ad locum*). Plato conceives the word as "sanitas animi" (soundness of mind) and the adjective as "sobrius, prudent" (temperate, prudent, see Astius 1838, *ad locum*) (even if one should note that in Gorgias (519a) he criticizes fifth-century democratic Athens for being devoid of *sophrosyne* and *dikaiosyne*). Last but not least, Aristotle interprets the word in his Politics mostly as "temperate" and is connected with human behaviours and not with political constitutions (for a detailed reference to all interpretations of *sophrosyne* in the work of Thucydides, see Bonitz 1995).

649 As Edmunds 1975 justly remarks: "sophrosyne was for Thucydides both an ethical value and a form of constitution that deserved the name if it represented the value".

650 Thuc. 1.68.1.

651 Thuc. 1.79.2. On Archidamus and his presence in the *History* of Thucydides, see inter alia Bloedow 1983 and Westlake 1968.

652 Thuc. 1.84.2-3.

653 Rademarker 2005, 209.

654 North 1966, 104.

655 See LSJ, *ad locum* and Bétant, *ad locum.*

656 See e.g. Thuc. 2.65.5, "as long as he (Pericles) was the city's leader in the time of peace he ruled them with moderation (*μετρίως ἐξηγεῖτο*) […]". Another characteristic example of this case is, according to North 1966, 113, also the reference of the historian to the constitution, which arose in Athens after the overthrow of the Four Hundred and was characterized by the historian as a *μετρία ξύγκρασις* (moderate blending) of the few and the many (Thuc. 8.97.2, for a more detailed analysis of this constitution, see the corresponding chapter). North believes that *metria* is the closest synonym in political terminology of *sophrosyne* "and the one that Thucydides

according to the scholar, since *sophrosyne* "more than any other sums up the inimitable balance of dynamism with restraint underlying the greatest achievements of that age" and its absence from a speech like the Funeral Oration, which celebrates "the spiritual, political, and aesthetic values of Athens in the age of Pericles"[657], indicates that *sophrosyne* should have been, in the mind of Thucydides at least, a Spartan value[658]. Rademarker justly remarks that "*σωφροσύνη* had a special appeal for Sparta and […] the Spartans generally lived up to their ideology"[659], which means that this "moderate" way of governing, which takes the name *sophrosyne* in the work of the historian accompanied Sparta through the whole Peloponnesian War and characterized its closed and conservative constitution. I will agree with North that "*sophron* is the operative word denoting oligarchy, because it was a commonplace of political thought that a democracy was more inclined to be turbulent, an oligarchy to be better disciplined"[660]. The adjective *sophron* is, consequently, more than suitable to a way of governing with the characteristics of the Lacedaemonian one, according to me.

At this point, I would like to refer to a rather ambiguous passage of the Thucydidean history. Down the narration of the events in Athens in 411, Thucydides mentions the following:

> "In Thasos, therefore, the result was the opposite of what those Athenians establishing the oligarchy had wanted, just as it was, I suppose, in many of the other subject states as well. After acquiring prudence and losing their fear of reprisals, the cities went straight for outright freedom in preference to the festering *eunomia* offered by the Athenians *(σωφροσύνην γὰρ λαβοῦσαι αἱ πόλεις καὶ ἄδειαν τῶν πρασσομένων ἐχώρησαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἄντικρυς ἐλευθερίαν τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπούλου εὐνομίας)*"[661].

This is for sure a difficult passage and several opinions have been expressed on its interpretation. Thucydides narrates that two months after the establishment of the oligarchy by the Athenian general Diitrephes in Thasos, the city managed to rebel against the tyrannical constitution of the Athenians with the help of Sparta[662]. According to some modern scholars,

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always prefers when he describes Athens". See also North 1966, 114, for other synonyms of *sophrosyne* in the work of the historian.

[657] North 1966, 106.

[658] There is only one example, in which Thucydides uses *σωφρονέω* in a speech of an Athenian (in particular in the speech of the Athenian Diodotos, who with his speech in the *ecclesia,* opposed the decision of the Assembly to destroy the island of Mytilene in 428 Thuc. 3.44.1). In this case, however, no political shade of this term can be implied.

[659] Rademarker 2005, 216.

[660] North 1966, 112.

[661] Thuc. 8.64.5, transl. ed. by me following the translation of Ferrari 1985, *ad locum.*

[662] Thuc. 8.64. 2-5.

the *sophrosyne*, which the *poleis* acquired, refers to the constitution, which the Athenian oligarchs tried to impose on Samos. Consequently, Thucydides, on the one hand, characterizes the constitution imposed from the Athenian oligarchs in Samos as *sophron*, when right afterwards he speaks of it as a "festering" *eunomia*, two characterizations completely opposed to each other, if we consider of course that in this case *eunomia* is accompanied by the adjective *ypoulos*. The use of *sophrosyne* at this point is considered from several modern scholars as a clear irony from the historian[663] since Thucydides could have never characterized a tyrannical form of constitution as *sophron*; indeed right afterwards he re-defines this form of government as a hollow constitution. For all these reasons this passage is considered from the modern scholars as the clearest example in the work of Thucydides of the oligarchic meaning of the term in general and of the oligarchy imposed by the Athenian oligarchs on the island in particular[664].

Even though I find the afore-mentioned interpretation as tempting, my personal opinion on this subject is a bit different. Let us have a closer look at the text at first. Thucydides says clearly that the cities after acquiring *sophrosyne* went on to absolute freedom in preference to the festering *eunomia* offered by the Athenians. I cannot see sincerely any connection of *sophrosyne* with the form of government, which the Athenian oligarchs tried to impose on the city. I think Thucydides wants to say exactly the opposite: the cities refused the Athenian oligarchy exactly because they became prudent and understood that this form of government would be a disaster for their cities. I think, consequently, that any connection of the *sophrosyne* with the Athenian oligarchy, in this case, is out of context. On the other hand, I cannot completely deny an oligarchical meaning of the term. Thucydides mentions clearly that Thasos received the Spartan contribution against Athens (*τὴν δ' ἀπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων ἐλευθερίαν ὁσημέραι προσδεχόμενοι*)[665] and we know that the city acquired an oligarchy influenced by the Lacedaemonians[666]. Even though in this passage our historian speaks of several cities and not only Thasos, the fact that the last at the end became oligarchic could

[663] Andrewes 1981, 160, mentions that: "I would therefore conclude that the word is here an ironical label for the sort of oligarchy that Thasos and other cities would get from a reformed Athens". For the same opinion see also Rademarker 2005, 218: "here *σωφροσύνη* is the 'moderate', oligarchic government Athens has now forced onto their allies: significantly, the term is once again associated with *εὐνομία.* But this *εὐνομία* is a sham".

[664] See inter alia Andrewes 1981, 159 and Hornblower 2008, 942.

[665] Thuc. 8.64.3: "they daily expected a liberation delivered by the Spartans".

[666] It seems that Thasos continued to have an oligarchical constitution after the rebel, according to a contemporary Athenian decree (SEG 38 851. A.4, 19, B.2-3), which speaks clearly of an oligarchy influenced by the Lacedaemonians, which in the year 407 will be overthrown and replaced by a democratic one by the Athenians under Thrasybulus (Xen. Hell. 1.4.9; Diod. 13.72.1; SEG 38 851.A7).

indicate an oligarchical colouring of the *sophrosyne,* which the cities acquired, when they refused the Athenian oligarchy. I will completely agree with North, who mentions that "here the restoration of oligarchy is described as "acquiring *sophrosyne*", and this condition is equated with genuine *eunomia*, in contrast to the counterfeit of this excellence under the democrats"[667]. *Sophrosyne* as the opposite of "tyrannical" forms of government will appear again in the work of the historian, where it is considered as the opposite of *dynasteia,* a tyrannical form of oligarchy (*τῷ σωφρονεστάτῳ ἐναντιώτατον*)[668]. Consequently, *sophrosyne, in this case,* is, in my opinion, opposed to the fraudulent oligarchy of Athens and should not be considered as the ironical label of the Athenian oligarchy, as several scholars believe.

In order to understand this concept of *sophrosyne* in Thucydides, one should notice also the case of Peisander, one of the coup instigators in Athens in 411, who uses the idea of *sophrosyne* during his speech in the Athenian *ecclesia* as a part of his political propaganda. Inter alia, Peisander says that Athens will never manage to gain the support of the Persian King if the city will not change its constitution into a more moderate one, i.e. an oligarchy (*εἰ μὴ πολιτεύσομεν τε σωφρονέστερον καὶ ἐς ὀλίγους μᾶλλον τὰς ἀρχὰς ποιήσομεν*)[669]. Obviously, the oligarchic constitution imposed by the Four Hundred and the ideal of *sophrosyne* are in reality two ideas completely opposed to each other, but the use of an adjective commonly combined with "healthy" oligarchic forms of government, was for sure a clever profession from Peisander, in order to convince the Athenians to accept the overthrow of democracy; the Athenians could have not imagined in this way the cruelness of the new authoritarian oligarchy. As Rademarker notes, "*σωφροσύνη* in Athens tended to be claimed as a distinctive *ἀρετή* by elitist citizens who disapproved of the excesses of democracy and favoured a modified, more 'moderate' form of government"[670].

The new concept of *aristocracy*

Another important term, which arises in the work of our historian and can be considered as an oligarchic ideal is the political form of *aristocracy.* The civil war, which exploded in Corcyra in 427 was the result of the extreme concurrence of the two main political factions, which

[667] North 1966, 113. Of the same opinion is also Edmunds 1975, 76f., who mentions that Thucydides uses *sophrosyne* in this case, in order to "describe the independent oligarchy achieved by some Athens' allies in 411, which he contrasts with the "festering" (i.e. seeming) good government (*ὑπούλου εὐνομίας*: 8.64.5) that the Athenian oligarchs had fostered".
[668] Thuc. 3.62.3.
[669] Thuc. 8.53.3.
[670] Rademarker 2005, 216.

used every means, in order to dominate[671]. During this internal conflict, Thucydides narrates that the oligarchic faction uses as ensign the *ἀριστοκρατία σώφρων*[672], a glorified profession that will be used as its slogan against the democratic faction. It is for sure not a coincidence that the oligarchic faction of Corcyra uses this slogan, in order to support its political propaganda. A research on the way, in which Thucydides conceives *aristocracy*, in this case, would help us a lot, in order to understand deeper the political value of *sophrosyne.*

It is notable that *ἀριστοκρατία* emerged as a separate political institution in the period after the Dark Ages, in order to replace monarchy[673]. In the next centuries, anyway, including the period of the Peloponnesian War, the term gets used also in order to express the constitution of the *ἄριστοι*, of the best and most capable citizens of the city. Aristotle claims that an aristocratic constitution could be the one, which is based on the wealth (*πλοῦτον*), the virtue (*ἀρετὴν*) and the people (*δῆμον*), like the constitution of Carthage but also the one, which is based only on the virtue and the people and not the wealth, like the constitution of Sparta.[674] This means that *ἀριστοκρατία* is a constitution based basically on the *ἀρετὴ*, i.e. the goodness, the excellence of its citizens and not on the wealth. Consequently, *aristocracy* is the government by *οἱ ἄριστοι* and not the government by *οἱ εὐγενεῖς*. In Gomme's opinion: "Any form of government could be "aristocratic" in the Greek sense: a democracy, if in fact the masses elected the most suitable men to office; an oligarchy, if the governing class consisted of the most suitable men to govern (also if they elected to office their own best men); a monarchy, if the monarch was the best man in the state."[675] So we could say that *ἀριστοκρατία* is a characteristic that can be observed in several types of constitutions. In this passage, however, the term "has nothing to do with the rule of an established nobility of birth or plutocracy", as Graham justly remarks[676]. Graham notes that *ἀριστοκρατία*[677] here is the "counterblast to *δημοκρατία* with great stress placed upon the contrast of the prefixes, *ἀριστο-* versus *δημο-*." This idea can be even more reinforced if we notice that the term is combined with *sophrosyne*. Since *sophrosyne* is combined several times in the Thucydidean world with

[671] On the civil in Corcyra and the political factions developed during the war, see the corresponding chapter.
[672] Thuc. 3.82.8.
[673] The discussion about the definition of *aristocracy* in this period is very big and this is not the right place to be analysed. For more information on this subject, see inter alia Whibley 1913, 24ff., and 72 ff., but also the article of Greenhalgh 1972.
[674] Aristot. Pol. 4.1293b, 14-19.
[675] Gomme 1956, 109.
[676] Graham 1984, 33.
[677] Graham 1984, 33 notes also justly that this passage is the earliest attested occurrence of this term.

oligarchy, in this passage the *ἀριστοκρατία σώφρων* should be conceived as a moderate oligarchy[678].

It is not a coincidence that the oligarchic faction uses this slogan for its political propaganda. If we have a look at the text of the historian, we will notice that the democratic faction in the Corcyraean civil war used as ensign the political equality of the people in front of the laws (*πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς*). *Isonomia*, usually combined with democracy[679], is used clearly here as the slogan of the *plethos,* the multitude. In consequence, the two different political factions of the war used as slogan for their political propaganda, not the real terms, which define the constitutions (democracy and oligarchy), but political terms that evoke old times, (*ἰσονομία πολιτικὴ* and *ἀριστοκρατία σώφρων*), which serve as glorified slogans to their political propaganda. These ideas are backward-looking for the Peloponnesian War and the world of the historian. According to me, the use of these words in the propaganda of the political factions is made on purpose, in order to beautify their policy and to attract more supporters. "Democracy" and "oligarchy" as slogans of the political factions would not be successful for this goal since they had taken a negative character during the Peloponnesian War[680]. Athens and Sparta, the two big representatives of democracy and oligarchy, had demonstrated an imperialistic policy towards their allies, had been violent in respect to their enemies and their political systems had been connected with the cruelty of the war. Consequently, the glamorization of the speeches of the political factions was necessary for their political propaganda during the conflicts between the Greek city-states at the end of the fifth century.

At this point, one should mention also another event of the Thucydidean narration. When the historian describes the events in Thasos and the establishment of the "fraudulent eunomia" of the Athenians[681] the historian mentions among others that the Thasians got on fortifying their city, thinking that they had no further need of an *aristocracy* supported by the Athenians (*τῆς μὲν μετ' Ἀθηναίων ἀριστοκρατίας*)[682]. The oligarchy of the Four Hundred gets characterized here as an *aristocracy* backed by and dependent from Athens. In this case, oligarchy is equated with the *aristocracy* founded by the Athenian coup instigators. The fact that

[678] Note also Leppin 1999, 177, who justly characterizes *sophrosyne* as an "aristokratischer Wert".
[679] See chapter on *eunomia*.
[680] See also Hornblower 1991, 486, who also believes that "oligarchy or rule of the few would not, however, 'moderate', be attractive as a slogan for general consumption".
[681] Thuc. 8.64.5.
[682] Thuc. 8.64.2-3.

Thucydides uses this term to describe the Athenian oligarchy indicates that *aristocracy* was really perceived from Thucydides as an oligarchical value.

Both references of the historian to an *aristocracy* are expressed in the frame of political propaganda. In the case of the civil war in Corcyra, the propaganda indicates the effort of the oligarchic faction to gain more supporters. On the other hand, in the case of Thasos and the effort of the Athenian oligarchs to impose their new authoritarian constitution, the use of *aristocracy* indicates, according to me, both the type of propaganda made by the instigators, a propaganda based on the idea of a glorified form of a moderate constitution, named *aristocracy* and also, according to Andrewes[683], the irony expressed by the historian about the new fraudulent "moderate" form of constitution (like already observed in 8.64.5). It is for sure not a coincidence that Thucydides uses only two times the term *ἀριστοκρατία* and only in this political context; in the fifth century, when the old aristocratic values of the precedent centuries seem to belong to the past, *aristocracy* receives a new interpretation and gets used as a glorified slogan for the political propaganda of the oligarchic factions.

Sophrosyne, aristocracy **and their raison d'être in the** ***History***

To sum up, I think that the analysis both of *sophrosyne* and *aristocracy* are very important, in order to understand a bit more the political way of thinking of Thucydides. Our historian is not only known for his effort to remain more objective possible in his narration, but he could be also characterized more as "Kriegshistoriker" than "politischer Philosoph", as Leppin justly remarks[684]. The fact that he does not restrict himself to use only one term to describe oligarchic forms of government, but several ones, many times also in an ironic way, could seem strange for a researcher of his *History*. We have noticed that the historian uses *sophrosyne* as an oligarchic label of Sparta, but also, in order to express his irony for the constitution of the Four Hundred and, in my opinion, his rejection of the new constitution imposed in Athens in 411. On the other hand, *aristocracy* as a political label of the fifth century abandons its former characteristics of the archaic period as the government of the *aristoi* and becomes the political slogan of the oligarchic faction in Corcyra, in order to delineate the glorious history of the constitutions governed by the few. Thucydides demonstrates consequently that he is more interested in political history than we tend to think nowadays and that, even if he seems to prefer to describe in every detail battles than political

[683] Andrewes 1981, 158.
[684] Leppin 1999, 178.

constitutions, he really had a critical thinking on the politics of the Greek world during the Peloponnesian War. This critical thinking, however, has to be always covered by his need to be more objective possible in his narration and this is why we have to read behind the lines, in order to understand a bit more his political position; even for a historian of the intelligence and importance of Thucydides, absolute objectivity cannot be succeeded.

Oligarchy in the ancient literature

It is extremely interesting the way that the historian uses the term *ὀλιγαρχία* in his work, but Thucydides is not the first one to use it. The term is mentioned for the first time in the Greek literature from Herodotus at the famous discussion of the three Persians about the ideal constitution for Persia[685]. One of them, Megabyzus, will support the constitution of oligarchy, i.e. the sovereignty of the few, as the best way of governing. (*Μεγάβυζος δὲ ὀλιγαρχίῃ ἐκέλευε ἐπιτρέπειν*[686]). Megabyzus bases his argument on the fact that "nothing can be both more unintelligent or insolent than the worthless, ineffectual mob"[687] and sustains that they cannot give the power to the *demos*, who "has not been educated and has never seen anything good or decent". This is why the Persian Grandee insists that they should give the power to the best men (*ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἀρίστων*), which are most likely to make the best decisions. This almost "aristocratic" view of oligarchy of Megabyzus, will be completely refused by the supporter of monarchy, Darius, who believes that even if the "few" of an oligarchic constitution have the best intents, they always end with discords (*στάσιες*) and bloodsheds (*φόνος*), since "each man wants to be the head of affairs and desires that his own opinions prevail"[688]. The result of this deviation of oligarchy and the bloodsheds between its governors, according to Darius, is the transformation of the constitution into a monarchy, established by the one, who will survive the *staseis.*

[685] On the purpose of the discussion of the three Persians, see the interesting theory of Asheri 1990, 297 that Herodotus wants with this passage to criticize the Greeks for their false opinion on the barbarians and in particular on the fact that democracy does not appear only in the Greek world, but was also known in the world of the barbarians. On the discussion of the three Persians see among the rich bibliography the detailed work of Apffel 1957. See also Ryffel 1949, 64ff.; Bornitz 1968, 201-214; Bringmann 1976; De Vido 2014, 63ff. and Ingarao 2017, 155ff. See also De Ste Croix 1977, 134, for the idea that the Persian Debate was an innovation for the account of the Greek political history by the ancient sources.

[686] Hdt. 3.81.

[687] All transl. of Herodotus are taken from Strassler 2007, *ad locum.*

[688] Hdt. 3.82.3, transl. by me.

All of this aside, Herodotus refers to oligarchy, when he speaks of the organization of the Corinthian state (*Κορινθίοισι γὰρ ἦν πόλιος κατάστασις τοιήδε: ἦν ὀλιγαρχίη, […]*[689]). He mentions that Corinth used to be ruled under an oligarchy by the Bacchiadae, the ruling aristocratic family of Corinth in eighth and seventh centuries, until replaced by the Cypselid dynasty in the eighth and seventh centuries[690]. I imagine that in this case, the historian uses a term, which represents Corinth of the present, since the city was traditionally oligarchic[691], but in a historical background of the past, since aristocracy, the government of the best men, was connected many times with oligarchy, the government of the few, in the Greek political thought of the fifth century, as we have already observed.

When it comes to antecedent sources of Thucydides, Herodotus (even if he can be considered almost as contemporary of our historian) is actually our only source; the term does not occur in sources of the antecedent centuries. When it comes, on the other hand, to other contemporary or subsequent ancient sources, we can surely say that Plato and Aristotle are the ones, who tried more than anyone to understand the concept of oligarchy. This is not the right place and time to make a very detailed analysis of the way, in which the two main philosophers of the fifth and fourth century understood the political form of *oligarchia*. What interests me more at this moment is to understand how Thucydides managed to influence our philosophers in the way, in which they understood the government of the few[692].

Starting with Plato, the philosopher defines oligarchy as "the state that is ruled by the few (*τὴν δὲ ὑπ' ὀλίγων γε ἑκάστοτε κρατηθεῖσαν πόλιν*)"[693]. Plato highlights however, that oligarchy is a form of government "based on property qualification", "wherein the rich hold office and the poor man is excluded (*τὴν ἀπὸ τιμημάτων, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, πολιτείαν, ἐν ᾗ οἱ μὲν πλούσιοι ἄρχουσιν, πένητι δὲ οὐ μέτεστιν ἀρχῆς*)."[694] Plato seems to speak in a negative way of the nature of this constitution, which he characterizes as "a constitution teeming with many ills"[695]. Actually Plato mentions that both aristocracy and oligarchy are constitutions based on the sovereignty of the few; the difference between them is the fact that by an aristocracy "the

[689] Hdt. 5.92B, 1.
[690] On the Bacchiads, see Diod. 7.9 and Salmon 1984, 55ff.
[691] See IACP, 467.
[692] On the way, in which Thucydides influenced the philosophers of the fourth century, see Balot 2017, 320f.
[693] Plat. Stat. 291e, all transl. of Plat. Stat. are taken from Fowler 1921, *ad locum.*
[694] Plat. Rep. 8.550c-d, all transl. of Plat. Rep. are taken from Shorey 1969, *ad locum*. On this argument see also Vegetti 2005, 217, who justly mentions that Plato speaks of a "plutocrazia".
[695] Plat. Rep. 8.544c.

rich imitate this government (*ὅταν ἄρα οἱ πλούσιοι ταύτην μιμῶνται*),"[696], when by an oligarchy "they (the rich) disregard the laws (*ὁπόταν δὲ τῶν νόμων μὴ φροντίζωσιν*)"[697].

In the category of the constitutions based on the sovereignty of the few, aristocracy, the rule of the best is in this case considered as a better form of constitution in opposition to oligarchy, the constitution "according to the whim of those in office", according to Rowe[698]. Plato considers oligarchy worse even than democracy. In his *Laws*, he mentions that the best State would arise from a monarchy when an oligarchy "would admit of the growth of the best State only with the greatest difficulty since it has the largest number of rulers (*πλεῖστοι γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ δυνάσται γίγνονται*)"[699]. The negativity, with which the philosopher deals with oligarchy does not, however, indicate only that Plato was against this form of government; Plato has a critical view with many constitutions of his times. As Ostwald justly remarks "he thinks that none of the governments of the world in which we live pursues the true goal of governance, the "real" good of the governed"[700]. The research on what Plato considers as the ideal form of government is very large and this is not the right place and time to be done. What is more interesting for my research is the fact that in the time of Plato, oligarchy seems to be already a formed type of constitution in the political thought, a fact that gave the possibility both to him, and Aristotle (as we will see consequently), to study its form and characteristics and accept it or reject it in their research of the ideal government.

When it comes to a specific definition of oligarchy, Aristotle is for sure the one to attempt it[701]. According to Aristotle, oligarchy is the government of the few rich and is directly combined with wealth and property. He clearly speaks of a constitution, in which the sovereignty of the state is in the power of the few[702], who own the properties[703]. The philosopher highlights the fact that "the real thing in which democracy and oligarchy differ from each other is poverty and wealth (*τὸ μὲν ταῖς ὀλιγαρχίαις τὸ δὲ ταῖς δημοκρατίαις, διὰ τὸ*

[696] On this phrase of Plato, Rowe 1995, 232, mentions that *μιμῶνται* should be interpreted as "describing, ruling according to the laws", since in the same dialogue (300e 11-301 a3) it has been implied that "imitating the true constitution well is simply a matter of ruling according to the laws".
[697] Plat. Stat. 301a.
[698] Rowe 1995, 232.
[699] Plat. Laws 4.710e, transl. by Bury 1967/ 1968, *ad locum.*
[700] Ostwald 2000a, 31. For the way, in which Plato conceives oligarchy, see also Barker 1918, 252ff.
[701] For the concept of *oligarchia* in Aristotle, see Ostwald 2000a, 41ff. and Ostwald 2000b, 389ff., who dealt on a great scale with this matter.
[702] Aristot. Pol. 3.1278b, 13.
[703] Aristot. Pol. 3.1279b, 18-19.

τοὺς μὲν εὐπόρους ὀλίγους, πολλοὺς δ' εἶναι τοὺς ἀπόρους πανταχοῦ)"[704], he defines consequently oligarchy and democracy on the economic-social *status* of the ones, which hold the power, as Accattino and Curnis justly remark[705]. He even makes a classification of the, according to him, four types of oligarchy, by starting from the more law-abiding forms of oligarchic constitutions, continuing with the more conservative forms based on richness and power and finishing with the most "tyrannical" form of oligarchy, the so-called *dynasteia*[706]. The fact that the philosopher defines in such a decisive way the oligarchic forms of government indicates for sure that in the fourth-century oligarchy was a more or less familiar idea. However, in which way could the Thucydidean narration have influenced the concept of this constitution in the subsequent Greek literature?

It is obvious that Thucydides is not the first to use the precise term in Greek literature. The use of the term in the text of Herodotus indicates that the idea of *oligarchia* as the constitution based on the power of the few should have been already established in the fifth century. However, between Herodotus and Thucydides, is the second the one to speak of different types of oligarchy, law-abiding and tyrannical ones, when the first limits his narration to a more theoretical approach of the term through the speech of Megabyzus. This more practical concept of the idea of oligarchy of Thucydides bequeathed to the subsequent scholars a more complete and concrete idea of this constitution, by offering them the possibility to analyse more deeply its functionality and malfunctions as a form of government[707]. Thucydides, even if not a historian, who aimed to write down thoroughly the political history of the fifth century, managed to leave as heritage very important observations on the political development of the Greek states.

What is oligarchy for Thucydides?

In order to understand the way that Thucydides understands the idea of oligarchy, it is worth mentioning, in my opinion, that the historian uses the word in a different frequency in his whole work. Like already mentioned, he uses the term extremely rarely in his first seven books and more frequently in the eighth book, when he describes the coup of the Four

[704] Aristot. Pol. 3.1279b, 35-41.
[705] Accattino; Curnis 2013, 184.
[706] Aristot. Pol. 4.1293a 12-34.
[707] Accattino and Curnis 2014, 228, note that Aristotle follows the suggestions of Thucydides, when it comes to the lacks of this form of government; I would agree and add that, according to me, the philosopher follows many considerations of the historian in his research of the true nature of oligarchy.

Hundred. This seems for sure awkward; why does he refer in his work to so many oligarchic constitutions without using the proper term *ὀλιγαρχία* and decides only in the last book to use the term every time he wants to refer to the constitution that arose from the coup of the Four Hundred?

I cannot imagine as an answer that Thucydides considered the constitution of the Four Hundred as a "more oligarchical" one than other constitutions in the Greek world of the fifth century. On the one hand, one should note one more time that Thucydides is not interested to write constitutional history; he is not interested to make a painstaking definition of oligarchy as a way of governing, but much more to investigate the way that its development influenced the behaviour of the participants of the war. However, I think that the answer has to do more with the use of the proper word in the development of the political history in Greece. It is for sure not a coincidence that the frequency of the use of this word increases gradually from Herodotus to Thucydides and from Thucydides to the philosophers of the fourth century. Oligarchy is for sure not an unknown form of government in the fifth century. The innovation, however, which Herodotus in small part and Thucydides afterwards introduce to the Greek political thought, is the definition of this way of governing with precise political terms, an unknown idea for the scholars of the archaic period. Ostwald mentions very accurately, according to me, that the appearance of the term *oligarchia* in Herodotus and Thucydides means that "the recognition of different types of régime necessarily lagged behind the existence of these types", which means that oligarchy was known in Greece, but was not understood as a precise political term before the narrations of Herodotus and Thucydides; it was them to define for the first time this political idea in the Greek literature.

There is also something else to consider in these conclusions. In the period, in which Herodotus and Thucydides write their history, the political situation of the Greek city-states is different than in the former centuries. The archaic period is riddled with different types of governing, like tyrannies and aristocracies, which in the fifth-century collapse and get replaced mainly by democracies and oligarchies. The explosion of the Peloponnesian War had as a consequence the extreme concurrence between Athens and Sparta and the political constitutions, which each of them represented. A civil war of this importance could not leave unaffected the traditional political structures, the stability of which gets questioned during the war. The Greek world gets divided into two parts and democracy and oligarchy become the slogan of the two different political factions, as the civil war in Corcyra demonstrated so accurately. Ostwald justly remarks that the Greek words *ὀλιγαρχικός* and *δημοκρατικός* are

both terms, which are born from the concurrence of the two political mentalities of the war. He believes that although differences between both ideologies were present in Greece much time before the fifth century, "they had not yet been transformed into the kind of ideology that proved to be so divisive internally in the Greek cities from the late fifth century on"[708]. In the period, in which Thucydides writes his history consequently, oligarchy is one of the two main constitutions in Greece, a fact, which offers much more evidences than in the past centuries to a historiographer, who is willing to write down this history, to define in a more thorough way this type of governing.

What is Oligarchy according to Thucydides consequently? For sure not one and only idea. In the work of the historian oligarchy can be a law-abiding government and at the same time also an authoritarian constitution of the few. On the other hand, oligarchy itself can have different denominations in the Thucydidean text. One can observe that Thucydides uses several terms, when he speaks of oligarchic ways of governing, like *eunomia, aristokratia, sophrosyne, oi oligoi,* etc. He likes to change the denomination of oligarchy extremely often, according to the idea that he wants to pass to the reader in every moment of the Peloponnesian War and to the type of oligarchy, of which he speaks, but we cannot speak of an absolute correspondence between every denomination of oligarchy with a specific definition of it. It seems, consequently, that oligarchy can have several denominations in the work of the historian and can for sure not be defined in one and only way and it seems that Thucydides chooses on purpose this method of describing oligarchy; this constitution has so many different shades and characteristics as the variety of the different city-states of the fifth century in Greece.

In this new era, consequently, oligarchy becomes the main constitution based on the sovereignty of the few and takes the place of all the archaic equivalent forms of government, like aristocracy. This should be the reason, for which oligarchy adopts a more precise definition and Thucydides manages to describe as first so many different kinds of oligarchic constitutions of the Greek world of the fifth century and leave a *κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ* (a possession for all time)[709] at his subsequent scholars of the political history and not only. Our historian makes clear that the variety of the Greek states of the fifth century, each of them governed and administered by its own rules, had as a consequence the existence not of one type, but of many different ones, each of them adapted to the character and organization of each state.

[708] Ostwald 2000b, 387.
[709] Thuc. 1.22.4.

And if it was not for him, other thinkers of the fourth century, would probably never had had the instruments to research in-depth the diverse political systems developed in the Greek world of the fifth century.

Conclusions

A research on the oligarchic forms of governing of the fifth century through the eyes of Thucydides was of great interest and offered to me a great amount of information on the development of politics in Greece in the classical period. It also demonstrates, in my opinion, how the Peloponnesian War changed once and for all the history of Greece. Thucydides has shown clearly that oligarchy was not one and only idea and that the diversity of the Greek city-states had as a consequence also the development of diverse political structures among them.

Oligarchy cannot be described with one sentence, and this is evident in the *History*. The history of every city-state characterized also its very unique form of governing, which, even if it can be defined under the term oligarchy (or democracy, as we have seen in the case of Syracuse), it cannot be perceived in one and only way. This is a very important observation, according to me, because nowadays we tend to define ancient oligarchy in a precise way, to characterize it as the law-abiding constitution, governed by a small clique of persons and institutions. Actually, I believe, that we tend to identify it with the constitution of Sparta, the most famous oligarchy of the fifth century. The work of Thucydides demonstrates exactly the opposite: there is no absolute definition of the term and no oligarchic constitution of a city-state has the exact same characteristics as the one of its neighbour city. I think that a research of this kind can open to the reader (as it happened also to me) a completely new way of thinking on oligarchy as a political structure and as one of the two fundamental constitutions, which determined the development of the greatest war of all times, as our historian defines it (Thuc. 1.1.2).

I have to admit that a research of this type involves several difficulties. As it emerges from my work, the primary goal of the Thucydidean *History* was not to understand deeply the political structure of the Greek city-states of the fifth century. Our historian does not insist on the description of the diverse political structures. This fact does not indicate, however, that Thucydides was not interested in the political development of the Greek cities: in reality, he is the painstaking scholar, who is interested in writing down all the information that he managed to gather through his personal research and with the most objectivity possible. Consequently, Thucydides does not speak further of a constitution, if he does not have enough information on it and this is the reason, in my opinion, for which, we know so few things on important forms of governing of the fifth century, when we have much more

information on military events of the war. This is why one should try to educe as much as possible from the text, in order to construct an – as complete as possible – image of the diverse oligarchic forms of governing of the period of the Peloponnesian War.

But can we really speak of absolute objectivity in the words of our historian? Thucydides demonstrated in several parts of his work his subjective point of view on the politics of Greece. His famous speeches are for sure characteristic for the length and the amount of information, which provide to the reader. The speeches of Pericles, in particular, indicate also the admiration of the historian for the dominant politician in Athens, a fact that is actually very far from an objective view of the facts. This means that our historian was actually available to introduce his own opinion, even indirectly, in order to support or reject a political idea. This fact makes the work of a researcher of his text more difficult, but also more interesting at the same time. Thucydides remains always our only contemporary source of the Peloponnesian war and his text is extremely important for the research of this period of history.

Aim of my research was to comprehend the Thucydidean point of view, because, I believe that if one manages to come a bit closer to the way of thinking of our historian, he will manage also to comprehend more the society itself. Thucydides is a contemporary of the events and his text represents the society of the fifth century in a very direct way. His work can be an important manual, in order to comprehend not only the ancient times but also a bit more the politics and society of today. No research of antiquity, in my opinion, should be done with the aim to understand only the past. The Thucydidean *History* can be a precious instrument not only for the further research of the development of politics through the centuries but also for the comprehension of the ambitions, sentiments, and desires of the human beings, who today like yesterday try to shape the world in which they live.

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