

V

The Class Struggle in Greek History on the Political Plane

(i)

'The age of the tyrants'

In this chapter I propose to concentrate mainly on the ways in which the class struggle in Greek history manifested itself on the political plane.

After the Dark Age which succeeded the Mycenaean civilisation, our earliest contemporary picture of Greece is that of the poet Hesiod, in the *Works and Days*, written from the standpoint of a Boeotian countryman, in the late eighth century B.C. or at the beginning of the seventh.¹ Here the lot of the farmer is presented as hard, with unceasing toil.² But we must not think of anything resembling the miserably poor 'Potato Eaters' whom Van Gogh portrayed with such heartrending sympathy (see IV.ii above and its nn.3-4 below). In fact, Hesiod is writing for reasonably well-to-do freehold farmers,³ who are assumed to have a number of slaves,⁴ as well as the occasional hired hand, the *thēs*,⁵ and various kinds of cattle. When the poet advises his reader to have only one son – or, if he has more, to die old (*WD* 376 ff.) – one remembers that this theme, the desirability of transmitting one's property undivided to a single heir, has often obsessed members of a privileged class, especially perhaps those who are on the lower edge of that class and whose descendants may fall below it if they inherit only a part of the ancestral estate.⁶ The mentality is very different from that of a peasant serf in a 'labour rent' system such as that of Poland from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth (as analysed with great acuteness by Witold Kula), where the peasant's obligation to perform the traditional amount of labour for his lord was paramount, and he could not hope to rent additional land and profit from the sale of its produce unless he could find additional labour inside his own family, with the result that 'in this economic system, in which the families of rich peasants are those which have the most members, they are not larger because they are richer, but on the contrary, richer because larger'.⁷

Access to political power in Hesiod's Boeotia, as in all other Greek states of which we know anything at this time, is clearly the exclusive preserve of a hereditary aristocracy, described by Hesiod as 'gift-devouring princes' (*dōrophagoi basilēes*),⁸ who scorn justice and give crooked judgments. The outlook of these blue-blooded gentlemen is superbly expressed in the *Theognidea*, poems probably put together at a later time, around a nucleus of genuine poetry written by Theognis of Megara at some time between the mid-seventh century and the mid-sixth.⁹ But now, in Theognis' world, the situation is very different from what it had been in Hesiod's time. The old secure days of aristocracy are gone. The poet himself, a class-conscious aristocrat if ever there was one, had been

driven into exile and his lands confiscated: for this he cries bitterly to Zeus for vengeance, praying that he may drink the blood of those who have his lands.¹⁰ For Theognis, society is divided into just two groups, his terminology for which (as always in ancient Greece)¹¹ is an inextricable mixture of the social and the moral. On one side are Theognis and his like, who are quite literally the Good (the *agathoi* or *esthloi*), and on the other side are the Bad (the *kakoi* or *deiloi*).¹² Everything depends on birth: in one of his most emotional pieces the poet bewails the corruption of heredity that comes from intermarriage between the Good and the Bad (lines 183-92).¹³ In mating rams and asses and horses, he says, men look for thoroughbreds; but now, provided he gets a large dowry, a 'good' man (he means of course a man of blue blood) does not hesitate to marry the 'bad daughter of a bad father' – a *kakēn kakou*, the daughter of what I have sometimes heard called 'a pleb'. The result is that *ploutos emeixē genos*: perhaps 'wealth confounds heredity' (190, cf. 192). Correspondingly, a woman will not disdain a 'bad' husband, provided he is rich (187-8). A nice illustration would be the marriage of Pittacus of Mytilene in Lesbos, described (perhaps quite unfairly) by the aristocratic poet Alcaeus as a *kakopatridēs* (a man with a low-born father),¹⁴ to a girl from the arrogant Penthelid family of the same town – who, according to Aristotle, were in the habit of going round striking people with clubs, an unfortunate trait which led to their being attacked (and some of them killed) by a certain Megacles and his associates (*Pol.* V.10, 1311^b26-8).¹⁵ Mere wealth, without good birth, remains a trivial quality for Theognis; and he is being bitterly sarcastic when he apostrophises Wealth (Plutus) as 'the fairest and most desirable of all the gods', and says, 'With you a man becomes Good (*esthlos*) even if he's really Bad' (1117-18). As for the 'demos' (*δῆμος*), the lower classes (the great majority of the population), who had been taking the wrong side in this acute class strife, the right way to treat them is to kick them hard, prod them with a sharp goad, and put a harsh yoke on their necks – then you will not find a *dēmos* anywhere so *philodespotos*, one that so loves its master (847-50).¹⁶ Theognis must have thoroughly approved of the way Odysseus treats the low-class agitator Thersites in Book II of the *Iliad* (211-78): he thumps him into silence, and of course everyone applauds (see VII.i below).

In the poems of Theognis we see bitter class struggle with a vengeance. What had happened to cause the remarkable change since Hesiod's day? The answer, in a word, is the Tyrants.¹⁷ Between the mid-seventh century and the late sixth (and later still in Sicily) many Greek cities, dominated until now by hereditary aristocracies, experienced a new form of personal dictatorial rule, by the so-called tyrants (*tyrannoi*). Attempts have of course been made to deny any important class basis to the rule of the tyrants and to pretend that they were no more than isolated adventurers, greedy for power and profit. Take any one Greek city on its own, and it may be difficult to prove that its tyrant was anything more than a self-seeking, power-hungry despot. But one might as well try to represent the English Reformation as nothing more than the consequence of King Henry VIII's annoyance with the Pope for refusing to help him get rid of Catherine of Aragon. Certainly, each Greek tyranny has some features peculiar to itself, as does the Reformation in each of the various countries of Europe; but in either case it is when one looks at all the examples together that the general picture begins to become clear. When the rule of the Greek tyrants

ended, as it usually did after quite a short period, of a generation or two,¹⁸ hereditary aristocratic dominance had disappeared, except in a few places, and had been succeeded by a much more 'open' society: political power no longer rested on descent, on blue blood, but was mainly dependent upon the possession of property (this now became the standard form of Greek oligarchy), and in many cities, such as Athens, it was later extended in theory to all citizens, in a democracy. This was a change of fundamental importance and it provides a good example of the process I am trying to illustrate.

The classes I would recognise here are on the one hand the hereditary ruling aristocrats, who were by and large the principal landowners and who entirely monopolised political power, and on the other hand, at first, all other classes, sometimes together called the 'demos' – an expression now often used in a much wider sense than in the fifth and fourth centuries, to mean roughly 'commoner' as opposed to 'aristocrat'. At the head of the demos there were likely to be some men who had become prosperous themselves and who aspired to a political position commensurate with their economic status.¹⁹ Those of the tyrants who were not (as some were)²⁰ renegade aristocrats themselves may have come from this class: we rarely have any reliable information about the social origins of tyrants, but in some cases they do appear to be commoners of some wealth and position: an example (though probably not a characteristic one) is Phalaris of Agragas in Sicily, in the second quarter of the sixth century, who is said to have been a tax-farmer and then a contractor for building a temple.²¹ (There was once a widespread view, propagated in particular by Percy Ure,²² and taken over by George Thomson and others, that many tyrants were, so to speak, 'merchant princes', who had made their fortune in commerce; but in fact this cannot be proved for any single tyrant, and the most one can say is that some tyrants may have been the sons or grandsons of men who had had successful trading ventures and had then acquired the necessary social standing by turning themselves into landowners; cf. III.iii above.) A few of these prosperous commoners may even have achieved the ultimate social *cachet* of providing themselves with a warhorse (roughly the equivalent of a Rolls-Royce)²³ and thus becoming *hippeis* ('knights'); but in my opinion the great majority of the *hippeis* would normally be members of the ruling nobility. Below the leading group of men I have mentioned came the mass of well-to-do and middling peasants: those who are often referred to as 'the hoplite class', because they provided the heavy-armed infantry (*hoplitai*) of the Greek citizen armies of the seventh and following centuries, who played a notable part in defeating the invading Persian armies at Marathon (490) and Plataea (479), and by whom the inter-city warfare that was endemic among the Greek states was largely conducted. Membership of the hoplite class depended entirely upon the ownership of a moderate amount of property, sufficient not merely to provide a man with a full 'panoply' (complete military equipment, including body-armour and shield), the only qualification that is sometimes mentioned by modern writers, but also to ensure him and his family an adequate livelihood even if he had to go abroad on campaign or stay on guard away from his farm for weeks or even months on end. A man who had too little property to become a hoplite served only in the fleet (if there was one) or as a light-armed soldier, using a bow or sling or dagger or club rather than the spear, the gentleman's weapon (cf. my *OPW* 372-3). In the literature of the fifth

and fourth centuries the term 'demos' is often used particularly of this 'sub-hoplite' class. Some of them would be poor peasants (freeholders or leaseholders), others would be artisans, shopkeepers, petty traders, or men who earned their living in what was then considered (as we have seen: III.vi above) to be the meanest of all ways open to free men: namely, as hired labourers – *misthōtoi* or *thētes*. (The last expression, used in a specialised sense, was actually the technical term at Athens for those who were too poor to be hoplites.)

There was a very simple reason why tyranny was a necessary phase in the development of many Greek states: institutions suited to maintaining in power even a non-hereditary ruling class, let alone a democracy, did not exist (they had never existed) and had to be created, painfully and by experience, over the years. As far as we know, democracy had never before been established in a thoroughly civilised society, and the Greek *poleis* which developed it had to build it up from the very bottom: they had both to devise the necessary institutions and to construct an appropriate ideology – a brilliant achievement of which I shall have something more to say later (Section ii below). Even non-hereditary oligarchy, based entirely on property ownership and not on right of birth, was something new and untried, lacking a traditional pattern which could be utilised without potentially dangerous experiment. Until the necessary institutions had been devised there was no real alternative to aristocracy but the dictatorship of a single individual and his family – partly according to the old pattern of Greek kingship, but now with a power that was not traditional but usurped. Then, as the tyrant and his successors (from his own family) brought new men into positions of responsibility, and political *aretē* (competence and 'know-how') gradually seeped down into at least the upper layers of the social strata below the nobility, a time came when the propertied class (or even the whole body of citizens) found that they could dispense with the tyrant and govern by themselves. As Glotz so admirably put it:

The people regarded tyranny only as an expedient. They used it as a battering-ram with which to demolish the citadel of the oligarchs, and when their end had been achieved they hastily abandoned the weapon which wounded their hands (GC 116).²⁴

The metaphor of the 'battering ram' must not of course be taken to imply that the whole process was conscious and directed by the demos – in the sense explained above, of those outside the ruling aristocracy – towards securing power ultimately for themselves. The movement might often begin as a simple revolt by the demos, or (more usually) some sections of it, against oppression and exploitation, simmering possibly for years and breaking out only when a willing and capable leader presented himself – a leader, perhaps, whose aims eventually turned out to be mainly selfish. The motives of the tyrants have often been scrutinised; but this is a singularly pointless quest, since with hardly an exception we have no real evidence except later traditions, often at least partly fictitious, and inferences from actions, which will support different hypotheses.

There is one political figure in the age of the tyrants about whom we know much more than any of the others: Solon the Athenian, at the beginning of the sixth century (he was archon in 594/3), whose political outlook and activities can be seen clearly in some of their aspects in his own excellent poems, considerable fragments of which have survived.²⁵ There is no doubt at all about Solon's

perfectly serious conception of his own role, as a would-be impartial arbitrator in a situation of severe class strife, who was pressed by the demos to make himself tyrant, but refused.²⁶ Although Solon also refused to make a general redistribution of land, as demanded by the impoverished lower classes, he did take the extraordinary step of cancelling all debts, and he forbade for the future not merely enslavement for debt but also any kind of debt bondage, by the simple expedient of prohibiting the giving of the body as security²⁷ – a much-needed reform affecting Athens alone, of course: we have no idea how many other Greek states, if any, followed the example of Athens here (see III.iv above and its n.2 below). Other leading political figures who were less reluctant than Solon to take unconstitutional power need not necessarily have had less worthy motives, although no doubt many of them will have been primarily concerned with gaining political power. Cylon, who staged an abortive coup at Athens nearly thirty years before Solon's archonship, failed completely: either the discontent had not yet reached fever-pitch, or the Athenians knew enough about Cylon to reject him. Peisistratus later completed Solon's work at Athens by enforcing (if with a certain amount of 'fiddling')²⁸ the new constitution of Solon – admirable and progressive in its day – which (in my opinion) the old aristocracy of Eupatrids had been sabotaging.²⁹

A subject for investigation that is decidedly more promising than the motives of individual tyrants is the social basis of their power. Here again the evidence is far from satisfactory and its interpretation is much disputed, recently in particular in regard to the extent to which the tyrants received support from the hoplite class. I think I have said enough above to indicate how I would set about solving such a problem. The fact is that the situation must have varied greatly from *polis* to *polis*. In some cases the tyrant might be installed mainly or entirely by superior force from outside, either by a more powerful city, or (as in Asia from the late sixth century to the late fourth) by the king of Persia or one of his satraps or a local dynast.³⁰ In other cases the tyrant may have come to power with the aid of a mercenary force,³¹ and may have maintained himself in power for some time by its aid. In the absence of any such external pressures, the tyrant would have to rely upon discontented sections of the demos. My own feeling is that the lowest classes (the poorest peasants, the landless labourers, the humbler artisans and the like) would not at this early date have formed a source of strength effective enough to bring to power a tyrant who was not acceptable to the bulk of the hoplite class, whose role, if it came to armed conflict, would surely at this period have been decisive.³² Many humble citizens in some *poleis* are anyway likely to have been clients of nobles or to have had such a dependent relationship to them that they could do little to oppose them. I myself have no doubt at all that a considerable proportion of the hoplite class in many *poleis*, especially at its lower levels, must have given support to tyrants. This thesis, first argued in detail by Andrewes (*GT*, 1956) but criticised by Snodgrass in 1965, is now sufficiently established, in my opinion, by Paul Cartledge's excellent article, 'Hoplites and heroes', in *JHS* 97 (1977) 11-27.³³

For Aristotle, there was an essential distinction between the two Greek forms of *monarchia* (one-man-rule), namely *basileia*, traditional kingship according to established forms of law, and *tyrannis*, the rule of a tyrant. They differed in their very origin. Kingship, says Aristotle, 'came into existence for the purpose of

helping the better classes [*hoi epieikeis* – just another name for the propertied class] against the demos' (the common people), whereas tyrants arose 'from among the common people and the masses, in opposition to the notables [*hoi gnōrimoi*], so that the demos should not suffer injustice at their hands . . . The great majority of the tyrants began as demagogues, so to speak, and won confidence by calumniating the notables' (*Pol.* V.10, 1310^b9-16). A little later he says that the king 'wishes to be a guardian of society, so that those who possess property may suffer no injustice and the demos may not be subjected to arrogant treatment', whereas the tyrant does just the opposite and in practice considers only his own interests (1310^b40-11^a2). The tyrants, who had fulfilled their historic role long before Aristotle's day and by his time were often the oppressive and despotic figures he conceives most tyrants to have been, receive almost uniformly hostile treatment in our surviving sources. One single figure emerges only slightly tarnished:³⁴ the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus, who receives some positive encomia from Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristotle (see n.28 again).

I must not leave the subject of Greek tyranny without recalling some passages in Marx, inspired by the seizure of power in France by Louis Napoleon in December 1851: these are cited in II.iii above.

(ii)

The fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

Before the end of the sixth century virtually all the tyrants had disappeared, except in Sicily, and in the Greek cities of Asia and the offshore islands in which many tyrants ruled as Persian quislings.¹ The two centuries that followed, the fifth and fourth,² were the great age of Greek democracy, when democratic constitutions of various kinds, successful or unsuccessful in different degrees, were introduced, often by violent revolution, and sometimes with the intervention of an outside power. The regimes they displaced were usually oligarchies of wealth: political rights had been confined not merely to a Few (the *oligoí*) but to the *propertied* Few (cf. II.iv above). At its broadest, such an oligarchy might extend to the whole class of the *hopla parechomenoi* (those able to afford to serve as cavalry or hoplites: see Section i above), who may perhaps have accounted for something between one-fifth and one-third of all citizens in most cases (see esp. Ps.-Herodes, *Peri Politeias* 30-1, discussed in my *OPW* 35 n.65). If the property qualification for the exercise of political rights was put rather higher, the oligarchy might consist of what I have defined as 'the propertied class' *par excellence* (see III.ii above): those who could live off their own property without having to work for their living. And of course the membership of the oligarchy might be more restricted still; at its narrowest it might even be confined to a few leading families, forming a hereditary *dynasteia*. I think one could say that, broadly speaking, the narrower the oligarchy, the smaller the chance of its surviving for a long time, except in special circumstances, such as the backing of an outside power.

Classical Greek democracy³ is far too large a subject for me to discuss in any detail here, and I shall content myself with a very brief summary of its principal characteristics, as we can see them both in contemporary (and often hostile) specifications of *dēmokratia*⁴ and in what we know of its practice.⁵ Unfortunately,

we have so little information about other Greek democracies that I am obliged to treat the Athenian democracy as if it were typical, as it evidently was not, although it was certainly the most respected and illustrious of Greek democracies, and the most highly developed one of which we have any knowledge.

A. (i) The first and most characteristic feature of *dēmokratia* was rule by majority vote of all citizens, determined in a sovereign Assembly (*ekklēsia*, normally voting by show of hands) and large popular lawcourts, *dikastēria*, consisting of dicasts (*dikastai*) who were both judges and jurors, voting by ballot and inappellable. Even many Classical scholars have failed to realise the extraordinary originality of Greek democracy, which, in the fundamental sense of *taking political decisions by majority vote of all citizens*, occurred earlier than in any other society we know about: see my *OPW* 348 (Appendix XXIV).

(ii) *Dēmokratia* was the rule of the 'demos' (*δῆμος*), a word used in two main senses, to mean either the whole citizen body (and its Assembly), or the poor, the lower classes. Since the majority of citizens everywhere owned little or no property, the propertied class complained that *dēmokratia* was the rule of the *dēmos* in the narrower sense and in effect the domination of the poor over the rich. In so far as this was true, democracy played a vital part in the class struggle by mitigating the exploitation of poorer citizens by richer ones – a fact that seldom receives the emphasis it deserves. (I have discussed this subject sufficiently in II.iv above.)

(iii) Only adult males were citizens in the full sense, and women had no political rights. When I use the term 'citizen', therefore, it must be understood to include adult males only.

(iv) We must never forget, of course, that Greek democracy must always have depended to a considerable extent on the exploitation of slave labour, which, in the conditions obtaining in the ancient world, was if anything even more essential for the maintenance of a democracy than of any more restricted form of constitution. (I have explained the reason for this in III.iv above: see the third paragraph of its § I.) However, even though we may regard slavery, *sub specie aeternitatis*, as an irredeemably evil feature of any human society, we must not allow the fact of its existence under Greek democracy to degrade that democracy in our eyes, *when we judge it by even the highest standards of its day*, for Greek states could not dispense with slavery under any other constitutional form either,⁶ and virtually no objection was ever raised in antiquity to slavery as an institution (see VII.iii below).

B. The great aim of democrats was that their society should achieve as much freedom (*eleutheria*) as possible.⁷ In strong contrast with many twentieth-century societies which boast of their freedom but whose claim to have achieved it (or even to aim at it) may be denied and derided by others, the opponents of Greek democracy fully accepted the fact that freedom was indeed the goal of democrats, even when they disparaged that goal as involving license rather than real liberty. Plato, one of the most determined and dangerous enemies that freedom has ever had, sneers at democracy as involving an excess of freedom for everyone – citizens, metics, foreigners, slaves and women and (a brilliant conceit) even the animals in a democracy are simply 'full of *eleutheria*'! (*Rep.* VIII.562a-4a). Since public debate was an essential part of the democratic process,

an important ingredient in democratic *eleutheria* was freedom of speech, *parrhēsia*.⁸

C. Because under democracy every citizen had an equal vote, political equality (*isotēs*) was, so to speak, a built-in feature of Greek *dēmokratia*.⁹ Greek democrats would say that their society was characterised by *isonomia* (perhaps 'equality before the law', although not a 'correct translation', conveys the essential idea best to a modern reader) and *isēgoria*, the equal right of everyone to speak his mind freely.¹⁰ There was no pretence, however, of economic equality.

D. It was a fundamental principle of democracy that everyone who exercised any power should be *hypeuthynos*, subject to *euthyna*, the examination of his conduct (and audit of his accounts) which every official had to undergo, at Athens and most if not all other democracies, at the end of his term of office, normally one year.¹¹

E. Democrats believed deeply in the rule of law, however much they might be accused by their opponents of habitually overriding their laws by decrees (*psēphismata*) passed *ad hoc* and *ad hominem* – an accusation that was conspicuously untrue of Classical Athens, even if the strictures of Aristotle and others under this head may have been justified in relation to some other democracies.¹²

Since it is alleged by some ancient sources and even by some modern scholars that Greek democrats believed in making appointments to office by lot rather than by election, I must emphasise that this is true only of minor offices and of those not involving military command. The issue is well put by the author of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Rhetoric to Alexander*, which we may as well now call (with its latest Teubner editor, M. Fuhrmann, 1966) Anaximenes, *Ars Rhetorica*:

In democracies it is necessary for the minor magistrates (the majority) to be appointed by lot, for this avoids civil strife, but for the important ones to be elected by the whole citizen body (2.14, 1424^a17–20).

And the same work goes on to say that even in oligarchies it is desirable to appoint to most offices by lot, reserving only the greatest ones for 'a secret vote under oath and with strict precautions' (2.18, 1424^a40–b3).

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The evidence that survives from the fifth and fourth centuries is very fragmentary, and although a large proportion of it relates to Athens, there is also a scatter of evidence for scores of other *poleis*, each different in some respects from every other. Generalisation is exceedingly difficult and oversimplification is an ever-present danger. I have, however, done my best to examine virtually all the important evidence that is in any way relevant (far more than I have found it possible to cite), and I now propose to make a series of general statements concerning the class struggle in the fifth and fourth centuries, based upon the specific evidence I have mentioned.

1. In an ancient Greek *polis* the class struggle in the basic economic sense (see my definitions, in II.ii above) proceeded of course without cessation in so far as it was between property-owners and those workers whose labour provided them, directly or indirectly, with their leisured existence: that is to say, chattel slaves in the main, but in a few places principally serfs (see III.iv above); some hired labourers, relatively few in number (see III.vi above); those unfortunates

We can accept the fact that what we call 'the state' was for the Greeks the instrument of the *politeuma*, the body of citizens who had the constitutional power of ruling. And as I have already shown (in II.iv above), the Greeks habitually expected an oligarchy to rule in the interests of the propertied class, a democracy mainly in the interests of the poorer citizens. Control of the state, therefore, was one of the prizes, indeed the greatest prize, of class struggle on the political plane. This should not surprise even those who cannot accept the statement in the *Communist Manifesto* that 'political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another' (*MECW* VI.505).

3. Class struggle on the political plane, then, was above all in most cases for control of the state. If in a Greek *polis* the demos could create and sustain a democracy that really worked, like the Athenian one, they could hope to protect themselves to a high degree and largely to escape exploitation. The only long-lived example of really successful democracy which can be cited with confidence is Athens between 507 and 322/1, when the democracy was securely in power except for two brief oligarchic revolutions in 411 and 404-3 (see below and nn.29-34). Many other democracies existed, but our knowledge of them is slight.

4. When, on the other hand, the propertied class were able to set up an oligarchy, with a franchise dependent on a property-qualification, the mass of poor citizens would be deprived of all constitutional power and would be likely to become subject in an increasing degree to exploitation by the wealthy. In II.iv above I quoted a number of statements by Greek writers who took this for granted. As Plato says, an oligarchy becomes 'two cities', of Rich and Poor respectively, for in oligarchies some have great wealth, others extreme poverty, and almost everyone outside the ruling class is a pauper (*Rep.* VIII.551d, 552bd). Oligarchy, Plato adds, is a form of constitution that 'abounds with many evils' (544c). As happened under the Roman oligarchy in Italy (see III.iv n.5 below), 'the powerful' in Greek oligarchies must often have been able to usurp possession of most of the best land, legally or illegally. Aristotle mentions that the leading men (the *gnōrimoi*) of Thurii, a Greek city in southern Italy, were able to profit by absorbing 'the whole countryside, contrary to law, for the constitution was too oligarchic' (*oligarchikōtera*): the eventual result was a violent revolution (*Pol.* V.7, 1307^a27 ff., esp. 29-33). Aristotle goes on at once to generalise about 'aristocratic' constitutions: since they are oligarchical, he says, the *gnōrimoi* grasp more than their share (*pleonektousin*, 1307^a34-5). No doubt in most Greek oligarchies the law of debt was harsh, allowing forms of debt bondage, if not actual enslavement for debt (cf. III.iv, § III above). Even if they retained personal freedom, defaulting borrowers might lose their property altogether and be forced to become either tenant-farmers or wage-labourers, or they might resort to mercenary service, an escape-route available only to the most able-bodied.¹⁶ In oligarchies there may well have been forms of compulsory labour for those without sufficient property to make financial contributions to the state or to serve in the hoplite army (cf. the *angareiai* we so often encounter in the Hellenistic and Roman periods: see I.iii above and its n.8 below). And with the courts of law staffed exclusively by magistrates and other members of the ruling class, it will often have been difficult for a poor man even to obtain his legal rights (such as they were) against members of the oligarchy – in whose eyes justice, as Aristotle

who were obliged by need to borrow at interest and (probably in the great majority of *poleis* other than Athens) might become debt bondsmen on default; and more indirectly their tenants. This struggle was of course very one-sided: it expressed the master's dominance, and its essence was his exploitation of the labour of those who worked for him. I know of no parallel to the mass liberation of the Messenian Helots (see III.iv above, § II, and its n.18 below), who in 370-369 obtained their freedom with the aid of powerful outside intervention at a time of unprecedented Spartan weakness, and became once more the independent *polis* of Messene.

2. There were, however, very many Greeks who owned little property and no slaves: the majority of these will have fulfilled my definition of 'peasants' (see IV.ii above), and a good number of others will have been artisans or traders (IV.vi). Collectively, these people were the 'demos', the common people, and they must have formed the great bulk of the citizen population in the vast majority of Greek *poleis*. How did this demos participate in class struggle? If class is a relationship of exploitation, then the answer to this question must depend upon the extent to which the members of a particular demos were either exploited or, although in danger of falling into that condition, were successful in avoiding it by political class struggle. What happened in practice would depend largely upon the result of this political class struggle, which (as we shall see) was essentially for control of the state. We must look closely at the nature of this struggle, and how it was related to the state. It is convenient and profitable to deal with this topic here, in relation to the fifth and fourth centuries, since before that period our knowledge is insufficient, and after it the Greek *poleis* were mainly no longer their own masters but were subject to a greater or less extent to the dictation of a suzerain, whether a Hellenistic king or the Roman government (see Section iii of this chapter). Moreover, I can discuss the subject in the very terms used by contemporary thinkers, Aristotle and Plato above all.

When I speak of control of the 'state' I am referring to what the ancient Greeks called the *politeia* – literally, the 'constitution', the fundamental laws and customs governing political life; but the Greek word has on occasion something very like the force of the modern expression, 'way of life'. Isocrates describes the *politeia* as the very soul of the city (the *psychē poleōs*, VII.14). Aristotle declares that when the *politeia* changes, the city is just not the same city (*Pol.* III.3, 1276^b3-4). For him, the body of citizens having full political rights,¹³ the *politeuma*, is 'master in all respects of the *polis*; *politeuma* and *politeia* are identical' (III.6, 1278^b10-11), the two words 'signify the same thing' (1279^a25-6). The constitution is the ruler or rulers, who may be One man, or a Few, or the Many: each of these ought to rule in the interests of all members of the community but in practice will often not do so (1279^a27-39), for Aristotle makes it plain in numerous passages that what one must expect in practice is that the rulers will rule in what they regard as their own personal or class interest. (It is worth remarking here, by the way, that Aristotle and other Greek intellectuals did not regard the preservation of the rights of property as a main function of the state,¹⁴ in the way that so many later thinkers have done, in particular Cicero, who fervently believed that states exist primarily in order to protect private property rights (*De offic.* II.73, cf. 78, 85; I.21), and of course Locke and the many other political theorists of more modern times who have held similar views.¹⁵

realised, was likely to be equated with the interests of the propertied class: they normally felt themselves to be absolutely superior and entitled to make all political decisions at their own will (see II.iv above).¹⁷

5. An oligarchy, once securely in power, might survive for quite a long time if it remained vigilant and above all united, and if its members did not abuse their political power too grossly. (In II.iv above I have quoted some of Aristotle's remarks on this subject.) Few examples are known of long-lived oligarchy. One of the most obvious is Corinth, for nearly two centuries from the fall of the Cypselid tyranny (probably c. 582) until the democratic revolution in 392. The most enduring oligarchy of all was Sparta (see my *OPW* 124-49), where successful revolution was unknown after the setting up of the 'Lycurgan' constitution in (probably) the mid-seventh century until the coup effected by King Cleomenes III in 227, when there began a troubled period of two or three generations of civil strife. Economic distress often drove the impoverished to attempt revolution, with the aim both of capturing control of the state and of effecting some kind of reallocation of property – most frequently in the form of a redistribution of land (*gēs anadasmus*), or the cancellation of debts (*chreōn apokopē*), or both these measures (see below, with n.55). There is an important proviso to be added: no democratic revolution had much chance of success, or of leading to a stable democracy, unless the impoverished masses received leadership from some members of the governing class. According to a neglected passage in Aristotle, however, light-armed forces and naval crews – drawn entirely from the lower classes and therefore uniformly democratic in outlook – were very numerous in his day, and since in civil conflicts 'light-armed troops easily overcome cavalry and hoplites' (he is not thinking of pitched battles, of course), the lower classes (the *dēmoi*) got the better of the wealthy (the *euporoi*: *Pol.* VI.7, 1321^a11-21). I may say that the only way in which oligarchy could be transformed into democracy was by revolution: I know of no single case in the whole of Greek history in which a ruling oligarchy introduced democracy without compulsion and by a simple vote.

6. Conditions favouring successful revolution of either sort (from oligarchy to democracy or vice versa) were most likely to arise when (as very often happened) an outside power was called in by the would-be revolutionaries. This might be an imperial state (Athens or Sparta), or a Persian satrap or other Asiatic grandee (see my *OPW* 37-40), who could at the very least produce mercenaries or money with which to hire them. Almost invariably, intervention by democratic Athens was in favour of democracy, by oligarchic Sparta or a Persian monarch or satrap in favour of oligarchy or tyranny.¹⁸

7. Of course it was only adult male citizens of a *polis* who could indulge effectively in class struggle on the political plane, except in very special circumstances, such as the democratic restoration at Athens in 403, after the rule of the 'Thirty', when metics and other foreigners (and even slaves) participated, and some of them were rewarded with citizenship.¹⁹ And we must not forget that land – by far the most important means of production and form of wealth, as we have seen (III.iii above) – could be owned only by citizens and by those few foreigners to whom the exceptional right of *gēs enktēsis* had been granted by

the state, as an honour or in return for useful services. Probably metics (resident foreigners) could take land and houses on lease in most states, as they evidently could at Athens (see Lysias VII.10; cf. XII.8 ff., 18-19);²⁰ but any profit they could make out of it would be greatly reduced by the rent they would have to pay to their citizen landlords. In a sense, therefore, the citizens of a Greek state could be considered a distinct class of landowners, according to my definitions (in II.ii above), over against foreigners, although of course they themselves would be divided into different classes in confrontation with each other, in a more significant way. I will only add that anyone who feels that metics ought to be given more attention here will find the subject sufficiently dealt with in II.v above and its nn.29-30 below: most metics who were not freedmen would be citizens of another *polis*, living voluntarily for a time in a city not their own, probably – whether or not they were political exiles – with the intention of returning home in due course. And surely metics could not be exploited intensively: if they were, they would simply move elsewhere.

* * * * *

I said earlier that much of the evidence for the history of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries relates primarily or exclusively to Athens. Athens was anything but typical – I have explained why in *OPW* 34 ff. (esp. 46-9). Yet I propose to concentrate on that city, simply because the evidence for it is so much more plentiful than for any other.

The constitution of Cleisthenes in 508/7 gave to Athens what the Greeks regarded as full democracy, in the sense that, although property-qualifications were required for the holding of certain offices,²¹ every citizen had a vote in the sovereign Assembly, both in its deliberative and legislative capacity (in which it was known as the *ekklēsia*) and in its judicial capacity, when it was the *hēliaia*, divided for most purposes – if not until later, perhaps even 462/1 – into *dikastēria*, 'jury-courts'. Apart from the organs of state at Athens itself there were numerous and important local political functions, democratically organised,²² in the 'demes' (roughly 150 in number) into which the citizen population was divided. No very important changes were made before the destruction of the democracy in 322/1 (for which see Section iii of this chapter and its n.2 below), but there were certain modifications, both in the constitutional structure and in its practical working, which made it distinctly more democratic, to our way of thinking, during the fifth century. Apart perhaps from the 'reforms of Ephialtes' in 462/1, of the precise nature and details of which we know far less than many modern scholars pretend, much the most important reform was the introduction by degrees, between the middle of the fifth century and its closing years, of pay for the performance of political tasks: at first sitting in the jury-courts, and on the Council (*boulē*) which prepared business for the Assembly, and later (after 403) for attending the Assembly.²³ Although the rates of pay were low (less than the wages of an artisan), this reform enabled even the poorer citizens to play a real part in the political life of the city if they so desired. I would emphasise (since the contrary has recently been asserted, in defiance of the evidence, by Sir Moses Finley) that political pay was certainly not peculiar to Athens but was introduced in a number of other democracies by at any rate the fourth century: this is perfectly clear from a series of passages in Aristotle's *Politics*, even if Rhodes is

the only other city we can actually name for the fourth century – see my PPOA.²⁴

Political leadership at state level was long monopolised by a fairly small circle of 'political families'; but Athens' acquisition of an empire in the fifth century created a large number of new openings which made it necessary for this circle to be widened; and in the last thirty years of the fifth century we encounter a group of 'new men', often unfairly satirised by upper-class writers such as Aristophanes and the other comic poets as jumped-up tradesmen, 'sellers' of this, that or the other (see my *OPW* 359–62).²⁵ The politicians who played a leading role were often referred to as 'demagogues' (*dēmagōgoi*), originally a neutral term meaning 'leaders of the demos' but one which soon came to be used most frequently in a disparaging sense. The most famous of these 'demagogues', Cleon, who played a leading role in the late 420s, was a full-time professional politician, very different from the vulgar 'tanner' or 'leather-seller' ridiculed by Aristophanes (and depicted in a very different light, if an almost equally hostile one, by Thucydides). Some other 'demagogues' are known to have been similarly travestied, and there are good reasons for thinking that the time-honoured picture of most of these men is very unreal (see my *OPW* 234–5, esp. n.7).

I have explained at length elsewhere why members of the Athenian upper class such as Aristophanes and Isocrates should have detested Cleon and his fellow-demagogues (*OPW* 355–76). To put it in a nutshell – these demagogues were *dēmotikoi* (the equivalent of the Roman *populares*): they often took the side of the lower classes at Athens against their 'betters', or they acted in some way or other that was considered inimical to the best interests of the Athenian upper class or some of its members. However, the political class struggle at Athens was on the whole very muted in the period we are discussing (I shall notice the two prominent exceptions presently), and the internal political conflicts recorded in our sources seldom arise directly out of class struggle. This is very natural and precisely what we might have expected, for the democracy was firm and unshakeable and it satisfied the aspirations of the humbler Athenians. The Assembly and in particular the courts must have given the poorer citizen a considerable degree of protection against oppression by the rich and powerful. Here it is worth remembering that the control of the courts by the demos was regarded by Aristotle as giving the demos control of the constitution (*Ath. pol.* 9.1 *fin.*). The democracy was also remarkably indulgent to the rich, whose financial position was secure and who were not heavily taxed (even if we allow for occasional hardship resulting from the *eisphora*, a capital levy sometimes imposed in wartime), and who had ample opportunity for achieving honour and esteem, above all through public service. The fifth-century 'empire',²⁶ from which the leading Athenians profited most (Thuc. VIII.48.6),²⁷ had for a time reconciled many rich men to the democracy, which was widely recognised to be an integral part of the foundation on which the empire rested. It is unique among past empires known to us in that the ruling city relied very much on the support of the lower classes in the subject states (see my *OPW* 34–43) – in striking contrast with other imperial powers, which have commonly aimed to secure the loyalty of royal houses, aristocracies, or at least (as with Rome: see Section iii of this chapter) the upper classes among the peoples they ruled. The miserable failure of the two oligarchic revolutions of the late fifth century, which I shall briefly describe presently, discouraged any further attempt to attack the

democracy, even after the fall of the Athenian empire in 404.

Between 508/7 and the destruction of the democracy by the Macedonians in 322 there were only two episodes in which class struggle at Athens erupted in violent *stasis*, civil strife. (I need only mention in passing two abortive oligarchic conspiracies in 480-79 and 458-7, and the assassination of the radical-democratic leader Ephialtes in 462-1.)²⁸ The oligarchy of the Four Hundred in 411, which lasted for only about four months, was altogether a product of fraud:²⁹ the pretence, known to be false by the revolutionaries by the time they put their plans into effect, that if a form of oligarchy were introduced at Athens some desperately-needed financial help for the war against Sparta might be forthcoming from Persia through the agency of Alcibiades. The whole thing was planned from the start by men who were among the wealthiest Athenians: the trierarchs (Thuc. VIII.47.2) and 'the most influential people' (*hoi dynatōtatoi*, 47.2 [twice], 48.1), 'the best people' (*hoi beltistoi*, 47.2). The Samian *dynatōtatoi* joined in the plan (63.3; cf. 73.2, 6). The preparatory moves were carried through amid serious uneasiness on the part of the demos (54.1; cf. 48.3), allayed only by the belief (emphasised by Thucydides) that the demos would be able, when it wanted, to vote away any oligarchic constitutional measures that might have to be imposed as a temporary expedient – a vital consideration which is seldom given sufficient emphasis.³⁰ In the weeks before the climactic stage of the revolution there were a number of assassinations (the first we hear of at Athens for fifty years) and a deliberate campaign of terror (65.2 to 66.5); and the actual decisions setting up the oligarchy were taken, *nem. con.* (69.1), at a meeting of the Assembly convened at Colonus, well outside the walls, to which – since the Spartans had now set up a fortified post at Decelea, only a few miles away – the hoplites and cavalry must have marched out as an army, with few if any *thētes* (sub-hoplites) present. Meanwhile the fleet (the *nautikos ochlos*: Thuc. VIII.72.2), based at Samos, remained staunchly devoted to democracy: the passages in Thucydides which bring this out vividly are among the most moving in his work (VIII.72.2; 73.4-6; 75-77; 86.1-4). The oligarchy soon collapsed, and then, after about eight months with a 'mixed constitution',³¹ the full democracy was restored.

In 404 the narrow oligarchy of the Thirty was forced upon Athens by the victorious Spartan commander, Lysander, some weeks or even months after the capitulation of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war, during which period the Athenian oligarchs had evidently found it impossible to force through a change of constitution on their own.³² The victory of the democratic Athenian Resistance in 403, made possible by a sudden, complete change of policy at Sparta (for which see my *OPW* 143-6), is one of the most remarkable and fascinating episodes in Greek history, which often fails to receive the attention it deserves, although a whole book has been devoted to it by the French historian Cloché.³³ The Athenian demos was surprisingly magnanimous in its victory, and it receives high praise for this from many quarters, notably Aristotle, *Ath. pol.* 40. (The demos even refunded to Sparta money which had been borrowed by the Athenian oligarchs to pay for the garrison supplied by Sparta, said to have amounted to a hundred talents.)³⁴

The two episodes I have just described are clear examples of a struggle to control the state, between the mass of the Athenians and a few 'top people', with

many of the hoplites inclined to waver – as one would expect of *mesoi* (see II.iv above) – but eventually coming down firmly on both occasions in favour of democracy. (In most other cities democracy had evidently not gained anything like such a firm hold on the mind of the hoplite class.)

In the fourth century, with the fortunes of Athens first rising and then falling again, it was taken for granted by virtually all citizens that there was no practicable alternative to democracy for Athens, and for roughly two generations the upper classes evidently gave up hope of any fundamental constitutional change and concentrated on immediate issues, above all on foreign policy, now a rather bewildering problem for the Athenians, who often had cause to wonder where their real interests lay – whether to fight Sparta, or to accept her as an ally against Athens' immediate neighbour Thebes, now growing ever more powerful; how much effort should be devoted to regaining control of the Thracian Chersonese, at one of the two main bottle-necks on Athens' vital corn-supply route from the Crimea (see *OPW* 45 ff., esp. 48–9); and whether to try to reconquer Amphipolis, the key to the timber supply of the area around the River Strymon and the strategic point that controlled the crossing of the Strymon itself. Once or twice we hear of a division on foreign policy at Athens on class lines, between rich and poor (see *Hell. Oxy.* VI[1]3; *Ar., Eccl.* 197–8); but on most issues, home and foreign, there is no clear evidence of any such division: there is not the least reason to expect it at this period.

A decisive change began, almost imperceptibly at first, with the rise of Macedon, in the person of King Philip II, from the early 350s, at the very time when the power of Athens and her 'Second Confederacy' had begun to decline.³⁵ The role of Philip is something that can be more conveniently treated a little later: all I want to emphasise here is the fact that Philip was a highly despotic ruler, with an unlimited thirst for personal power, and naturally no friend to democracy; and that it was all too likely that if he gained control of Athens he might feel it desirable to install a government of oligarchic partisans – as in fact he did at Thebes after his victory over that city and Athens at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 (Justin IX.iv.6–9). It took quite a long time for the Athenians to appreciate the underlying realities of the situation, but I think there is reason to believe that Demosthenes suddenly grasped the truth late in 352,³⁶ and soon came to understand that it was the humbler Athenians who were most likely to respond to appeals for an all-out resistance to Macedon, for the simple reason that if Philip gained power over Athens, he might well decide (though in fact he did not) to destroy the democracy – in which event they, the poorer Athenians, would necessarily be disfranchised, as indeed they actually were in 322/1 (see below). In fact it was no part of Philip's plan to treat Athens roughly, if he could avoid it, as he did; and as it happened Philip's son and successor Alexander the Great had no occasion to interfere with the Athenian constitution. But when the Athenians led a major Greek revolt against Macedon on Alexander's death in 323, and in the following year were utterly defeated and compelled to surrender, the Macedonian general Antipater put an end to the democracy; and after 322 Athens was subjected to a whole series of interventions and constitutional changes and was never able to decide her own destiny for very long (see Section iii of this chapter; also Appendix IV, § 2, and its n.5).

Perhaps the most obviously noticeable failure of Athens in the fourth century

was her inability to find the sums of money (very large, by Greek standards of public finance) required to maintain the naval forces which she needed, to a far greater extent than any other Greek state, in order to pursue what I might call her 'natural' foreign policy. I have already, in *OPW* 45-9, explained why Athens was driven by her unique situation, as an importer of corn on an altogether exceptional scale, towards a policy of 'naval imperialism', in order to secure her supply routes. (I have also, in the passage just mentioned, listed the principal occasions on which Athens came to grief, or nearly so, when interruption of her corn supply was threatened.) Athens' whole way of life was involved; and what is so often denounced, as if it were sheer greed and a lust for domination on her part, by modern scholars whose antipathy to Athens is sharpened by her promotion of democratic regimes in states under her control or influence, was in reality an almost inevitable consequence of that way of life. In the fifth century the tribute from the empire made it possible for Athens to maintain a large fleet. After 405 the whole situation changed: because of the rudimentary character of all Greek public finance, and their own failure to innovate in this sphere, the Athenians were perpetually unable to provide the funds necessary to man their essential fleets. Contributions from their allies in the so-called 'Second Athenian Confederacy' of 378/7 ff. could not just be demanded by the Athenians (as in the fifth-century empire) but had to be requested, and voted by the allies in their *synedrion*. In the long run these contributions were not adequate, and Athenian commanders sometimes resorted to what were virtually piratical measures in order to make good the deficiencies. I think that by no means all historians sufficiently realise how desperately serious was Athens' lack of state funds in the fourth century. I have collected a great deal of evidence on this subject, which, since I know of no single presentation of it, I will give here in a note.³⁷

But it is time to take a more general view of fourth-century Greece and its future.

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As I shall show in Section iii of this chapter, Greek democracy, between the fourth century B.C. and the third century of the Christian era, was gradually destroyed – because it did not just die out, let alone commit suicide: it was deliberately extinguished by the joint efforts of the Greek propertied classes, the Macedonians and the Romans.

Greece and Poverty had always been foster-sisters, as Herodotus put it (VII.102.1); but poverty in the fourth century seems to be a more pressing evil than in the fifth. The seventh, sixth and fifth centuries had been an age of steady economic development, with a distinct increase of wealth in at least the more progressive cities; and from the meagre information available one gets the impression that there had been a marked rise in the standard of life of practically all sections of the population. There had certainly been a genuine economic expansion, made possible by the growth of commerce, of small-scale industry, and of a money economy, and greatly assisted by the early movement of colonisation, in the eighth and seventh centuries. The export of Greek oil, wine, pottery, metal work and other agricultural and industrial products grew to surprising dimensions, reaching a climax probably in the second half of the fifth century.³⁸ On the political plane the whole period was characterised by a move-

ment towards the attainment of political rights by an ever-increasing proportion of the citizen community. In the fifth century the Athenian 'empire' undoubtedly promoted the creation, or the strengthening, of democracy in many other Greek cities (see n.26 again). In the fourth century this development stopped, and indeed in some places was reversed. The status of democracy in the fourth century, except at Athens and probably not many other *poleis*, was always precarious, and it was perpetually on the defensive. In both the economic and the political spheres, then, the tide of development had turned by the beginning of the fourth century, and a slow regression had begun. As regards the details of economic life in the fourth century we are still very badly informed, except to some extent in regard to Athens; but my own impression is that there was widespread and serious poverty among the mass of the people, at the same time as the few rich were perhaps growing richer. I do not myself think that we have nearly enough evidence to be certain whether or not the first trend (the impoverishment of the Many) greatly outweighed the second (the enrichment of the Few) and produced a real total impoverishment of Greece as a whole. Rostovtzeff, in his great *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (published some forty years ago), argued that the economic decline of many Greek cities from the end of the fifth century onwards was mainly due to the contraction of the foreign market for Greek exports, as local production began to grow at the periphery of the Greek trading area: he traces the growth of ceramic industries, coinage, jewellery and metal working, the manufacture of textiles, and the culture of the vine and olive, in districts as far apart as Italy, Thrace, Syria, the Crimea and south Russia, all of which until the latter part of the fifth century provided markets for the products of Greece itself, but thereafter became increasingly able to supply their own needs, often by crude local imitations of the former Greek imports.³⁹ Athens was altogether exceptional in needing to import the greater part of her food supply (see my *OPW* 46-9), as well as all her timber and metals (except silver and lead, which were supplied by the famous mines at Laurium in south-east Attica); but many other Greek cities will have been dependent in some degree upon imports, even of corn when their own crops failed or were deficient (as often happened), and if their exports declined seriously, they would have difficulty in paying for necessary imports.

How far this theory of Rostovtzeff's (recently endorsed in the main by Claude Mossé)⁴⁰ provides even a partial explanation of the situation I have described, I am not sure; and in any event the whole question needs to be re-examined by someone with a far greater command than mine of the archaeological evidence. I certainly know of no single passage in any Greek literary source which gives the slightest hint that any of the Greeks realised that the market for Greek goods was contracting against them, or which betrays any awareness of a need to increase exports. Moreover, can we be sure that the production of the commodities which used to be exported (wine and oil as well as manufactured goods) was not offset to some extent by an increase in the growth of cereals? Except during the great grain shortage that began at the end of the 330s, the price of cereals does not seem to have risen very much in the fourth century, relative to other prices. My own impression, for what it is worth, is not so much that Greece as a whole was poorer in the fourth century as that the wealthy class was now able to appropriate a greater share of the small available surplus than in the late fifth

century – though probably less so in democratic Athens than in most other states. If so, the real cause of Greek decline is much more deeply rooted in the nature of the Greek economic and social system than Rostovtzeff's theory would allow.

I should like to draw particular attention to the very large and increasing number of men who took service as mercenaries, not only in Greek armies but also with non-Greeks, especially the king of Persia and his satraps – in the second half of the fourth century especially they numbered many tens of thousands.⁴¹ We have a series of statements in the fourth-century sources, above all Isocrates, to the effect that it was inability to make a living at home which drove these men to become mercenaries, and others to wander far from home in search of a livelihood.⁴² Writers of oligarchic sympathies sometimes abuse the mercenaries bitterly. According to Plato they are about the most overbearing, unjust, violent and senseless of men.⁴³ Isocrates represents them as bands of fugitives, vagabonds, criminals and robbers, 'the common enemies of all mankind',⁴⁴ and he says bluntly that they would be better dead (V.55). Isocrates was anxious that these men should at all costs be prevented from banding together against those of their fellow Greeks who, like himself, lived in some affluence, and seizing their property by force.⁴⁵ The obvious solution, urged early in the fourth century by Gorgias and Lysias, and most persistently by Isocrates himself over a period of some forty years,⁴⁶ was a grand Greek crusade against the Persian empire, which would wrest from the barbarians enough land in Asia to provide a comfortable livelihood for these men and any other Greeks who were in need. But when the crusade was in fact undertaken a few years after the death of Isocrates, by Alexander the Great and his Macedonians, the reality was very different from Isocrates' dream.

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In the political sphere, democracy barely held its own in the fourth century, and in many cities outside Athens the class warfare which had already become widespread in the last quarter of the fifth century became more acute. Since a very large part of the surviving evidence for the political history of the fourth century relates specifically to Athens, where (as I said earlier) the class struggle on the political plane was probably much milder than in any other Greek city, it is easy for us to overlook the parlous condition of tension and strife in many of the other cities. Oligarchic and democratic leaders had no hesitation in calling in outside powers to help them gain the upper hand over their adversaries. A particularly interesting example is the situation at Corinth in 387/6, just after the 'King's Peace' or 'Peace of Antalcidas'. Corinth had recently ceased to exist as an independent polis, having been absorbed by the neighbouring democracy of Argos.⁴⁷ When the Spartan King Agesilaus appeared before the walls of Corinth, 'the Corinthians' – that is to say, the democratic faction which was now in control at Corinth – at first refused to dismiss the Argive garrison which ensured the maintenance of the existing democratic regime at Corinth (Xen., *HG* V.i.33–4). Although they knew that if the garrison withdrew and Sparta regained control of the city, Corinth would be reconstituted as an independent polis, they realised that this would also involve the reimposition of the former oligarchy – and they regarded that as a more unpleasant alternative than accepting the non-

existence of Corinth as an independent polis, and remaining a mere part of Argos! An equally extreme example, this time involving oligarchs instead of democrats, is the surrender of the Cadmeia (the Acropolis of Thebes) to the Spartan general Phoebidas in 382 by the oligarchic Theban faction led by Leontiadas, a devoted partisan of Sparta. Leontiadas then headed a small oligarchy, thoroughly subservient to the Spartans, who installed a garrison on the Theban Cadmeia to keep the puppet regime in power. It is interesting to hear from Xenophon that the Thebans now 'gave the Spartans even more service than was demanded of them' (HG V.ii.36) – just as the Mantineaean landowners, when Sparta destroyed the walls of their city and broke it up into its four original villages, were so glad to have an 'aristocracy' and be no longer troubled by 'burdensome demagogues', as under their democracy, that they 'came for military service with the Spartans from their villages far more enthusiastically than when they were under a democracy' (ibid. 7).

In such incidents we see Sparta^{47a} as the great supporter of oligarchy and the propertied classes: this was the situation throughout the first three or four decades of the fourth century, until Sparta lost her pre-eminent position in Greece (see my *OPW* 98-9, 162-4). In the early fourth century, Xenophon in particular always takes it for granted that when there is a division within a city on class lines, the rich will naturally turn to Sparta, the demos to Athens.⁴⁸ Among several illustrations of this we can certainly include the case of Phlius, which has been badly misunderstood in one important respect in a detailed recent study by Legon.⁴⁹

Some cities seem to have been able for quite long periods to preserve at least a certain superficial harmony, but in others there were outbreaks of *stasis* (civil strife), sometimes assuming a violent and bloody form, reminiscent of the terrible events at Corcyra in 427, of which Thucydides has left us such a vivid account (III.70-81; IV.46-8), and which he himself regarded as one of the opening episodes in a new age of intensified civil strife (III.82-3, esp. 82.1). One of the most sanguinary of the many fourth-century outbreaks of *stasis* was the *skytalismos* at Argos in 370, when 1,200-1,500 of the upper classes were said to have been massacred by the demos – an event which caused such horror when it was announced to the Athenian Assembly that a purificatory sacrifice was immediately performed (Diod. XV.57.3 to 58.4; Plut., *Mor.* 814b).

Tyranny, a phenomenon which had become very much rarer in the fifth century than in the seventh and sixth, now occurred again in several cities: its reappearance suggests an intensification of political class strife. It is a great pity that we cannot reconstruct what happened in particular at Heraclea Pontica: the real situation is almost totally obscured by abusive rhetoric in the sources, especially the local historian, Memnon (*FGrH* 434 F 1), who wrote several centuries later, during the early Roman Principate. Part of the essential truth does come out in a rather unlikely source, Justin (XVI.iv-v, esp. iv.2, 10-20), where we learn that class strife had led to a revolutionary situation, with the lower classes clamouring for a cancellation of debts and a redistribution of the lands of the rich; that the Council, evidently the organ of oligarchic rule, sent for the exiled Clearchus, believing that he would make a settlement in their favour; but that he in fact took the side of the lower classes, who made him tyrant (364-352/1 B.C.). He evidently pursued a radical policy, in opposition to the

interests of the rich: it is hidden from us behind a welter of abuse in Justin, Memnon and others.⁵⁰ The 'wickedness' of Clearchus surprised Isocrates (*Epist.* VII.12), whose pupil he had once been, as he had also been Plato's (Memnon, F 1). In the same letter in which Isocrates refers to Clearchus he shows (§ 8, cf. 4) in what circumstances he would be prepared to accept a tyrant as a *kalos kagathos*, an expression we might here translate as 'a high-minded gentleman' (cf. *OPW* 371-6): he praises Cleomis of Mytilene because he has provided for the security of the property of the citizens; he has not made any confiscations; and when he has restored exiles he has given them back their property and compensated those who had purchased it!

Another interesting figure, a contemporary of Clearchus, is Euphron of Sicyon, who receives much abuse in our two main sources for the 360s, Xenophon and Diodorus,⁵¹ as having made himself tyrant of Sicyon in 367 by taking the side of the demos against those of the citizens whom Xenophon often describes indifferently as 'the richest' (*plousiōtatoi*, *HG* VII.i.44) or 'the most powerful' (*kratistoi*, iii.1) or simply 'the best' (*beltistoi*, iii.4,8), from whose property he is said to have made wholesale confiscations (i.46; iii.8; *Diod.* XV.70.3). Euphron is also said by Xenophon to have proclaimed that he would set up a constitution under which all would participate 'on equal and similar terms' (*epi isois kai homoiois*, *HG* VII.i.45). But, for Xenophon and Diodorus, Euphron is a tyrant, and Xenophon is disgusted at the fact that the Sicyonians, after he had been murdered at Thebes, buried him in their Agora and honoured him as a 'founder of the city' (iii.12), evidently giving him the cult proper to heroes. (Euphron's grandson, also named Euphron, was specially honoured by the Athenians for his friendship and assistance to Athens in the difficult days of the Lamian war and the oligarchy that followed, for which see Section iii of this chapter and its n.2.)⁵²

The Athenian democracy, secure and impregnable as it was against purely internal attack, came under constant sniping. In some of our sources, and in the judgment of many modern writers, this situation is seen mainly through the eyes of the wealthy, from whom all the surviving propaganda comes—hence the opinion so often held that in the fourth century the unfortunate rich were dreadfully plundered and exploited and taxed by the merciless and greedy poor. That was certainly what many of the rich said. Listen, for example, to the piteous complaints of Isocrates (XV.159-60; cf. VIII.128):

When I was a boy [this would be the 420s], being rich was considered so secure and honourable that almost everyone pretended he owned more property than he actually did possess, because he wanted to enjoy the prestige it gave. Now, on the other hand, one has to defend oneself against being rich as if it were the worst of crimes . . . ; for it has become far more dangerous to give the impression of being well-to-do than to commit open crime; criminals are let off altogether or given trivial punishments, but the rich are ruined utterly. More men have been deprived of their property than have paid the penalty of their misdeeds.

But when we put generalisations of this sort on one side and consider such specific factual evidence as we have, we find that the situation is totally different. For example, we shall not take very seriously the gloomy passage I have just quoted from Isocrates when we discover that the orator himself, although a very rich man by ancient standards, had borne a quite remarkably small share of

state burdens.⁵³

As I have already indicated, outside Athens the political class struggle in the fourth century often became very acute. Rich and poor would regard each other with bitter hatred, and when a revolution succeeded there would be wholesale executions and banishments, and confiscation of the property of at least the leaders of the opposite party. The programme of Greek revolutionaries seems largely to have centred in two demands: redistribution of land, cancellation of debts (*gēs anadasmōs, chreōn apokopē*). These twin slogans, characteristic of an impoverished peasantry, had appeared at Athens in the early sixth century, in the time of Solon, as we saw earlier (Section i above). They are not much heard of in fifth-century Greece⁵⁴ but became ever more insistent in the fourth. At Athens, where the democracy put the poor in a position to exercise a certain amount of political control and thus to protect themselves in some degree against exploitation and oppression, we scarcely hear of them again after the early sixth century. Elsewhere they became the permanent nightmare of the propertied class.⁵⁵ The mid-fourth-century writer Aeneas, generally known as Aeneas 'Tacticus', who wrote not long after 360 (and who may well be the Arcadian general Aeneas from Stymphalus mentioned in Xenophon's *Hellenica*),⁵⁶ affords some interesting evidence of the fear by the propertied class of revolution prompted by the burden of debt: among the measures he recommends to cities under siege is a reduction or cancellation of interest and even of the principal (XIV.1-2); and in general he shows a positive obsession with the danger that the city will be betrayed to the enemy by political malcontents within.⁵⁷ Sometimes a leading political figure might take up the cause of the poor and put at least part of their programme into effect, at the same time perhaps seizing power himself as a tyrant. (We noticed one or two examples of this earlier: Clearchus of Heraclea and Euphron of Sicyon – if indeed Euphron is to be classed as a 'tyrant'.) But these explosions were futile: even when they did not result in an irresponsible and ultimately repressive tyranny, they merely effected a temporary levelling, after which the same old process started again, intensified by the rancours of civil war.

In the long run there could be only one satisfactory solution, from the point of view of the propertied classes in general: the acceptance of a powerful overlord who could quell by force any further attempts to change the existing scheme of things – and perhaps lead the Greek crusade against Persia long advocated by Isocrates and others (see above), which – it was thought – might provide land and a new hope for those who could no longer make a living at home. It was this solution which was ultimately adopted when Philip II of Macedon had defeated Athens and Thebes at the battle of Chaeronea in 338. Not that by any means all wealthy Greeks welcomed this development: at Athens in particular it looks as if not very many did. The desire of each Greek *polis* for that absolute political independence which in reality few of them ever enjoyed for very long died hard. But the remarkable support which Philip obtained, in the shape of what would nowadays be called 'Fifth Columns' in the Greek states, shows that many leading citizens understood that they had within their walls more dangerous and irreconcilable enemies than the Macedonian king. The affections of some of Philip's Greek partisans were of course bought with handsome gifts.⁵⁸ We have, for example, a fascinating vignette showing one of Philip's Arcadian supporters,

Atrestidas, returning from the king's court with some thirty Greek women and children, enslaved by Philip on his capture of Olynthus in 348 and given by him as a present to Atrestidas, doubtless for services rendered or expected – a story which is the more valuable in that it is not a Demosthenic fiction but goes back to a speech of Philip's admirer Aeschines, who had told the Athenians how he had burst into tears at the sight (Dem. XIX.305-6). But men may require no bribes to induce them to pursue courses that are anyway congenial to them (as indeed some Greeks realised),⁵⁹ and even at Athens there were a number of rich and influential citizens who needed no persuasion to support Philip. They included Isocrates, the leading publicist and rhetorician of his time, and Speusippus, who had succeeded his uncle Plato as head of the Academy on Plato's death in 348/7.⁶⁰ A recent article by Minor M. Markle has well explained the political attitude of these two men and those who thought as they did: 'Support of Athenian intellectuals for Philip', in *JHS* 96 (1976) 80-99. Pointing out, with Momigliano, that Philip could expect support in Greece from the oligarchically-inclined only, Markle demonstrates admirably why men like Isocrates and Speusippus were prepared to accept Philip's hegemony over Greece: the king could be expected to support the propertied classes and to favour a regime of a more 'hierarchical and authoritarian' type than existed in democratic Athens (ibid. 98-9). And indeed the League of Corinth, the almost⁶¹ Panhellenic league which Philip organised in 338/7 and his son and successor Alexander renewed in 335, explicitly guaranteed the existing social order: city constitutions were 'frozen', and there was an express prohibition of the redistribution of land, the cancellation of debts, the confiscation of property, and the freeing of slaves with a view to revolution (Ps.-Dem. XVII.15).

After Athens and Thebes had been defeated by Philip in 338, Philip installed an oligarchy of three hundred of his partisans at Thebes (Justin IX.iv.6-9), backed by a Macedonian garrison;⁶² but he treated Athens with great mildness and made no attempt to suppress the Athenian democracy – he had no need to, and it had always been his aim to appear not only 'completely Greek' but also 'most friendly towards Athens' (*hellēnikōtatos* and *philathēnaiotatos*: Dem. XIX.308); and above all he himself, and even Alexander in the 330s, needed the Athenian fleet to secure their communications with Asia. However, as we shall see early in Section iii of this chapter, the Athenian democracy was changed to an oligarchy by the Macedonians in 322/1, and thereafter, although at times it revived, it was never again secure. If the fears felt by men like Demosthenes that the Macedonian king might well destroy the Athenian democracy were not realised in Philip himself, they were justified by the events that took place less than twenty years after his victory over Athens.

The results of Alexander's vast conquests in the East in the late 330s and the 320s were ultimately very far-reaching. They had less direct, immediate effect upon the old Greek world, but it was subjected to the suzerainty of a series of Macedonian kings, who controlled the foreign policy of the Greek states in various degrees but sometimes left them a considerable degree of precarious civic autonomy (see Section iii of this chapter). By far the most important indirect result of Alexander's conquests was a great spread of Greek civilisation into Asia (and Egypt), with the foundation of very many new cities by Alexander himself and his successors, a process which continued in the Roman

period. The consequence was a remarkable Hellenisation of the Near East, or rather of its upper classes, extending far into Asia, with Greek cities dotted all over the map from Turkey to Afghanistan, although by the beginning of the Christian era there were not very many cities that can genuinely be called Greek east of Syria and Asia Minor.

As early as 380 B.C. Isocrates (IV.50) had declared that being a Greek was not a matter of race (*genos*) but rather of mental attitude (*dianoia*), and that the name 'Hellenes' was given to those who shared a particular culture (*paideusis*: the process of education and its effects) rather than a physical relationship (a *koinē physis*). That Greek civilisation was indeed a matter of culture rather than 'race' or 'nationality' comes out most noticeably in the vast eastern area which became Hellenised only from the late fourth century B.C. onwards, because in this area a striking difference can be observed from the first between two worlds, one superimposed on the other: those of the city and the countryside, the *polis* and the *chōra*. As I have already discussed this subject (I.iii above), I shall only repeat here that in the newly Hellenised East the world of the *polis* was largely Greek-speaking, with Greek city-life and Greek civilisation generally prevailing, if sometimes much affected by a native culture, and that this world existed (a fact too often forgotten) through its ability to exploit the world of the *chōra*, inhabited almost entirely by peasants living in villages, who spoke mainly their native languages and shared to only a small degree, if at all, in the benefits of Greek civilisation.

(iii)

The destruction of Greek democracy

I have now to describe the gradual extinction of Greek democracy, a subject often ignored or misrepresented in the books which becomes fully intelligible only when explained in terms of a class analysis.

In the early Hellenistic period the lower classes, especially among the city-dwellers (who would naturally find it easier to attend the Assembly), may still have played quite an important part in the life of their city, at least in the older Greek cities of the East as well as in some of those of Greece itself – unfortunately, we have not much information on this point, and much of it is epigraphic and scattered over a wide area and has never been properly collated and analysed. Very soon, however, there developed all over the Greek world a tendency for political power to become entirely concentrated in the hands of the propertied class. This development, or rather retrogression, which seems to have begun early in the Hellenistic period, was still by no means complete when the Romans took over, in the second century B.C. The Romans, whose governing class always detested democracy, intensified and accelerated the process; and by the third century of the Christian era the last remnants of the original democratic institutions of the Greek *poleis* had mostly ceased to exist for all practical purposes.

The earlier stages of this transformation are difficult to trace: not much firm evidence survives and it is often capable of more than one interpretation. I shall presently single out three aspects of the process: the growth of royal, magisterial, conciliar or other control over the citizen assemblies; the attachment to magistracies of liturgies (the performance of expensive civic duties); and the

gradual destruction of those popular law courts, consisting of panels of dicasts (*dikastēria*, in which the dicasts were both judges and jury), which had been such an essential feature of Greek democracy, especially in Classical Athens. All these were devices invented for the express purpose of getting round the fact that outright oligarchy, the open limitation of political rights to the propertied Few, was still likely to meet with strong resistance from the lower classes, and had been discredited in many places by Alexander's time by its bad record in practice, notably at Athens. In fourth-century Athens even would-be oligarchs found it politic to pretend that they too wanted democracy, only of course it must be the good old democracy of the good old times, not the vicious contemporary form which led to all sorts of unworthy and wicked men gaining power for their own nefarious ends, and so forth – the odious Isocrates furnishes some excellent examples of this kind of disguised right-wing propaganda, notably in his *Areopagiticus* and his treatise *On the Peace*.¹

As I shall not have occasion to describe it elsewhere, I must not omit to mention briefly the destruction of the Athenian democracy in 322/1, at the end of the 'Lamian war',² by Antipater, who may be described as the Macedonian viceroy of Greece. When the Athenians received the news of Alexander's death (which had occurred at Babylon in June 323), they soon led a widespread Greek revolt, which they themselves referred to proudly as a 'Hellenic war', against Macedonian domination; but in 322 they were utterly defeated and compelled to surrender, and the Macedonians turned the constitution of Athens into an oligarchy, limiting the exercise of political rights to the 9,000 citizens (out of, probably, 21,000) who possessed at least 2,000 drachmae (Diod. XVIII.18.4–5, with Plut., *Phoc.* 27.5; 28.7, on which see n.2 below). The figure of 2,000 drachmae may have been roughly equivalent to the property level that would enable a man to serve as a hoplite. After 322/1 Athens was subjected to a whole series of interventions and constitutional changes and was never able to decide her own destiny for very long. There was a short-lived restoration of democracy under the aegis of the Macedonian regent Polyperchon in 318, but in the following year Antipater's son Cassander regained power over Athens and installed a less restricted oligarchy, excluding from political rights all those who possessed a property qualification of less than 1,000 drachmae (Diod. XVIII.74.3). At the head of this oligarchy was Demetrius of Phalerum, who was virtually tyrant in the Macedonian interest, having been appointed overseer or superintendent of Athens (probably *epimelētēs*, perhaps *epistatēs*) by Cassander under the terms of the treaty made when Athens capitulated to him in 317.³ Pausanias calls Demetrius a *tyrannos* outright (I.xxv.5–6); according to Plutarch his regime was 'nominally oligarchical but in reality monarchical' (*Demetr.* 10.2). Yet the term oligarchy still had a rather unpleasant sound, and Demetrius himself claimed that he 'not merely did not destroy the democracy but actually reinforced it' (Strabo IX.i.20, p.398). There was then, to quote W. S. Ferguson's *Hellenistic Athens* (95), 'a new era of internal and external conflict for Athens, which continued almost without intermission for 46 years. Seven times the government changed hands [in 307, 303, 301, 294, 276, 266, and 261], and on as many occasions the constitution was in some degree altered . . . Four times the institutions were modified, and a new government established, through the violent intervention of a foreign prince [in 303, 294, 276, and 261]. Three

uprisings were bloodily suppressed [303, 295, and 287/6], and the city sustained four blockades [304, 296-4, 287, and 265-1], all with equal heroism, but twice unsuccessfully [294, and 261]. After further vicissitudes the story virtually comes to an end with the heroic and futile resistance to the Roman general Sulla, which ended with the sack of Athens in March 86 (see Appendix IV, § 2, and its n.5 below).

The relation of the Hellenistic kings – or, for that matter, of the Romans at first – to the Greek cities within their realms is hard to define with precision,⁴ because each side tended to see the relationship differently, although a king, especially when he needed the support of the cities, was often willing to pander to their *amour propre* by using the diplomatic terminology they preferred. 'It was rarely that a king so far forgot himself as to issue commands to a city; he was usually scrupulous to give advice and offer suggestions' (Jones, *GCAJ* 111). While Alexander the Great was actually in the process of conquering Asia Minor and those of the Aegean islands which had been taken over by the Persians or by pro-Persian parties, he did not hesitate to issue some peremptory orders to the cities; when he discovered that the democrats were in general on his side, while many oligarchs and would-be oligarchs were prepared to fight to the death for Persia, he prescribed democracies everywhere (see my *OPW* 40 n.76). But since he was 'liberating' the Greek cities of Asia from Persian domination, he was quite prepared, when a city was firmly under his control, to avoid speaking of a 'gift' of freedom and to use a technical term which signified 'recognition' (literally, 'giving back'): instead of the verb *didōmi* ('I give'), he used *apodidōmi* or some similar word (see the list at the end of n.12 of Magie, *RRAM* II.828). The difference between these two formulae emerges best from negotiations in the late 340s between Athens and Philip II of Macedon concerning Halonnesus, which the Athenians refused to accept as a 'gift' from Philip, insisting that he should 'recognise' the island as theirs (Ps.-Dem. VII.2-6) – with the result that Philip kept Halonnesus. The essential thing to notice here is that it lay entirely with Philip to decide whether he should 'give' Halonnesus to Athens or 'recognise' it as hers. Similarly, it was purely a matter for Alexander to decide what formula he would use in regard to the freedom of the Asian cities. He was usually prepared to 'recognise' the freedom of Greek cities he 'liberated' from Persia; but the velvet glove could be stripped off when necessary to reveal the iron hand beneath. When Alexander in 324 issued a decree or edict (*diagramma*) prescribing the return of exiles⁵ he of course had all the Greek cities in mind; but the decree will simply have used the expression, 'I restore' (or, more probably, 'We restore', *katagomen*, the royal plural; cf. Diod. XVIII.8.4; 56.4; Tod, *SGHI* II.192.10, 17), without addressing a direct order to the cities, and it was therefore possible for them to pass their own decrees recalling their exiles and to pretend to themselves that it was they who were issuing the orders, even if the mask occasionally slipped, as when the Tegeates referred to 'those whom it pleased the city to restore' in a decree which makes repeated reference to the *diagramma* of Alexander as something binding on the city (Tod, *SGHI* II.202, esp. 58-9).

The successors of Alexander behaved towards the cities in whatever ways they thought their own interests dictated; and it is just as mistaken as in the case of Alexander to press the use of words like *apodidōmi* as if they had some genuine

legal, constitutional significance, apart from propaganda.⁶ If I had to choose a single text to illustrate the realities of the situation, it would be the statement of Antiochus III, at a conference with Roman envoys at Lysimacheia in 196 B.C., that 'those of the cities of Asia which were autonomous ought to acquire their freedom by his own grace [*charis*] and not by an order from Rome' (Polyb. XVIII.li.9; cf. App., *Syr.* 3). A little earlier Antiochus had sent ambassadors to Lampsacus, to insist that if they were to gain their liberty it must be in circumstances which would make it perfectly clear that they had obtained it from himself 'and not usurped it themselves at an opportune moment' (*libertatem non per occasionem raptam*, Livy XXXIII.xxxviii.5-6). 'Freedom' (*eleutheria*), in the mouth of a king, signified very much what 'autonomy' (*autonomia*) had always meant. As Bickerman has shown in his fundamental study of that conception in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., 'Toujours le terme *autonomia* indique que la cité n'est pas la maîtresse absolue de sa politique', and 'L'indépendance d'une cité autonome est nécessairement imparfaite' (APT 330, 337). Claire Préaux has rightly said of Alexander's actions in regard to the cities of Asia, 'C'est sans aucun doute agir comme un maître sur des villes sujettes: l'autonomie, quoiqu'elle s'appelle "liberté", n'exclut pas la sujétion'.⁷ And so it was with all the Hellenistic kings.

As for the internal affairs of cities under their control, whether theoretically free or not, the kings might or might not interfere directly. Some cities were left almost entirely to themselves. In others a king might reserve the right to appoint one or more of the regular magistrates, or install an overseer (e.g. an *epistatês*: see n.3 again) of his own choice, with or without a garrison (sometimes paid for by the city concerned); and a city might sometimes be made to feel that it would be impolitic to pass decrees on a certain range of matters without first obtaining the consent of the king or his overseer (see n.4 again). The imposition of a garrison (by no means a rare event) could be particularly destructive to a democracy, if the garrison commander (who was exceedingly unlikely to be a democrat) felt obliged or inclined to intervene politically; and even if he did not, the menacing presence of the garrison was bound to have a deleterious effect on internal democratic politics.

At this point I must jump ahead for a moment and (in a single paragraph) glance at the relationship of Rome to the Greek cities within the area she dominated. With some Rome made actual treaties acknowledging their freedom: they were 'free and federate states', *civitates liberae et foederatae*. Others received freedom by a unilateral grant: they were *civitates liberae*. The great majority (except in Old Greece, where the cities were from the first declared 'free') were subject to the provincial governor like any other 'native' community: for them there was no corresponding technical description. I have no doubt that A. H. M. Jones was right in saying that 'freedom was, it would seem, to the Roman government what it was to the Hellenistic kings, a privileged status granted by itself to cities under its dominion, and the principal element in it was exemption from the authority of the provincial governors . . . Rome took over the royal concept of freedom; she too by a free city meant not an independent sovereign state, but a state subject to her suzerainty enjoying by her grace certain privileges . . . But there was an infinite gradation of privilege, and some subject cities – those of Sicily for instance – enjoyed rights hardly inferior

to those of some free cities' (Jones, CLIE 112, 106, 109). As for the 'federate states' (*civitates foederatae*), they 'differed only in the sanction of their privileges: those of free cities were in theory as well as in fact revocable at will, those of federate, being guaranteed by a sworn instrument, were in theory irrevocable' (ibid. 113). But 'in effect the difference was not very great, for free cities were not arbitrarily degraded and if a federate city offended Rome it could generally be found that it had violated the terms of its *foedus*, which thereupon became void' (Jones, GCAJ 117). And although federate states continued occasionally to be created as late as the early Principate, Suetonius mentions that Augustus deprived of their liberty several cities which were federate but were 'heading for ruin through their lawlessness' (Aug. 47) – in other words, as Jones puts it, 'internal disorders were a good enough excuse for cancelling a *foedus*' (GCAJ 131, cf. 132). An apt illustration of the Roman attitude to *civitates foederatae* much weaker than themselves is the statement of Appius Claudius to the Achaean League in 184 B.C., reported by Livy (XXXIX.37.19): he strongly advised them, he said, to ingratiate themselves with Rome 'while they still had the power to do so of their own free will' (*voluntate sua facere*); the alternative was that they would soon have to do as they were told, against their will (*inviti et coacti*). The Achaeans, needless to say, were afraid to disobey, and they merely allowed themselves the luxury of a 'general groaning' (*omnium gemitus*: id. 20).

In Jones's great work on the Greek city in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, from which I have already quoted, we read that 'whatever devices the kings might invent to secure their control over the cities, there was one which they could not use, the formal limitation of political power to a small class; . . . the kings felt obliged to support democracy in the cities and were thus unable to create and effectively support monarchist parties which should rule in their interest; the few attempts made – notably by Antipater and Cassander [in 322 ff.] – to establish oligarchies of their supporters roused such violent discontent that this policy became utterly discredited' (GCAJ 157–60, 111). Apart from the short-lived oligarchies just mentioned, Jones could produce only one exception to his rule: Cyrene, to which the first Ptolemy dictated a moderately oligarchical constitution (replacing a more extreme oligarchy) in the last quarter of the fourth century, perhaps in 322/1.⁸ But I think there are likely to have been other exceptions. For instance, in an inscription of Ptolemais in Upper Egypt, of the third century B.C., we hear that disorders had occurred at meetings of the Council and Assembly, especially at the elections of magistrates; and with a view to remedying this situation the decree (of Council and Demos) proceeds to restrict the choice of those eligible for the Council and the courts of law to a select list of *epilektoi andres* (OGIS 48.9–11, 13–16). I find it hard to believe that the reigning Ptolemy had not intervened on this occasion, even if he tactfully left it to the organs of city government to provide against repetition of the disturbances (and cf. Jones, GCAJ 104). Also, it is only fair to mention that in many *poleis* of the newly hellenised East, unlike Old Greece (and the long-settled Greek fringe of Asia Minor), the citizens themselves were often an exclusive oligarchy among the permanent free inhabitants, a large part of the old native population (essentially the poorer classes) being excluded from citizenship (see Jones, GCAJ 160–1, with 335 nn. 10–11).

As for the new cities founded by Alexander and the Hellenistic kings, it is only

rarely that we have any details of their original constitutions, but there is reason to think that full political rights were never extended to anything like the whole free population, even where (as at Egyptian Alexandria) the constitution was at first of the standard Greek type, with a Council and Assembly.⁹ Some of the disfranchised (like the Jews of Antioch and Alexandria and Berenice Euesperides, and the Syrians of Seleucia on the Tigris) were organised in special *ad hoc* bodies known as *politeumata*, through which their affairs were administered;¹⁰ but probably in most cases the natives in the countryside, who cultivated the lands of the citizens, had no political rights of any kind, except to a small degree in their villages, and remained to a considerable extent outside the ambit of Graeco-Roman culture, which always remained essentially urban. As I have explained in I.iii above, the relationship of those who dominated the Greek cities to the natives outside is best described as one of exploitation, with few benefits given in return. As a matter of fact, there are traces even in Aristotle's *Politics* of a situation in which 'those around the countryside' (*hoi kata tēn chōran*) can be expected not to possess the franchise. In *Pol.* VII.14, 1332^b27-32, they are seen as likely to join in a body in revolutions begun by those citizens who do not possess proper political rights. An example of such a situation might be the revolt against the Gamoroi of Syracuse, perhaps in the late 490s (see Dunbabin, *WG* 414-15), by the *dēmos* of Syracuse and their 'slaves', as Herodotus calls them (VII.155.2) – in fact the Killyrioi, who were serfs: see III.iv above and its n.3 below.

I have mentioned three principal oligarchic devices by which democracy was in practice frustrated after the fourth century B.C. The first (control of the Assembly by royal officials, magistrates, Council or otherwise) is obvious enough and requires little comment. Assemblies continued to meet in most if not all cities, and sometimes quite large numbers of citizens might attend the sessions, as we know from a handful of surviving decrees (mostly of about the early second century B.C.) which give the actual numbers present and voting. On three occasions at Magnesia on the Maeander attendances of 2,113, 3,580 and even 4,678 are mentioned; an inscription found on the island of Cos records a decree of the Assembly of Halicarnassus passed by a vote (unanimous or *nem. con.*, like most of the others) of 4,000; other figures are smaller.¹¹ I might add that all or most of the decrees just mentioned are honorific in character, as indeed are the majority of the city decrees inscribed on stone which have survived from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The second device, the assimilation of magistracies to liturgies by attaching special burdens to the performance of magistracies, is much more interesting and deserves discussion. Aristotle, in that part of his *Politics* which is devoted to advising oligarchs how to run a state of which they are in control, has this remarkable passage:

To the most important magistracies should be attached liturgies, in order that the common people may be willing to acquiesce in their own exclusion from office and may sympathise with those who have to pay so high a price for the privilege. Those who enter into office may also be reasonably expected to offer magnificent sacrifices and to erect some public building, so that the common people, participating in the feasts and seeing their city embellished with offering and buildings, may readily tolerate a continuance of this constitution [oligarchy]. The leading citizens, too, will have visible memorials of their own expenditure. But this is not the policy pursued by oligarchs today – they do the very opposite: they covet profit as well as honour (*Pol.* VI.7, 1321^a31-42).

This passage (which seems to have escaped general notice) is of very great interest, because it describes something that did happen in the Hellenistic period, when magistracies and liturgies often became to some extent assimilated. (One wonders how many 'thinking' members of the ruling class in the fourth century shared Aristotle's sentiments!) There was seldom, it seems, any constitutional requirement that magistrates should perform liturgies, but this became the custom in many cities, which no one would dare to flout. This has been referred to as 'a tacit convention whereby the people elected rich men to magistracies, and they as magistrates contributed freely to the public services under their charge' (Jones, *GCAJ* 167, cf. 168); but this does not take account of the passage from the *Politics* which I have just quoted and obscures the fact that the whole process was partly an adroit expedient by the wealthy class to keep the poorer citizens out of office without having to pass invidious legislation to that end, and even more to serve as a substitute for the one thing the wealthy Greeks would never tolerate: a legally enforceable taxation system under which the burden of maintaining the state would fall mainly upon those who derived most benefit from it and were best able to bear that burden. It is fascinating to read the passage in Dio of Prusa's Rhodian speech, expressing horror at the very thought that 'a time might ever come at which it would be necessary for each individual citizen to pay a levy from his private means' (Dio Chrys. XXXI.46). Dio congratulates the Rhodians on never having done such a thing except when their city was in extreme danger.

The third significant oligarchic device by which democracy was gradually extinguished was the abolition of the popular *dikastēria* mentioned above, on which in a full Greek democracy all citizens were entitled to serve, just as they were able to attend the Assembly. This, the judicial aspect of the decline of Greek democracy, has received even less attention than the political aspect of the same process: the decline of the popular assemblies. This is partly because the evidence is so deplorably scanty, but also because modern scholars tend to forget how extraordinarily important the popular courts were for the maintenance of proper democracy. (Clear separation of the 'political' and the 'judicial' is a very modern phenomenon.) My own collection of the evidence is very incomplete, and I do not feel able to give a coherent account; I shall merely mention some of the more interesting material later in this section.

The seventh, sixth and fifth centuries, as I said earlier, had been characterised by a movement towards the attainment of political rights by an ever-increasing proportion of the citizen community. By the Hellenistic age, the upper classes had learnt that it was unwise to make legally enforceable concessions by granting too wide a range of *political rights*. Instead, they offered to the lower classes a certain amount of *charity*, to be granted or withheld at their own pleasure. When things were not going well for them the charity could be cut down, without anyone having the right to complain. They were prepared on occasion to enforce upon recalcitrants among their own number the performance of expensive tasks which were really necessary; but inessential offices involving some outlay could at a pinch, in very hard times, or when no one could be persuaded to shoulder the burden, be conferred upon some obliging god or hero, who could scarcely be expected to make the customary expenditure.¹² One of the worst features of this whole process was surely its demoralising effect on both sides.

It was only in the Roman period, however, that the last remaining vestiges of

democracy were gradually stamped out of the Greek cities. (The evidence for this is very fragmentary and scattered, and I can do no more here than give an oversimplified outline.) It was the regular aim of the Romans to place the government of provincial cities under the sole control (subject of course to the Roman governor) of the propertied classes. This was effected in various ways, partly by making constitutional changes, but even more by giving steady support to the rich and encouraging them to assume and retain control of local political life, as of course they were only too ready to do. Livy puts it perfectly in a nutshell, in a speech he gives to Nabis, the tyrant of Sparta, in 195 B.C., which almost certainly derives from Livy's main source for this period, Polybius. Addressing the Roman general, T. Quinctius Flamininus, Nabis says, 'Your [the Romans'] wish is that a few should excel in wealth, and that the common people should be subject to them' (*paucos excellere opibus, plebem subiectam esse illis, vultis*, XXXIV.xxxi.17). And, as Plutarch said in the reign of Trajan, the Romans were 'very eager to promote the political interests of their friends' (*Mor.* 814c).¹³ We know enough about this process to be confident of its general outlines, but the particulars are difficult to display in a palatable shape for the general reader, even in summary form, and I have therefore relegated the details to Appendix IV. I will refer at this point only to a single series of incidents, from one small town in the northern Peloponnese, which may not be in themselves at all typical of what happened in Old Greece after its final conquest by Rome in 146 B.C. ('typical', in the sense that we might expect many similar occurrences elsewhere), but which certainly brings out very well the significance of the Roman conquest and the effect this could have upon the class struggle in Greek cities. In the Achaean town of Dyme, probably in 116-114 B.C., there was a revolution, evidently caused in part by the burden of debt, for it began with the burning of the public archives and the cancellation of debts and of other contracts. This was suppressed, with or without the aid of the Roman proconsul of Macedonia (who now had a general oversight of Greece, not yet organised as a separate province); two of the revolutionary leaders were immediately condemned to death by the proconsul and another was sent to Rome for trial. Our only evidence for these events is an inscription recording a letter of the proconsul, Q. Fabius Maximus, to the city of Dyme, which complains bitterly of 'disorder' (*tarachē*), a 'disregard of contractual obligations and cancellation of debts' (*chre[ōkopia]*), and twice speaks of the revolutionary legislation as carried 'in violation of the constitution given to the Achaeans by the Romans'¹⁴ — a reference to the oligarchies imposed by the Roman general L. Mummius in various parts of central Greece and the Peloponnesus, when in 146 he had crushed the revolt of the Achaeans and their allies. Much more often, I imagine, any local disturbance would be nipped in the bud by the action of the city magistrates themselves, who would usually be anxious to avoid attracting the attention of the provincial governor by making an appeal to him. Thus we find an inscription of Cibyra (on the borders of Phrygia and Caria in the province of Asia), apparently of the second quarter of the first century of the Christian era, honouring a conspicuously wealthy citizen named Q. Veranius Philagrus who, after the serious earthquake of A.D. 23, had not only reclaimed for the city 107 public slaves who had somehow escaped from their condition (perhaps at the time of the earthquake), but had also 'suppressed a great conspiracy which was

doing the greatest harm to the city' (IGRR IV.914.5-6, 9-10).

Dio Cassius, writing in the early third century, puts into the mouth of Maecenas a speech addressed to Augustus, to which I shall return later in this section. One of the policies Maecenas is made to advocate is the total suppression of city Assemblies. The *dēmoi*, says Maecenas, should not be sovereign in any respect (*mēte kyrioi tinos*), nor should they be allowed to meet together in *ekklēsia* at all, for they would come to no good conclusions and they would often create disturbances (LII.xxx.2). I agree with Jones (GCAJ 340 n.42) that this is 'not true even of his [Dio's] own day but must represent the policy which he himself would have favoured'. We have little explicit evidence for constitutional changes brought about directly or indirectly by Roman action; but we can trace the imposition – in Greece itself in the second century B.C., and later elsewhere – of property qualifications for at any rate magistracies and membership of the Council, and in some cases the courts, if not for access to the Assembly (see Appendix IV below, § 2); the gradual turning of Councils (*boulai*) into little models of the Roman Senate, with ex-magistrates having life membership; and the exercise of such control over the popular Assemblies that by slow degrees they eventually died out entirely. By at any rate the end of the second century of the Christian era the Assemblies of the Greek cities had either ceased to meet or at least lost all effective power, and the Councils, which had originally been chosen annually (as a rule) from the whole body of citizens or at least a large part of it, often by lot, had been transformed into permanent, largely hereditary, and more or less self-perpetuating bodies, sometimes enrolled by censors chosen by and from their own number, the councillors (*bouleutai*, *decuriones* in Latin) being drawn only from the wealthier citizens and, with their families, eventually forming the privileged curial order, by which and from which in practice all magistrates were chosen. (I shall have more to say about the curial order in VIII.i and ii below.) Paulus, the Severan jurist, can say that non-decurions (*plebei*) are excluded from local magistracies, because they are debarred from *decurionum honores*, the offices open only to decurions (*Dig. L.ii.7.2*). He is speaking specifically of the duumvirate, the principal magistracy in very many towns of the Roman West, but his statement would apply equally, *mutatis mutandis*, to Greek cities. And of course a city Council might suffer interference from the provincial governor in its choice of magistrates. Legal texts speak of a Roman governor giving directions to a local Council (*ordo*) to elect a certain man as a magistrate or to confer on him some office or liturgy (*honor vel munus*: Ulpian, in *Dig. XLIX.iv.1.3*); and it is contemplated that the governor may himself be present at the meeting of the Council in question (*id. 4*). A proconsul, says Ulpian elsewhere, ought not to agree to the election of a duumvir by mere 'low-class clamour' (*vocibus popularium*), in place of the regular legal procedure (*Dig. XLIX.i.12*).

I know of no detailed description of this process which to my mind sufficiently brings out its deliberate, purposive character. The 'Greats' pupils I used to teach at Oxford, who study one period of Greek history and one of Roman, with quite a large gap in between, were often puzzled by the way in which Greek democracy, so vigorous in the fifth century and even in the fourth, has by the beginning of the Roman Principate become but a shadow of its former self. The books sometimes note this as a fact in passing, but most of them make no attempt

to supply an explanation of it, and when it is noticed at all it tends to be recorded as something that 'just happened'. Characteristic is the statement of Hugh Last, in *CAH* XI.458-9: 'In the East democracy had been in decline even before Rome came to throw her influence on the side of the more substantial elements, and in Rome itself circumstances had combined to make oligarchy the one possible alternative to monarchy. In the municipalities the same forces were at work . . . Rome showed no enthusiasm for democracy.' I on the other hand would see the whole process as part of the class struggle on the political plane: the Greek propertied classes, with the assistance first of their Macedonian overlords and then of their Roman masters, gradually undermined and in the end entirely destroyed Greek democracy, which before the end of the Principate had become extinct. Of course the suppression of Greek democracy was gratifying to the Romans; but it is clear that the Greek propertied classes did not merely acquiesce in the process: they assisted in it – and no wonder, because they themselves, after the Romans, were the chief beneficiaries of the system. An important letter of Cicero's congratulates his brother Quintus because he has made sure, during his government of the province of Asia, that the municipalities have been administered by the deliberations of the leading men, the *optimates* (*Ad Q. fr.* I.i.25; cf. *De rep.* II.39, and passages from the *Pro Flacco* quoted below). Pliny the Younger, writing in c. A.D. 107-8 to his friend Caelestrius Tiro, who was then proconsul of Baetica (southern Spain), reminds him of the necessity to preserve distinctions of rank and dignity (*discrimina ordinum dignitatumque*). 'Nothing,' he declares, with a characteristically Roman perversity, 'is more unequal than equality' (*Ep.* IX.v.1,3; cf. II.xii.5). Doubtless Pliny was familiar with the curious oligarchical argument for the superiority of 'geometrical' over 'arithmetical' proportion, which was known to Cicero (see VII.i below & its nn. 10-11). The 'greatest and most influential men of every city' are said by Aelius Aristeides, in the mid-second century, to act as guards of their native places for the Romans, making it unnecessary for them to be garrisoned (*Orat.* XXVI.64). Those of the principal propertied families of the Greek world who were prepared to accept Roman domination wholeheartedly and co-operate with their masters sometimes flourished remarkably. In Asia, with its great natural wealth, they might become immensely rich and aspire to membership of the imperial nobility, the Roman Senate (cf. III.ii above). Even in Old Greece, with its comparative lack of resources, they might at least achieve great prestige locally by holding office through several generations, like the four leading families of Roman Athens recently studied by Michael Woloch, which held a high proportion of the most important magistracies (as well as some major priesthoods) in the period 96-161; and occasionally they might eventually enter the senatorial class, like the family of Flavii from the insignificant little city of Thespieae in Boeotia, whose history from the third century B.C. to the third of our era has been ably reconstructed by C. P. Jones.¹⁵ A man who could claim to have expended much of his fortune for the benefit of his city (as some did, eager for the prestige it could bring) might sometimes receive from the city a real 'golden handshake': in the reign of Domitian, 40,000 drachmae/denarii (nearly 7 talents) were given to Julius Piso, by a decision of the Council and Assembly of Amisus, on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Trajan had issued instructions to Pliny, as his special governor of Bithynia-Pontus, forbidding such gifts; but he gave a special exemption to Piso

because his present had been made to him more than twenty years earlier (Pliny, *Ep.* X.110-111). And at about the end of the third century the lawyer Hermogenian regarded it as settled law that pensions (*alimenta*) might be decreed to ruined councillors, especially if they had 'exhausted their patrimony through munificence towards their native place' (*Dig. L.ii.8*) – a claim which was by no means infrequent (see Dio Chrys. XLVI.3 etc.).

In the earlier period of Roman rule – indeed, even occasionally in the early second century of the Christian era – the Assemblies of some Greek cities could evidently still show signs of life and vigour. Cicero, in the speech he delivered in 59 B.C. when successfully defending L. Valerius Flaccus, who was being prosecuted for extortion during his governorship of the province of Asia in 62-1, indulges in some bitterly contemptuous abuse of the Assemblies of the Greek cities of Asia, contrasting what he represents as their disorderly character with the dignified procedure of a Roman Assembly. Parts of this speech (*Pro Flacc.* 9-24, 57-8, 63) ought to be – as they rarely if ever are – prescribed reading for those who are studying the history of political institutions. Cicero pours scorn on Greek popular Assemblies, whose very procedure in passing their decrees (*psēphismata*) after general debate and by the holding up of hands he repeatedly derides (§§ 15, 17, 23): he says that these Greek Assemblies are excitable, rash, headstrong, tumultuous (§§ 15-19, 23, 24, 54, 57, 58) and that they are dominated by men of no account, 'uneducated men' (*imperiti*, § 58), cobblers and belt-makers (§ 17), artisans and shopkeepers and all such 'dregs of the state' (§ 18), rather than by the 'rich *bien-pensants*' (*locupletes homines et graves*, § 18), the 'leading men' (*principes*, §§ 54, 58; *optimates*, §§ 58, 63) for whom Cicero and his like, as we have seen, always wished to reserve the monopoly of political power in subject states. Cicero actually attributes the 'fall' of Greece (he uses the word *concidit*, § 16) to 'this one evil: the immoderate liberty and license [*licentia*]¹⁶ of their Assemblies'; and just afterwards he shows that he has Classical Athens particularly in mind (§ 17). None of this need surprise us, of course, for Cicero's speeches, letters and treatises are full of abuse of the lower classes at Rome itself (cf. VI.v below). And it should not escape our notice, by the way, that Cicero, who represents Greeks in general (even when he is not artfully denigrating them by calling them Asiatics, Phrygians, Mysians, Carians, Lydians: §§ 3, 17, 37-8, 40-1, 60, 65, 100) as totally untrustworthy witnesses, 'men to whom an oath is a joke, testimony a game' (§ 12; cf. 9-10, 36, 37), can bluntly tell his jury that decisions in a lawsuit ought to be rendered according to 'the welfare of the state, the safety of the community, and the immediate interests of the Republic' (*quid utilitas civitatis, quid communis salus, quid reipublicae tempora poscerent*, § 98) – that is to say, the interests of the propertied class. The merits of the particular case are in comparison unimportant.

The difference between being a genuinely free Greek city in the fifth or fourth century B.C. and a city subject to Roman rule can best be conveyed by a few quotations from a work of Plutarch, the *Politika parengelmata* ('Political precepts', or 'Precepts of statecraft'), usually referred to by the Latin translation of its title, *Precepta gerundae reipublicae* (*Moralia* 798a-825f), written in about the first decade of the second century of the Christian era, in the earlier years of the reign of Trajan. Plutarch had been asked by a young friend, a citizen of Sardis (813f, with 825d), to give him advice for a political career – or at least, that is the

ostensible occasion for the composition of the work. (The young man is obviously a member of my 'propertied class'; the alleged poverty discussed in *Mor.* 822def is simply the absence of ostentatious wealth: see 823abc etc.)¹⁷

'Nowadays, when the affairs of the cities do not include leadership in war, or the overthrow of tyrannies, or the making of alliances, what opening for a conspicuous and splendid career could one find?' Well, reflects Plutarch, 'there remain public lawsuits and embassies to an emperor, which require a man of ardent temperament and one with courage and intelligence'! (805ab). He suggests various ways of doing good turns to friends (809a). He protests against being laughed at when he is seen (as he says he often may be) supervising the measuring of tiles or the transport of concrete or stones, as a magistrate of his native town of Chaeronea (811bc). And then he really comes to the point: 'When you take up some magistracy,' he says, 'you must say to yourself, "You who rule are a subject, and the state you rule is dominated by proconsuls, the agents of Caesar", . . . whose boots you see above your head.'¹⁸ You should imitate those actors who . . . listen to the prompter and do not take liberties with rhythms and metres beyond those permitted by those in authority over them, for a failure in your part now brings not just hissing or mockery or jeering, but many have experienced "the terrible avenger: the axe that cleaves the neck"' (a quotation from some unidentified Greek tragedy), and others have been exiled to islands (813def). Let others do their rabble-rousing with the common herd, Plutarch advises, 'stupidly advocating imitation of the deeds and designs and actions of their ancestors, which are out of proportion with present opportunities and conditions' (814a). 'Leave it to the schools of the Sophists to prate of Marathon and the Eurymedon and Plataea and all the other examples which make the masses swell with pride and prance' (814bc). 'The politician should not only show himself and his state blameless towards our rulers; he should also have some friend among those men of the greatest influence, as a firm bulwark of his administration, for the Romans themselves are very eager to promote the political interests of their friends' (814c). Plutarch is scornful about the highly profitable procuratorships and provincial governorships 'in pursuit of which most men in public life grow old at the doors of other men's houses, neglecting their own affairs' (814d). He insists that the politician, while making his native land amenable to its rulers, ought not to humble it unnecessarily, 'or, when the leg has been fettered, go on to place the neck under the yoke, as some do when they refer everything, great or small, to our rulers, and thus bring the reproach of slavery upon us, or rather, altogether destroy its constitutional government, making it dazed and timid and powerless in everything' (814ef). 'Those who invite the rulers' decision on every decree or meeting or privilege or administrative act are obliging their rulers to become their masters [*despotai*] more than they themselves wish to be: the principal cause of this is the greed and contentiousness of the leading men, who . . . call in their superiors, and as a result the Council and Assembly and courts and every magistracy lose their authority. One should placate the ordinary citizens by offering them equality¹⁹ and the powerful by corresponding concessions, and thus control affairs *within the constitution* and dispose of difficulties' (814f-5b). 'The statesman will not allow to the common people any high-handed treatment of the citizens or any confiscation of the property of others or distribution of public funds, but will firmly

contest aspirations of that sort with persuasion, instruction and threats – although harmless expenditures may on occasion be permitted' (818cd). Plutarch proceeds to cite some instructive precedents for the making of concessions to the people to divert their feelings into harmless channels (818def, cf. 813b). One remembers here that Pliny the Younger, writing to a friend in 107, describes a certain leading citizen of Ephesus, Claudius Aristion, as '*innoxie popularis*', which should perhaps be translated 'inclined towards the common people, but harmlessly so' (*Ep.* VI.xxxi.3). Above all, says Plutarch a little later, civil strife (*stasis*) must never be allowed to occur: its prevention should be regarded as the greatest and noblest function of statesmanship (824bc). After all, he goes on, war has been done away with, and 'of liberty the common people have as much as our rulers grant them; and perhaps more would not be better for them' (824c). The wise statesman will aim at bringing about concord and friendship (*homonoian* . . . *kai philian*); he 'will lay stress on the weakness of Greek affairs, in which it is better for prudent men to accept one benefit: to live quietly and in harmony, since Fortune has left us no prize to compete for . . . What sort of power is it which a small edict of a proconsul may abolish or transfer to someone else, and which, even if it should last, has nothing worthy of enthusiasm?' (824def).

It is anything but an inspiring picture. Not that Plutarch and his like were at all basically dissatisfied with Roman rule:²⁰ the Greek propertied class had greatly benefited from it politically, when everything is taken into account (cf. VI.iv-vi below). They had even managed to preserve some of their self-respect, if with the loss of some of the nobler qualities of the Classical period.

As Rostovtzeff and others have seen,²¹ there is an interesting correspondence between the work of Plutarch which I have just been discussing and certain speeches delivered by Dio Chrysostom,²² mainly in the last decades of the first century and the first decade or so of the second. Particularly striking are Dio's advice to his native city (Prusa in Bithynia, north-west Asia Minor) to give up its futile quarrels with its neighbours, 'for leadership and power are vested in others' (meaning of course the Romans); and his apt comparison of such squabbles with 'the strife of fellow-slaves [*homodouloi*] with one another for glory and precedence'! (Dio XXXIV.48, 51). Dio could warn his fellow-citizens to be particularly careful not to give offence to the neighbouring city of Apamea, a Roman citizen colony, which, as long as it behaves itself, he says, can enjoy prestige and influence (*timēn tina kai dynamin*) with the proconsuls (of Bithynia: XL.22; cf. XLI.9). Even the status of a 'free city' was a very precarious one and might be lost by some act to which the Roman government objected (see below and n.23).

It seems likely, from some of the passages quoted above from Cicero's *Pro Flacco* and similar evidence, that as late as the mid-first century B.C. the poorer classes among the citizen population of a Greek democracy might derive some protection against exploitation and oppression by the rich from the control they could exercise on occasion over their popular Assembly – in which, so long as there was no property-qualification for the exercise of basic political rights, they would form a majority if enough of them could manage to attend. The local notables, however, could normally rely on receiving Roman support, and if an Assembly were driven by exceptional circumstances to act too strongly against their (or the Romans') interests, the result might be what Plutarch calls 'a small

edict of a proconsul', inflicting a penalty on the city (see above, and Appendix IV below, § 3B). And if the people dared to come together in a spontaneous Assembly, like the Ephesians who gathered in tumult to defend their precious goddess Artemis against St. Paul (and are said to have shouted their rhythmic civic slogan for a whole two hours), the city might well be punished by the governor, as the town clerk contemplated on that occasion (Acts XIX.21-41, esp. 40). This might involve withdrawal of the right to hold Assemblies (see Dio Chrys. XLVIII), or, in the case of a 'free city', the cancellation of that status – a step of which we know several examples,²³ and which Augustus (as we saw earlier) is said by Suetonius (*Aug.* 47) to have taken even in regard to cities which were actually *civitates foederatae*. 'Nothing in the cities escapes the notice of the provincial governors,' remarked Dio of Prusa at the end of one of his speeches (XLVI.14), delivered perhaps in the 70s, before the Assembly of his home city, when a band of his fellow-citizens had threatened to burn down his house and stone him, in the belief that he was partly to blame for a grain shortage (cf. below). It is interesting, by the way, to notice the threatened resort to 'lynch law', which indeed we find at intervals throughout the period of Roman rule in the Greek world, even in the Later Empire, when there are some striking examples of murderous riots, usually occurring as a result of famines, although in the fourth century onwards it is often Christian fanaticism which is responsible.²⁴ (I shall return presently to the subject of riots.)

By the age of Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch the Greek popular Assemblies, the very nerve-centre of Classical Greek democracy, were already in full decay, although some of them still met and might even occasionally discuss important matters, as is evident from the works of Dio and Plutarch themselves. Gradually, however, they died out altogether, as their functions became too trivial to be worth preserving. There is a great deal of scattered evidence of general Assemblies continuing to function in Greek cities well into the third century, but by then it is never possible to detect evidence that they are acting with any independence, let alone deciding policy. One of the latest decrees that have survived at any length, that passed at Athens in c. 230 in honour of M. Ulpius Eubiotus Leurus (and first published in 1941), records the making of a manual vote for and against the resolution; but the issue was entirely non-contentious, for the vote was unanimous – and no wonder, for Eubiotus, a man of consular rank, had given the city 250,000 drachmae (= HS 1 million) and much free wheat during a famine.²⁵ I know of no recent general discussion of the evidence for the functioning of Greek Assemblies in the Roman period, a subject well worth studying in detail.

Curiously enough, we happen to know from an edict of Constantine that in Roman Africa the elections of city magistrates were still being ratified by popular vote – no doubt a pure formality – as late as the 320s (*CTh* XII.v.1). Far more characteristic of the whole Graeco-Roman world by the late third century is the situation we see depicted in an imperial letter (in Latin, and probably of the time of Diocletian, A.D. 284 ff.) regarding the raising of Tymandus in Pisidia (southern Asia Minor) from the rank of village to that of city (*FIRA*² I.454-5, no. 92 = *MAMA* IV.236 = *ILS* 6090). Great emphasis is placed on an assurance given by the inhabitants that they will be able to provide a sufficient supply of decurions (town councillors), and reference is made to the fact that they will

now have 'the right of meeting in council (*coeund[i] n curiam*) and of passing decrees' etc., and will have to create magistrates, aediles and quaestors – there is no hint anywhere of a general Assembly. Well over a century earlier, in A.D. 158, a recently discovered letter of the Emperor Antoninus Pius to a city (perhaps Parthicopolis) in the Strymon valley in the province of Macedonia, at the site of the modern Sandanski in Bulgaria, had authorised a Council of 80 members, emphasising the dignity or repute (*axiōma*) which the citizens would derive from the size of such a Council – which, incidentally, seems to have been below rather than above average size (*IG Bulg. IV.2263*).²⁶

With one possible exception, from Pisidian Antioch (noticed in Appendix IV below, near the end of § 3B), the last meeting I have been able to discover of the public Assembly of a Greek city of which we have any detailed record took place within a few years either side of A.D. 300 at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt – an area where, of course, proper city life never developed in the way it did in most of the Greek world. We happen to possess part of the shorthand record of this meeting, which graphically conveys the utter futility of the political life of the cities under the Later Roman Empire. The people, for some reason which is not apparent, are bent on passing a decree that very day in honour of Dioscorus, their *prytanis* (the Chairman of the Town Council, we might call him), during a visit from the provincial governor and the principal financial officer of the province, the Katholikos. This is the record (which I have abbreviated slightly), consisting of little more than acclamations (*P. Oxy. I.41* = Hunt and Edgar, *SP II.144-7*, no. 239):

Bravo Prytanis, bravo the city's boast, bravo Dioscorus, chief of the citizens! under you our blessings still increase, source of our blessings! . . . Good luck to the patriot! good luck to the lover of equity! source of our blessings, founder of the city! . . . Let the Prytanis receive the vote, let him receive the vote on this great day. Many votes does he deserve, for many are the blessings we enjoy through you, Prytanis! This petition we make to the Katholikos about the Prytanis, with good wishes to the Katholikos, for the city's founder (the Lords Augusti for ever!), this petition to the Katholikos about the Prytanis, for the honest man's magistrate, the equitable magistrate, the city's magistrate, the city's patron, the city's lover of justice, the city's founder. Good fortune, governor! good fortune, Katholikos! Beneficent governor, beneficent Katholikos! We beseech you, Katholikos, concerning the Prytanis. Let the Prytanis receive the vote; let him receive the vote on this great day!

The Prytanis seems to have been seriously embarrassed and he speaks with deprecation:

I welcome, and with much gratification, the honour which you do me; but I beg that such demonstrations be reserved for a legitimate occasion when you can make them securely and I can accept them without risk.

But this dignified reply only stimulated the people to further transports of enthusiasm – perhaps it was all part of a time-honoured ritual.

Many votes does he deserve . . . (Lords Augusti, all-victorious for the Romans; the Roman power for ever!). Good fortune, governor, protector of honest men . . . We ask, Katholikos, for the city's Prytanis, the city's lover of justice, the city's founder . . . and so on, interminably.

I have said nothing here about the Gerousia which appears in many Greek cities, especially during the Roman period, because there is nothing to show that

it ever had any political or administrative functions: it enjoyed prestige and influence but was strictly a social organisation; and the same applies to the associations of youths: Epheboi and Neoi.²⁷

The most significant result of the destruction of Greek democracy was the complete disappearance of the limited measure of political protection afforded to the lower classes against exploitation by the propertied, which became intensified in the early centuries of the Christian era (as I shall explain in VIII.i below) and was one of the prime causes of the disintegration of a large part of the Roman empire between the fifth and seventh centuries (see VIII.iii and iv below). Modern historians have shown little concern with this aspect of the disappearance of democracy; and when they have noticed the disappearance at all, their interest in it has usually been submerged by attention to the supersession of 'city-state' or 'republican' forms of government (which of course may be either democratic or oligarchic) by the monarchy of the Hellenistic kingdoms or of the Roman Principate. Both these characteristics appear in Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, where attention is focused not on the destruction of democracy (a process that is noticed nowhere in the book) but on 'the replacement of the city-state form of government, with its intense political activity, by a bureaucratic, authoritarian monarchy' (that of the Roman Principate). Finley sees that process as making a 'major contribution' to the developments I have set out in VIII.i below, which are described by him as producing 'a cumulative depression in the status of the lower classes among the free citizens' (AE 87; I should perhaps add that the passage is indexed in AE 217, with only three others, under 'government, democratic', although it makes no specific reference to democracy).

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I said earlier that I would return, before the end of this section, to the decay of the popular lawcourts (*dikastēria*) which had been characteristic of Greek democracy in its great days. They evidently died out partly in the Hellenistic age and totally in the Roman period. One drawback of the *dikastēria* of Classical Greek democracy needs to be emphasised: both to make them representative, and to make bribery expensive and therefore more difficult, they needed to be *large*. But they could not be really large without the participation of many citizens outside the propertied class; and to make this possible it was necessary to *pay* the dicasts, or at least some of them. It has recently been claimed that Athens was the only city to give dicastic pay; but this is certainly false, and probably many democracies did provide pay (if only for limited numbers of dicasts), although the only other cities we can name with confidence which did this are Rhodes and Iasus, and only at Rhodes have we any ground for thinking that dicastic pay continued well into the Roman period (see my PPOA, with V.ii above and its n.24 below).²⁸

As part of the general decline of democracy during the Hellenistic period, the popular courts, like the Assemblies, evidently came more and more into the hands of the propertied class, although it is rare for us to be able to find any such specific evidence as that which I quoted above from a third-century inscription from Ptolemais in Egypt (OGIS 48), confining the choice of dicasts, as of councillors, to a chosen few. In the absence of sufficient evidence (which I

believe does not exist) I would assume both that the participation of the poorer citizens in such dicastic courts as continued to exist became increasingly rare, and that in many cities legal cases came to be tried more and more extensively by small boards of magistrates, even where words like *dikastērion* continued to be used, as they did generally.

I agree with Jones that in the sphere of jurisdiction the Romans 'interfered far more systematically than had the kings' (GCAJ 121-3, cf. 119). During the Republic and early Principate different rules obtained in different provinces, and moreover the position of an individual city might vary to some extent according to whether or not it was a 'free' or 'free and federate' state (but see above for the precarious nature of these statuses, especially the former). Our best information during the Republican period is from Sicily (ibid. 121-2, and see Appendix IV below, § 1 *ad fin.*). We also know something of the position in Cyrenaica in the early Principate (see Appendix IV, § 5). In both provinces we find the collective body of resident Romans (*conventus civium Romanorum*, of whom I shall have more to say in Appendix IV) providing judges for lawsuits. From the language used by Cicero in letters written while he was governing the province of Cilicia in 51-50 B.C., pluming himself on his generosity in allowing the Greeks to try their own cases, it seems that the cities of that province had no guaranteed constitutional rights of jurisdiction, and that the position was probably the same in the province of Asia (Cic., *Ad Att.* VI.i.15; ii.4).²⁹ Otherwise, most of our evidence comes from documents giving special privileges, including resort to Roman courts, to Greeks who were prominent pro-Romans, such as Asclepiades of Clazomenae and others in 78 B.C. and Seleucus of Rhosus in 41.³⁰ I believe that Jones may well be right (at any rate for some areas) in thinking it 'possible that the Romans abolished the jury system, which was already moribund, and substituted for it in the cities an arrangement like their own civil procedure, whereby a judge was appointed to try each case, perhaps by the local magistrates' (GCAJ 123). At any rate, I can see no sign of dicastic courts still functioning widely, although they continued for a time at Rhodes and perhaps a few other places (see below).

In the Principate interference with Greek judicial autonomy was intensified, with several 'free cities' losing their privileged status; and we now begin to find specific mention of the transfer of cases to the emperor's court,³¹ a practice which became more and more widespread. Sometimes we find the court of the provincial governor mentioned;³² and sometimes we may suspect that our source is referring to the governor's court rather than that of the city (see perhaps Plut., *Mor.* 805ab). Even if there is a clear reference to a city court,³³ we can hardly ever be sure that the case will be tried by any larger body than a board of magistrates³⁴ or a panel of judges drawn from the more well-to-do citizens³⁵ – and this is true, unfortunately, even in examples where the word *dikastērion* is used.³⁶ In particular, we find many times some such expression as *metapempton dikastērion*, in the sense of a small panel of judges (one or more) sent by one city to try legal cases in another, by special request.³⁷ I think it is significant when we find Hadrian's well-known law regulating the production of olive oil in Attica decreeing that certain offenders are to be prosecuted in the Athenian Assembly (see n.34 again) – the Assembly still existed, but the old Athenian *dikastēria* had presumably disappeared entirely by now (cf. Appendix IV below, § 2). As far as

I know, it is only at Rhodes that there is any real evidence for the survival of something like the old *dikastēria* into the second century of the Principate (and incidentally for pay being given to *dikastai* who served in the courts there: see my PPOA). There is, however, at least one other possible exception, namely Tarsus (see Dio Chrys. XXXIII.37). When Dio Chrysostom (XXXV.15) includes *dikazontes* in his list of the various people who can be expected to attend the judicial sessions at Apamea (Celaenae) in Phrygia, he is certainly not referring to mere local 'jurymen' of that city, for the occasions he is describing were the regular visits of the provincial governor, to preside over a court trying cases from the whole judicial *conventus* of which Apamea was the official centre. Dio's *dikazontes* must be members of the governor's *consilium* (his panel of advisers, *assessores*) and/or those men appointed by the governor to try less important cases who later (from the early third century onwards) became known as *iudices pedanei* and who might have their own *assessores*.³⁸

Before the end of the third century the local courts seem to have died out completely, and all jurisdiction was now exercised by the provincial governor or his delegates. (No doubt many governors were glad to allow local magistrates to try minor cases.) This development 'bore hard on the provincials, and in particular on the humbler classes, who had often to travel to the metropolis of the province to obtain justice and could not afford the gratuities expected of litigants by the governor and his officials. Moreover, when as was often the case their grievance was oppression by these very officials, they had little chance of satisfaction if they obtained a hearing' (Jones, *GCAJ* 150). The institution of *defensores civitatum* or *plebis* (in Greek, *ekdikoi* or *syndikoi*) in the fourth century is not likely to have made a great difference (cf. VI.vi below).

I have said nothing here of the *dikastai* who appear, though rarely, in inscriptions (mainly of the Hellenistic period) in roles not normally associated with dicasts: performing administrative functions, acting as witnesses to documents, moving decrees, and even perhaps filling eponymous offices,³⁹ since I do not think they are in any way relevant to the subject we are examining.

The whole process I have been describing, in which, under Roman rule, the legal and constitutional position (the *Rechtsstellung*) of poorer citizens became steadily worse, with the loss of those democratic elements that still remained, deserves to be considered side by side with the marked deterioration in the *Rechtsstellung* of humbler Roman citizens during the first two centuries of the Christian era, which I describe in VIII.i below. Both processes must have facilitated the exploitation of the poor: in the one case Greeks, in the other Romans.

* * * * *

The most important long-term effect of the destruction of Greek democracy, as I have already indicated, was the removal from the poor (who formed the vast majority of the population of the Graeco-Roman world) of all protection against exploitation and oppression by the powerful, and indeed of all effective opportunity of even voicing their grievances by constitutional means. If they lived in the country, as most of them did, they could do little, when things became intolerable, but take to flight or to brigandage – unless of course they could find some great landowner who would give them a measure of protection in return for their becoming virtually his serfs (see IV.ii above). I have quoted in IV.iv above the interesting passage in which Dio Cassius takes it for granted that the

most vigorous elements in the empire would tend to live by brigandage (LII.xxvii.3-5). When Fronto thought he was going to become proconsul of a relatively peaceful province, Asia, in c. 155, one of the first things he did was to send to Mauretania, on the other side of the empire, for a man he happened to know, Julius Senex, who was particularly skilled at dealing with brigands or bandits, *latrones* (*Ep. ad Ant. Pium* 8.1, ed. M. P. J. van den Hout, p. 161). In Italy brigandage was evidently rife in the fourth and fifth centuries: a series of imperial constitutions of the second half of the fourth century attempted to deal with this condition (*CTh* IX.xxx.1-5), and an edict of 409 actually forbade anyone except an ordinary rustic to put his sons out to nurse with shepherds on pain of being treated as an accomplice in brigandage (*ibid.* xxxi.1). But it would be superfluous to cite more of the plentiful evidence concerning brigandage (or banditry), which has often been discussed in modern times, for instance by MacMullen, *ERO* ch. vi and Appendix B, and Léa Flam-Zuckermann, in an article in *Latomus* (1970).⁴⁰ Doubtless most of those called brigands in antiquity were indeed essentially robbers, who had no wish to change the social order and were concerned only with their own personal advantage. Some, however, may well have been much more like what we should call social revolutionaries, with at least the rudiments of an ideology different from that of the ruling class of their day: a good example is the Italian Bulla, in the Severan period (see VIII.iii below). It is salutary to recall that in the series of 'suppression' and 'encirclement' campaigns waged by the Kuomintang against the Chinese Communists from 1927 onwards, the term regularly applied to the Communists by the government was 'bandits'. In VIII.iii below I quote the statement of Ulpian, in *Dig.* I.xviii.13.pr., about the importance to a *latro* of having local assistance, from *receptores*.

The poor townsman, or the peasant who lived near enough to a city, had more effective means of making his protests known: he could riot, or, if his city was large enough to have a hippodrome (circus), an amphitheatre or a substantial theatre, he might be able to organise a demonstration there. I need say nothing here about the very marked quasi-political role played during the Principate and the Later Empire by demonstrations in these places of public entertainment, sometimes in the very presence of the emperor himself, as this subject has been admirably dealt with in the Inaugural Lecture by Alan Cameron as Professor of Latin at King's College London in 1973, entitled *Bread and Circuses: the Roman Emperor and his People*, and also – up to a point – in his book, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (1976). Such demonstrations could often take place, of course, quite apart from the presence of the emperor or even the provincial governor.⁴¹ Those organised (roughly from the mid-fifth century to the reign of Heraclius) by the circus factions, the 'Blues' and 'Greens' mainly, were often futile affairs, sometimes apparently no more 'political' in intent than an outbreak of 'aggro' at a modern football match, for the factions as such had no specifically political characteristics – although I believe they may have acquired a political significance more often than Cameron would allow: this question, for me, remains open.^{41a} Outright abuse of an emperor, in the circus in particular, was not unknown. John the Lydian preserves an exceptionally entertaining example: a lampoon in four elegiac couplets, posted up in the hippodrome at Constantinople in the early years of the sixth century

(c. 510–15), attacking the Emperor Anastasius at a time when his financial policy was being carried out through Marinus the Syrian, and indeed was probably inspired by Marinus, who was praetorian prefect of the East from 512 to perhaps 515. Anastasius is named; he is addressed as *basileu kosmophthore*, 'World-destroying emperor'; he is accused of 'money-grubbing' (*philochrēmosynē*); Marinus is named only as Scylla to his Charybdis (*De Magistr.* III.46). The most famous example of a major disturbance arising out of the games is the so-called 'Nika Riot' at Constantinople in 532: it began as a demonstration against certain oppressive officials, developed into a revolution against the Emperor Justinian, and ended in a frightful massacre by Belisarius and Mundus and their 'barbarian' troops of vast numbers of the common people, estimated by even the most conservative of the sources – no doubt with the usual exaggeration – at thirty to thirty-five thousand (see e.g. Stein, *HBE* II.449–56).

That, one cannot help remarking, is the sort of price that may have to be paid for the total suppression of proper democratic rights. Occasionally we hear of milder demonstrations, like the one at Alexandria mentioned by Philo, who says he saw an audience rising to its feet and shouting with enthusiasm at the mention of 'the name of freedom' in the *Auge*, a play of Euripides now lost to us (*Quod omn. prob. lib.* 141). That remark of Philo's may make us think of some passages in Dio Chrysostom's insufferably verbose speech to the Alexandrians, which contains a series of animadversions, sometimes hard to interpret, on the public behaviour of the citizens (*Orat.* XXXII, *passim*, esp. 4, 25–32, 33, 35, 41–2, 51–2, 55: for the date, see VIII.iii n.1 below).

One of the last references, during the period covered by this book, to a popular movement inside a major city is made by the historian Evagrius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (completed in 594), concerning the situation at Antioch in 573, in the reign of Justin II, when a Persian army under a commander called in Greek Adaarmanes was invading and plundering Syria. (The work of Evagrius, our only surviving narrative source for the whole of the period it covers, 431–594, is not limited to the history of the Church, which is its major subject.) Antioch had never fully recovered from its sack by the Persians in 540: although rebuilt by Justinian, it had suffered further disasters, including two earthquakes, in 551 and 557, and more than one outbreak of plague. In 573 it seems that only the countryside and suburbs of Antioch were devastated by the Persians, although much of the population had fled. But before the city was abandoned, according to Evagrius (who may have been present at the time), 'the *dēmos* rose, with the aim of starting a revolution' (*epanestē neōterōn pragmatōn arxai thelōn*); and he adds the enigmatic remark that this is 'an event that often occurs [*hoia philei gignesthai*], especially in circumstances such as this' (*HE* v.9 *fin.*, p.206.11–13, ed. Bidez/Parmentier; and see Downey, *HAS* 561–2, with 533–59).

It is no wonder that the imperial government was suspicious of any kind of combination or association among the lower orders in the Greek East. The Emperor Trajan refused to permit the formation of a fire-brigade in the city of Nicomedia in Bithynia (which had just suffered from a disastrous fire, and had no organised body to deal with such things), on the express ground that any association in the province was bound to take on a political character and lead to disturbances (Pliny, *Ep.* X. 33–34). Indeed, there seems to have been a marked absence from the Greek East of organised fire-brigades such as there were in the

West. For the same reason, Trajan was also nervous about allowing new *eranoi* (friendly societies, or mutual benefit societies) in Bithynia-Pontus (ibid. 92-3).⁴²

One popular form of riot was to lynch a detested official, or burn down the houses of local bigwigs who were held responsible for a famine or some other misfortune. In the late first century the common people of Prusa in Bithynia threatened to burn down the house of Dio Chrysostom, and to stone him, on the ground that he was one of those mainly responsible for a famine. We possess the speech he delivered on that occasion in the Assembly of Prusa, which I have already mentioned above: he claims that he is not to blame for the famine, as his land produced only enough grain for his own needs and was otherwise given over to vine-growing and the pasturing of cattle (*Orat.* XLVI.6,8-13); he also reminds his audience that the Romans are watching them (§ 14). On other occasions the victims of popular indignation⁴³ may even have been innocent of at any rate the particular offence with which they were being charged – as when Ammianus tells us of a Roman noble of the third quarter of the fourth century, the father of the great orator Symmachus, whose beautiful house across the Tiber was burnt down by the people because of a baseless rumour to the effect that he had said he would rather use his wine for quenching lime-kilns than sell it at the price they expected (XXVII.iii.4). But I do not think we need waste very much sympathy on most of the magnates whose houses were destroyed in this way. The situation at Antioch in Syria, about which, in the late fourth century, we know more than any other city in the Greek East, may throw some light on this matter. I should explain first that the food supply of Antioch seems to have come mainly – as we should expect – from the neighbouring area, the plains of the lower Orontes,⁴⁴ and that it was the Council of the city, dominated by substantial landowners, which was always regarded as responsible for the corn supply, a sizeable proportion of which is likely to have come from the estates of the rich proprietors themselves. Their prime concern was evidently selling their corn at the highest possible price, even in time of famine. They were accused by the Emperor Julian of stock-piling it in their granaries during the famine at Antioch of 362-3 (*Misop.* 369d). A little later St. John Chrysostom denounced them for throwing whole sacks of grain into the river rather than let the poor have it cheap; and speaking of one particular landowner who had publicly bewailed the end of a threatened scarcity because of the loss he would sustain through the consequent fall in prices, the Saint spoke with some sympathy of demands to have his tongue cut out and his heart incinerated, and (with an apt reference to Proverbs XI.26) declared roundly that he ought to have been stoned! (*In Ep. I ad Cor., Hom.* XXXIX.7-8, in *MPG* LXI.343-4). These passages should not be written off entirely, although Chrysostom may well be exaggerating, as usual (cf. Petit, *LVMA* 117 n.5).

I need not describe here the famine at Antioch in 362-3, which I have already mentioned in IV.ii above: it did not give rise to outbreaks of violence, but this was entirely due to the personal presence of the Emperor Julian for some seven months and the exceptional measures he took to reduce the famine (see IV.ii and its n.23). It is, however, worth drawing attention to the demonstrations which took place on the emperor's arrival in July 362, both in the hippodrome (*Liban., Orat.* XVIII.195) and in the theatre (Julian, *Misop.* 368c), with rhythmical shouts of 'Plenty of everything: everything dear' (*panta gemei, panta pollou*). I will only

add that there is but a brief and vague account of these events in Ammianus, who, although one of the best historians the ancient world produced, was himself a member of the propertied class of Antioch and sympathised strongly with the councillors. Ammianus merely tells us disparagingly that Julian, without good reason and out of zest for popularity, tried to lower prices, 'a thing which sometimes, when not done in a fitting manner, is apt to produce scarcity and famine' (XXII.xiv.1; cf. XIV.vii.2) – Ammianus was evidently what would be regarded today in the capitalist world as an orthodox economist! But he does give us rather more details concerning a somewhat similar situation at Antioch in 354 (XIV.vii.2,5–6).⁴⁵ The Caesar Gallus, who was ruling the East, realised that a corn shortage was at hand and advised the councillors of Antioch to fix a lower price – inopportunately, as Ammianus believed (§ 2, *vilitatem intempestivam*). The councillors of course objected, whereupon Gallus ordered the execution of their leading members, some of whom were put to death (Liban., *Orat.* I.96), although the majority were saved by the intervention of Honoratus, the Comes Orientis. The common people begged the Caesar to help them. According to Ammianus, Gallus virtually accused Theophilus, the provincial governor (*consularis*) of Syria, of being responsible for the crisis: he was torn to pieces by the crowd, and the people also burnt down the house of a rich Antiochene, Eubulus – who, as we happen to know from Libanius, only just escaped stoning (*Orat.* I.103). The way the riot is referred to by Julian (*Misop.* 363c, 370c), and the failure of the authorities to take any very severe measures (except against a few humble people),⁴⁶ suggest that Theophilus and Eubulus between them had perhaps been conspicuously responsible for allowing the threat of famine to develop. Thus was a rough sort of justice sometimes done in the Later Empire – but at what a cost!

Justice through ordinary channels was virtually out of the question for the poor man by now, unless of course he could obtain the help of some powerful protector, at a price, in the way I have described elsewhere (SVP) and in IV.ii above. Emperors like Julian, and some imperial officials, might be well-intentioned, but if so they were likely to be defeated by the intrigues of the *dynatoi* or *potentes*, the great landlords. Even the autocratic Justinian, in a rescript dealing with a case of oppression by a government official in Egypt, which I have described in IV.ii above, could say apologetically, 'The intrigues of Theodosius proved stronger than our commands' (*P. Cairo Masp.* I.67024.15–17). In a constitution of 536 the same emperor complains that in Cappadocia (central Asia Minor) many small possessions and even the greater part of the imperial estates have been appropriated by the great landowners, 'and no one has protested, or if he has, his mouth has been stopped with gold' (*Nov.J.* XXX.v.1). The best-intentioned emperors could do little to protect the humble. Julian, one of the best of all the emperors in this respect, is said by Ammianus (XVI.v.15) to have deliberately refrained, when he was commanding in Gaul, from giving remissions of *arrears* of taxes, although he reduced the amount of tax for the future, because he well knew that everywhere the poor were invariably obliged to pay their taxes at once and in full, and that remissions of arrears could benefit only the rich. (And see VIII.iv below.)

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The Greek term *dēmokratia* became steadily more devalued during the process

I have been describing. It is possible to distinguish two phases in this development: the first began quite early in the Hellenistic period; the second is not evidenced (as far as I know) until the mid-second century of the Christian era and may not have evolved much earlier than that. During the third and second centuries B.C. *dēmokratia* increasingly came to signify no more than an internally self-governing republic,⁴⁷ whether democratic or oligarchic, and it could be used merely for the very limited degree of autonomy accorded by Rome to complaisant Greek cities, or to celebrate a restoration of constitutional republican government. The best early illustration of this that I can find is the bilingual dedication by the Lycian League to Capitoline Jupiter at Rome, probably of the 160s B.C. (IGRR I.61).⁴⁸ The Lycians themselves refer in Greek to the restoration of their 'ancestral democracy' (*hē patrios dēmokratia*), equating it in Latin with their 'ancestors' liberty' (*maiorum leibertas*). By the last century B.C. this sense of *dēmokratia* seems to have become the standard one. The Romans, of course, had no word of their own for 'democracy' and never resorted to a transliteration of the Greek word. When Cicero, for example, is speaking in his *De republica* of democracy in the original Greek sense, he usually substitutes for *dēmokratia* either *liber populus* or just *populus* (e.g. I.42-9, 53, 55, 69; cf. 66-8, where Cicero is partly paraphrasing Plato, *Rep.* VIII.562a ff.), and on one occasion he says that a state in which the people are all-powerful is called a *civitas popularis* (I.42). The original meaning of *dēmokratia* is still occasionally found in Greek until well into the Principate,⁴⁹ although this is more usually expressed now by some other word, such as *ochlokratia* ('mob-rule').⁵⁰

I do not know when the Greek word *dēmokratia* was first used for the constitution of the Roman Republic, but it seems likely that this happened by the last century B.C., or anyway by the first century of our era, when the *dēmokratia* of the Republic could be contrasted with the *monarchia* of the Principate. This was a perfectly natural usage, given the previous Hellenistic developments: it was simply an application to Rome of the terminology already in use for Greek cities. The earliest texts I happen to know in which the Roman Republic is clearly seen by an author writing in Greek as a *dēmokratia* are of the late first century: Josephus, *AJ* XIX.162, 187, and Plutarch, *Galba* 22.12. Josephus tells us that the soldiers who made Claudius emperor on the assassination of Caligula did so because they realised that a *dēmokratia* (which here can only mean a restoration of the Republic) could never have sufficient control of the great affairs of state, and anyway would not be favourable to themselves (id. 162). And Plutarch says that the oaths sworn to Vitellius as emperor in 69 by the army in Upper Germany were given in breach of oaths sworn but a short time before 'to the Senate' – in fact, to 'the Senate and People of Rome' (22.4), which Plutarch describes as *dēmokratikoi*. One could certainly translate *dēmokratikoi* here 'republican', especially since the very giving of those oaths had been an open repudiation of the existing emperor, Galba, if not of the Principate itself. Greek writers of the first, second and third centuries commonly refer to the Roman Republic as a *dēmokratia*, in contrast with the Principate, which is almost always an outright *monarchia*,⁵¹ under a *basileus* (cf. VI.vi below). Occasionally they apply to the Republic some other term than *dēmokratia*. For Strabo, in a passage written early in the reign of Tiberius (before the death of Germanicus in 19), the Republican constitution was a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy (*politeian* . . .

miktēn ek te monarchias kai aristokratias), characterised in his mind – as were also its leaders – by *aretē*, a word conveying approval not only of its efficiency but also of its moral qualities (VI.iv.2, pp.286,288; cf. Dion. Hal., *De antiq. orator.* 3). Appian, in the second quarter of the second century, often refers to the Roman Republic as a *dēmokratia* (see n.51 again), but in his *praef.* 6 it is an *aristokratia* (cf. VI.vi below). Dio Cassius, for whom *dēmokratia* is the standard term, sometimes describes the late Republican constitution as descending into, or at least disturbed by, *dynasteiai* (a term he seems to use as a milder form of *tyrannis*);⁵² and for Herodian, writing in the mid-third century, the Roman Republic as a whole was a *dynasteia*, a word he probably used to mean a close hereditary oligarchy (I.i.4), very much as Thucydides and Aristotle had done (Thuc. III.62.3; Arist., *Pol.* IV.5, 1292^b7–10, etc.).

I have spoken of two phases in the devaluation of the term *dēmokratia*. In the first, as we have just seen, it came to be used for almost any type of constitutional, republican government, however oligarchic. The second represents the ultimate degradation of the concept of *dēmokratia*: from at least the Antonine age onwards the term could actually be used of the Roman Principate.⁵³ In the oration *To Rome* of Aelius Aristeides, from the reign of Antoninus Pius in the mid-second century, the Roman empire as a whole is claimed as the ideal *dēmokratia*, because all the people have willingly resigned their powers of ruling into the hands of the one man best fitted to rule: the emperor!⁵⁴ And about A.D. 220 Philostratus, writing an imaginary dialogue between the Emperor Vespasian and some Greek philosophers, makes his hero, Apollonius of Tyana, after loftily dismissing constitutions as unimportant (his own life, he says, is in the power of the gods), declare that 'the rule of one man who is always looking after the common good is a democracy [*dēmos*]' (*Vita Apollon.* V.35).⁵⁵ What Aristeides and Philostratus are really praising, of course, is monarchy. Much the same line of thought is expressed in the extraordinarily interesting speech with a dramatic date of 29 B.C. which Dio Cassius puts into the mouth of Maecenas, addressing Augustus in reply to Agrippa's advocacy of a form of constitution called *dēmokratia* and represented by Agrippa not only as the traditional Greek but also as the Roman Republican form of government.⁵⁶ Maecenas is made to claim that 'that freedom of the mob [the *ochlos*] becomes the bitterest servitude of the best, and involves both in a common ruin', while under the regime he advocates (an outright monarchy) everyone will achieve, paradoxically, '*dēmokratia* which is genuine [*tēn dēmokratian tēn alēthē*] and freedom which is secure' (LII.xiv.4–5). And the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–80) could apply to his own rule, if not the actual word *dēmokratia*, a whole array of terms which had meant something very real in the great days of Greek democracy but were now largely empty. In *Medit.* I.6 he says he has learnt to endure free speech (*parrhēsia*).⁵⁷ In I.14 he applies to his own rule the concept of a constitution preserving equality before the law (a *politeia isonomos*), administered according to equality and with equal liberty of speech (*isotēs* and *isēgoria*). But of course these are merely attributes of a monarchy (*basileia*, the most dignified name for that institution), which, he thinks, honours above all things the freedom of its subjects (*tēn eleutherian tōn archomenōn*, I.14).

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There is one text I wish to mention, which never seems to be brought into any

discussion by historians of the later uses of the word *dēmokratia*, perhaps because it occurs in a work of much greater literary than historical interest: the last surviving chapter of the partly preserved treatise in Greek, *On the sublime* (*Peri hypsous*, or *De sublimitate*), a piece of literary criticism which used to be attributed to 'Longinus' or 'Dionysius' (and often to Cassius Longinus in the mid-third century) but is now generally agreed to be the work of an otherwise unknown author, writing in one of the first three centuries and perhaps most probably in the first, or the first half of the second. The writer states a problem put to him by 'a certain philosopher', who may of course be a creature of his own imagination – a common literary device. The 'philosopher' stresses the world-wide dearth of great literature, and asks whether it is right to accept 'the oft-repeated view [*ekeino to thryloumenon*] that *dēmokratia* is the effective nurse of great achievements [or, 'of great men'], and that literary genius flourished almost exclusively under it and perished with it'. *Dēmokratia* is then virtually equated with freedom (*eleutheria*) and contrasted with the 'slavery' which is represented as universally prevailing (44.1-3). By 'slavery', of course, political subjection is meant; and it is described as '*douleia dikaia*', an adjective I find puzzling: is it 'legalised, legal, legitimate', or 'deserved, justified', or 'just'? (I think that perhaps 'deserved [or 'just'] political subjection' gives the best sense.) The reply by the author of the treatise is bitterly disappointing: it hardly notices the 'philosopher's' statement and, in a very traditional manner, characteristic of the Stoics among others, attributes the prevailing 'frivolity' (*rhathymia*) to avarice and the pursuit of pleasure, and all the evils accompanying such qualities (44.6-11).

What the 'philosopher' says is of great interest. The general view of literary scholars today is that it is the introduction of the Roman Principate which is represented as the transformation of *dēmokratia* and *eleutheria* into 'slavery'.^{57a} Yet the literary scholars, best represented by D. A. Russell (whose edition of *On the sublime* can now be regarded as the standard one),⁵⁸ fail to bring out the startling paradox presented by the passage in question. It might be possible to maintain that *Latin* literature of the highest quality flourished best in the Republic and did not long survive its extinction.⁵⁹ But although the author of our treatise dedicated it to a man with a Roman name, Postumius Terentianus, and must have been writing at least partly, if not mainly, for educated Romans, he is not interested in the slightest in Latin literature, which, apart from a passing reference to Cicero (12.4), he entirely ignores – as did the vast majority of Greek men of letters, including even Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lived at Rome from 30/29 B.C. onwards, and who never notices Latin authors except when he has occasion to use them as historical sources. Even Plutarch, an omnivorous reader, did not take up the study of Roman literature until he was well into middle age (Plut., *Demosth.* 2.2). Our author is concerned exclusively with *Greek* literature. And I do not see how it could possibly be maintained that it was the institution of the Principate that had crippled Greek literature, which was surely little affected for the worse by the fall of the Roman Republic. A very much better case could be made for saying that Greek literature, apart from Homer and the early poets, did indeed rise and fall with *dēmokratia* – in the original and proper sense! Certainly the largest number of references in the treatise *On the sublime* to works which evoked the admiration of the author are to those written in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.; there is little or no enthusiasm

for Hellenistic literature.⁶⁰ The author reports the opinion I have been discussing (that of the 'philosopher') as 'widely held' – unless, as is possible, *ekeino to thryloumenon* in 44.2 has a pejorative sense: Rhys Roberts's translation, in his edition (of 1899), is 'the trite explanation'. Could the statement about the decay of great literature after Republican times have originated with Romans, thinking primarily about Latin literature in general, or perhaps oratory in particular, and after much repetition by them, could it have gained currency among Greeks? Or did the statement originate among Greeks, who realised that the period of the greatest development of Greek literature was precisely that in which real democracy had flourished? I must say, I should be rather surprised if there were many literary men in the Roman period who had opinions of the latter sort; and I would imagine that the view expressed by Longinus' 'philosopher' originated among Greeks during the Hellenistic period and was tenacious enough to retain a few adherents even under Roman rule. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, one of the leading literary critics of antiquity, opens his work, *On the ancient orators*, by dating the beginning of the end of 'ancient, philosophic rhetoric' (by which he means essentially the Attic style) to the death of Alexander the Great, in 323 B.C. (*De antiq. orat.* 1). It evidently did not occur to him that a more powerful influence might have been exerted by the destruction of the Athenian democracy in the following year!

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Two very puzzling references to *dēmokratiai* (in the plural), for which I have never been able to find a parallel, or an explanation, occur in the works of Hippolytus, Pope (or Antipope) of Rome and martyr: one is in section 27 of that curious work, *On the Antichrist*, which seems to have been written very near the year 200, and the other is in a slightly later work, the *Commentary on Daniel* II.xii.7.⁶¹ (For the Book of Daniel itself, see VII.v and its n.4 below.) Of the image depicted in Dan. II.31 ff. it is the toes (verses 41–2) which are singled out by Hippolytus as symbolising democracies – I cannot understand why, since they play no significant or independent role in Daniel (or in the Apocalypse) and are not given any particular explanation there, unlike the ten horns, interpreted as ten kings, with which they could be equated. (It is interesting, by the way, to find Porphyry, the great pagan scholar and anti-Christian polemicist, giving – as is now universally admitted – a far better interpretation of Daniel's beasts than any of the early Christian Fathers. I need do no more here than refer to G. Bardy, in the *Sources chrétiennes* edition of Hippol., *Comm. in Dan.*, mentioned in n.61, at pp.23–4, 271 note a.)

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Real democracy had always been anathema to the upper classes of the Graeco-Roman world. By the time of the Later Empire it had become a vaguely-remembered bogey, now – happily – extinct, but still something that a rich man might shudder at. It was probably in 336⁶² that the historian and bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea, delivered his *Triakontaëtērikos* (or *Oratio de laudibus Constantini*), a panegyric announcing for the first time the full theory, including the theology, of the new Christian monarchy of Constantine, on the thirtieth anniversary of that emperor's accession. (I shall have a little more to say about

this speech in VI.vi below, and see its n.77.) Eusebius contrasts with Constantine's *monarchia* the *ex isotimias polyarchia*, 'the rule of the Many, founded on equality of privilege'. He may well mean any form of rule other than monarchy, but *isotimia* suggests democracy above all. And he declares that such *polyarchia* is mere 'anarchy and civil strife' (*anarchia kai stasis*).⁶³ This was very much what Plato had thought about democracy. But in the seven eventful centuries between Plato and Eusebius democracy had perished utterly. Its spirit had been partly broken before the end of the fourth century B.C., and its institutions had then been gradually stamped out by the combined efforts of the Greek propertied classes, the Macedonians and the Romans. In Byzantine writers from at least the early fifth century onwards, the word *dēmokratia* and its verb *dēmokratein* can denote 'mob violence', 'riot', even 'insurrection'.⁶⁴ The democracy which revived in the modern world was something new, which owed little directly to Greek *dēmokratia*. But by the very name it bears it pays a silent but well-deserved tribute to its ancient predecessor.⁶⁵

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