

Democracy and the Athenians – Introductory sources

Please join [the Team for Classical Civilisation Bridging work](#) for week by week assignments, assistance and general Classics chitchat:

“The Democracy and the Athenians” paper is a “History of Ideas” paper. It is part history, part sociology, part philosophy, and all politics! It’s a chance to assess our own views about how society should be run as well as learn about the difference 2500 years makes!

To study it effectively, we first must look at how democracy evolved over time in Athens. This will give us the tools to assess when, if ever, Athens became truly democratic, whether Athenians would view us as a democratic state, and why Athenian democracy ultimately failed.

It is difficult to follow all the city states and all the different names in part of this. Don’t be afraid to google proper nouns and use Wikipedia to help you figure out who is on whose side (this can change very quickly!) As names are transliterated from the Ancient Greek, there can often be more than one way to spell them!

Section 1: Solon and the Tyrants

We start with the story of Solon, an aristocrat who lived at a time of crisis between rich and poor. At this time, Athens and the territory it controlled (called Attica) was only one of hundreds of independent Greek city states. The other Greek city state which will become a very important player in our story is Sparta, and the mighty empire of Persia will also be important.

Solon captured the imagination of many writers, so we have several accounts which tell us how:

- a) previously an Athenian called Cylon had attempted a coup,
- b) the poor were enslaved by the rich as they couldn’t pay their debts,
- c) Solon changed Athenian society stopping Athenians from becoming slaves,
- d) After Solon, Pisistratus launched a successful coup and became tyrant
- e) The eventual expulsion of Pisistratus’ family from Athens

As you read through the different accounts, try to pick out common themes.

These sources are arranged by author. Within each author, they are arranged chronologically. If you are confused refer to the 5 main points above which are in chronological order. The fourth source is a little more challenging and is presented as extension work rather than core work.

1) Plutarch, Life of Solon, 12, 14-26

Plutarch was a Roman writer who was interested in drawing parallels between famous Greeks and famous Romans. He writes in detail about Solon's reforms, but how could he know all this hundreds of years later?

12 Now the pollution of Cylon's death had for a long time agitated the city, ever since Megacles the archon had persuaded Cylon and his fellow-conspirators, who had taken sanctuary in the temple of Athena, to come down and stand their trial. They fastened a braided thread to the image of the goddess and kept hold of it, but when they reached the shrine of the Erinyes on their way down, the thread broke of its own accord, upon which Megacles and his fellow-archons rushed to seize them, on the plea that the goddess refused them the rights of suppliants. Those who were outside of sacred precincts were stoned to death, and those who took refuge at the altars were slaughtered there; only those were spared who made supplication to the wives of the archons. Therefore the archons were called polluted men and were held in execration. The survivors of the followers of Cylon also recovered strength, and were forever at variance with the descendants of Megacles. At this particular time the quarrel was at its height and the people divided between the two factions. Solon, therefore, being now in high repute, interposed between them, along with the noblest of the Athenians, and by his entreaties and injunctions persuaded the men who were held to be polluted to submit to a trial, and to abide by the decision of three hundred jurors selected from the nobility. Myron of Phlya conducted the prosecution, and the family of Megacles was found guilty. Those who were alive were banished, and the bodies of the dead were dug up and cast forth beyond the borders of the country. During these disturbances the Megarians also attacked the Athenians, who lost Nisaea, and were driven out of Salamis once more. The city was also visited with superstitious fears and strange appearances, and the seers declared that their sacrifices indicated pollutions and defilements which demanded expiation.

Under these circumstances they summoned to their aid from Crete Epimenides of Phaestus, who is reckoned as the seventh Wise Man by some of those who refuse Periander a place in the list. He was reputed to be a man beloved of the gods, and endowed with a mystical and heaven-sent wisdom in religious matters. Therefore the men of his time said that he was the son of a nymph named Balte, and called him a new Cures. On coming to Athens he made Solon his friend, assisted him in many ways, and paved the way for his legislation. For he made the Athenians decorous and careful in their religious services, and milder in their rites of mourning, by attaching certain sacrifices immediately to their funeral ceremonies, and by taking away harsh and barbaric practices in which their women had usually indulged up to that time. Most important of all, by sundry rites of propitiation and purification, and by sacred foundations, he hallowed and consecrated the city, and brought it to be observant of justice and more easily inclined to unanimity. It is said that when he had seen Munychia and considered it for some time, he remarked to the bystanders that man was indeed blind to the future; for if the Athenians only knew what mischiefs the place would bring upon their city, they would devour it with their own teeth. A similar insight into futurity is ascribed to Thales. They say that he gave directions for his burial in an obscure and neglected quarter of the city's territory, predicting that it would one day be the market-place of Miletus. Well then, Epimenides was vastly admired by the Athenians, who offered him

Commented [SD1]: According to ancient Greek religion, anyone taking sanctuary in a temple could not be killed without the killers becoming cursed by the gods

Commented [SD2]: The archons were magistrates in Athens.

Commented [SD3]: There were meant to be seven sages or wise men in early Greece. Solon is one of them.

Commented [SD4]: a mythical humanoid female creature.

much money and large honours; but he asked for nothing more than a branch of the sacred olive-tree, with which he returned home.

14 At this point, the wisest of the Athenians cast their eyes upon Solon. They saw that he was the one man least implicated in the errors of the time; that he was neither associated with the rich in their injustice, nor involved in the necessities of the poor. They therefore besought him to come forward publicly and put an end to the prevailing dissensions. And yet Phanias the Lesbian writes that Solon of his own accord played a trick upon both parties in order to save the city, and secretly promised to the poor the distribution of land which they desired, and to the rich, validation of their securities. 2 But Solon himself says that he entered public life reluctantly, and fearing one party's greed and the other party's arrogance. However, he was chosen archon to succeed Philombrotus, and made mediator and legislator for the crisis, the rich accepting him readily because he was well-to-do, and the poor because he was honest. It is also said that a certain utterance of his which was current before his election, to the effect that equality bred no war, pleased both the men of substance and those who had none; the former expecting to have equality based on worth and excellence, the latter on measure and count. Therefore both parties were in high hopes, and their chief men persistently recommended a tyranny to Solon, and tried to persuade him to seize the city all the more confidently now that he had it completely in his power. Many citizens, too, who belonged to neither party, seeing that it would be a laborious and difficult matter to effect a change by means of argument and law, were not reluctant to have one man, the justest and wisest of all, put at the head of the state. Furthermore, some say that Solon got an oracle at Pytho which ran as follows:—

"Take thy seat amidships, the pilot's task is thine;
Perform it; many in Athens are thine allies."

And above all, his familiar friends chid him for being averse to absolute power because of the name of tyranny, as if the virtues of him who seized it would not at once make it a lawful sovereignty. Euboea (they argued) had formerly found this true of Tynnondas, and so had the Mitylenaeans, now that they had chosen Pittacus to be their tyrant. None of these things shook Solon from his resolution. To his friends he said, as we are told, that a tyranny was a lovely place, but there was no way down from it. And in his poems he writes to Phocus:—

"And if," he said, "I spared my land,
My native land, and unto tyranny and violence implacable
Did not set hand, polluting and disgracing my fair fame,
I'm not ashamed; in this way rather shall my name be set above
That of all other men."

From this it is clear that even before his legislation he was in high repute. And as for the ridicule which many heaped upon him for refusing the tyranny, he has written as follows:—

"Solon was a shallow thinker and a man of counsel void;
When the gods would give him blessings, of his own will he refused.
When his net was full of fish, amazed, he would not pull it in,
All for lack of spirit, and because he was bereft of sense.
I had certainly been willing, for the power, and boundless wealth,
And to be tyrant over Athens no more than a single day,
Then to have a pouch flayed from me, and my lineage blotted out."

Commented [SD5]: This refers to the island of Lesbos!

Commented [SD6]: The "parties" being "the poor" and "the rich" respectively.

Commented [SD7]: This is tyranny, rule by one man in an unconstitutional fashion.

15 Thus he represents the multitude and men of low degree as speaking of him. However, though he rejected the tyranny, he did not administer affairs in the mildest possible manner, nor in the enactment of his laws did he show a feeble spirit, nor make concessions to the powerful, nor consult the pleasure of his electors. Nay, where a condition was as good as it could well be, he applied no remedy, and introduced no innovation, fearing lest, after utterly confusing and confounding the city, he should be too weak to establish it again and recompose it for the best. 2 But those things wherein he hoped to find them open to persuasion or submissive to compulsion, these he did,

"Combining both force and justice together,"

as he says himself. Therefore when he was afterwards asked if he had enacted the best laws for the Athenians, he replied, "The best they would receive."

Now later writers observe that the ancient Athenians used to cover up the ugliness of things with auspicious and kindly terms, giving them polite and endearing names. Thus they called harlots "companions," taxes "contributions," the garrison of a city its "guard," and the prison a "chamber." But Solon was the first, it would seem, to use this device, when he called his cancelling of debts a "disburdenment." For the first of his public measures was an enactment that existing debts should be remitted, and that in future no one should lend money on the person of a borrower. Some writers, however, and Androtion is one of them, affirm that the poor were relieved not by a cancelling of debts, but by a reduction of the interest upon them, and showed their satisfaction by giving the name of "disburdenment" to this act of humanity, and to the augmentation of measures and the purchasing power of money which accompanied it. For he made the mina to consist of a hundred drachmas, which before had contained only seventy-three, so that by paying the same amount of money, but money of lesser value, those who had debts to discharge were greatly benefited, and those who accepted such payments were no losers. But most writers agree that the "disburdenment" was a removal of all debt, and with such the poems of Solon are more in accord. For in these he proudly boasts that from the mortgaged lands

"He took away the record-stones that everywhere were planted;
Before, Earth was in bondage, now she is free."

And of the citizens whose persons had been seized for debt, some he brought back from foreign lands,

"uttering no longer Attic speech,
So long and far their wretched wanderings;
And some who here at home in shameful servitude
Were held"

he says he set free.

This undertaking is said to have involved him in the most vexatious experience of his life. For when he had set out to abolish debts, and was trying to find arguments and a suitable occasion for the step, he told some of his most trusted and intimate friends, namely, Conon, Cleinias, and Hipponicus, that he was not going to meddle with the land, but had determined to cancel debts. They immediately took advantage of this confidence and anticipated Solon's decree by borrowing large sums from the wealthy and buying up great estates. Then, when the decree was published, they enjoyed the use of their properties, but refused to pay the moneys due their creditors. This brought Solon into great condemnation and odium, as if he had not been imposed upon with the rest, but were a party to the imposition. However, this charge was at once dissipated by his well-known sacrifice of five talents. For it was found that he had lent so much, and he was the

Commented [SD8]: The technical name for this is the *seisachtheia*

first to remit this debt in accordance with his law. Some say that the sum was fifteen talents, and among them is Polyzelus the Rhodian. But his friends were ever after called "chreocopidae," or debt-cutters.

16 He pleased neither party, however; the rich were vexed because he took away their securities for debt, and the poor still more, because he did not re-distribute the land, as they had expected, nor make all men equal and alike in their way of living, as Lycurgus did. But Lycurgus was eleventh in descent from Heracles, and had been king in Lacedaemon for many years. He therefore had great authority, many friends, and power to support his reforms in the commonwealth. He also employed force rather than persuasion, insomuch that he actually lost his eye thereby, and most effectually guaranteed the safety and unanimity of the city by making all its citizens neither poor nor rich. Solon, on the contrary, could not secure this feature in his commonwealth, since he was a man of the people and of modest station; yet he in no wise acted short of his real power, relying as he did only on the wishes of the citizens and their confidence in him. Nevertheless he gave offence to the greater part of them, who expected different results, as he himself says of them in the lines:—

"Then they had extravagant thoughts of me, but now, incensed,
All look askance at me, as if I were their foe."

And yet had any other man, he says, acquired the same power,

"He had not held the people down, nor made an end
Until he had confounded all, and skimmed the cream."

Soon, however, they perceived the advantages of his measure, ceased from their private fault-finding, and offered a public sacrifice, which they called Seisactheia, or Disburdenment. They also appointed Solon to reform the constitution and make new laws, laying no restrictions whatever upon him, but putting everything into his hands, magistracies, assemblies, court-of-law, and councils. He was to fix the property qualification for each of these, their numbers, and their times of meeting, abrogating and maintaining existing institutions at his pleasure.

17 In the first place, then, he repealed the laws of Draco, all except those concerning homicide, because they were too severe and their penalties too heavy. For one penalty was assigned to almost all transgressions, namely death, so that even those convicted of idleness were put to death, and those who stole salad or fruit received the same punishment as those who committed sacrilege or murder. Therefore Demades, in later times, made a hit when he said that Draco's laws were written not with ink, but blood. And Draco himself, they say, being asked why he made death the penalty for most offences, replied that in his opinion the lesser ones deserved it, and for the greater ones no heavier penalty could be found.

18 In the second place, wishing to leave all the magistracies in the hands of the well-to-do, as they were, but to give the common people a share in the rest of the government, of which they had hitherto been deprived, Solon made an appraisal of the property of the citizens. Those who enjoyed a yearly increase of five hundred measure (wet and dry), he placed in the first class, and called them Pentakosiomedimnoi; the second class were composed of those who were able to keep a horse, or had a yearly increase of three hundred measures, and they were called Hippada Telountes, since they paid a Knight's tax; the members of the third class, whose yearly increase amounted to two hundred measures (wet and dry together), were called Zeugitai. All the rest were called Thetes; they were not allowed to hold any office, but took part in the administration only as members of the assembly and as jurors. This last privilege seemed at first of no moment, but afterwards proved to be of the very

Commented [SD9]: Lycurgus is the law-giver of Sparta.

Commented [SD10]: Draco was a politician before Solon who had codified Athen's laws. They were notoriously harsh. We get the term draconian from this!

Commented [SD11]: Those whose land produced 500 measures of produce or more a year.

Commented [SD12]: Literally "Yoke-men"

highest importance, since most disputes finally came into the hands of these jurors. For even in cases which Solon assigned to the magistrates for decision, he allowed also an appeal to a popular court when any one desired it. Besides, it is said that his laws were obscurely and ambiguously worded on purpose to enhance the power of the popular courts. For since parties to a controversy could not get satisfaction from the laws, the result was that they always wanted jurors to decide it, and every dispute was laid before them, so that they were in a manner masters of the laws. And he himself claims the credit for this in the following words:—

"For to the common people I gave so much power as is sufficient,
Neither robbing them of dignity, nor giving them too much;
And those who had power, and were marvellously rich,
Even for these I contrived that they suffered no harm.
I stood with a mighty shield in front of both classes,
And suffered neither of them to prevail unjustly."

Moreover, thinking it his duty to make still further provision for the weakness of the multitude, he gave every citizen the privilege of entering suit in behalf of one who had suffered wrong. If a man was assaulted, and suffered violence or injury, it was the privilege of any one who had the ability and the inclination, to indict the wrong-doer and prosecute him. The law-giver in this way rightly accustomed the citizens, as members of one body, to feel and sympathize with one another's wrongs. And we are told of a saying of his which is consonant with this law. Being asked, namely, what city was best to live in, "That city," he replied, "in which those who are not wronged, no less than those who are wronged, exert themselves to punish the wrongdoers."

19 After he had established the council of the Areiopagus, consisting of those who had been archons year by year (and he himself was a member of this body, since he had been archon), he observed that the common people were uneasy and bold in consequence of their release from debt, and therefore established another council besides, consisting of four hundred men, one hundred chosen from each of the four tribes. These were to deliberate on public matters before the people did, and were not to allow any matter to come before the popular assembly without such private deliberation. Then he made the upper council a general overseer in the state, and guardian of the laws, thinking that the city with its two councils, riding as it were at double anchor, would be less tossed by the surges, and would keep its populace in greater quiet.

Now most writers say that the council of the Areiopagus, as I have stated, was established by Solon. And their view seems to be strongly supported by the fact that Draco nowhere makes any mention whatsoever of Areiopagites, but always addresses himself to the "ephetai" in cases of homicide. Yet Solon's thirteenth table contains the eighth of his laws recorded in these very words: "As many of the disfranchised as were made such before the archonship of Solon, shall be restored to their rights and franchises, except such as were condemned by the Areiopagus, or by the ephetai, or in the prytaneium by the kings, on charges of murder or homicide, or of seeking to establish a tyranny, and were in exile when this law was published." This surely proves to the contrary that the council of the Areiopagus was in existence before the archonship and legislation of Solon. For how could men have been condemned in the Areiopagus before the time of Solon, if Solon was the first to give the council of the Areiopagus its jurisdiction? Perhaps, indeed, there is some obscurity in the document, or some omission, and the meaning is that those who had been convicted on charges within the cognizance of those who were Areiopagites and ephetai and prytanes when the law was published, should remain disfranchised, while those convicted on all other charges

Commented [SD13]: In Athenian mythology, this was actually established to judge Orestes for the crime of killing his mother. It was notoriously aristocratic in its membership and outlook.

should recover their rights and franchises. This question, however, my reader must decide for himself.

20 Among his other laws there is a very peculiar and surprising one which ordains that he shall be disfranchised who, in time of faction, takes neither side. He wishes, probably, that a man should not be insensible or indifferent to the common weal, arranging his private affairs securely and glorying in the fact that he has no share in the distempers and distresses of his country, but should rather espouse promptly the better and more righteous cause, share its perils and give it his aid, instead of waiting in safety to see which cause prevails. That law, too, seems absurd and ridiculous, which permits an heiress, in case the man under whose power and authority she is placed by law is himself unable to consort with her, to be married by one of his next of kin. Some, however, say that this was a wise provision against those who are unable to perform the duties of a husband, and yet, for the sake of their property, marry heiresses, and so under cover of law, do violence to nature. For when they see that the heiress can consort with whom she pleases, they will either desist from such a marriage, or make it to their shame, and be punished for their avarice and insolence. It is a wise provision, too, that the heiress may not choose her consort at large, but only from the kinsmen of her husband, that her offspring may be of his family and lineage. Conformable to this, also, is the requirement that the bride eat a quince and be shut up in a chamber with the bridegroom; and that the husband of an heiress shall approach her thrice a month without fail. For even though they have no children, still, this is a mark of esteem and affection which a man should pay to a chaste wife; it removes many of the annoyances which develop in all such cases, and prevents their being altogether estranged by their differences.

In all other marriages he prohibited dowries; the bride was to bring with her three changes of raiment, household stuff of small value, and nothing else. For he did not wish that marriage should be a matter of profit or price, but that man and wife should dwell together for the delights of love and the getting of children. Dionysius, indeed, when his mother asked him to give her in marriage to one of his citizens, said that, although he had broken the laws of the city by being its tyrant, he could not outrage the laws of nature by giving in marriage where age forbade. And so our cities should not allow this irregularity, nor tolerate unions which age forbids and love does not invite, which do not fulfil the function of marriage, and defeat its object. Nay, for an old man who is marrying a young wife, any worthy magistrate or lawgiver might say what is said to Philoctetes:

"Indeed, poor wretch, thou art in fine state for marrying!"

And if he discovers a young man in the house of a rich and elderly woman, waxing fat, like a cock-partridge, in her service, he will remove him and give him to some marriageable maid that wants a husband. Thus much, then, on this head.

21 Praise is given also to that law of Solon which forbids speaking ill of the dead. For it is piety to regard the deceased as sacred, justice to spare the absent, and good policy to rob hatred of its perpetuity. He also forbade speaking ill of the living in temples, court-of-law, public offices, and at festivals; the transgressor must pay three drachmas to the person injured, and two more into the public treasury. For never to master one's anger is a mark of intemperance and lack of training; but always to do so is difficult, and for some, impossible. And a law must regard the possibilities in the case, if its maker wishes to punish a few to some purpose, and not many to no purpose.

He was highly esteemed also for his law concerning wills. Before his time, no will could be made, but the entire estate of the deceased must remain in his family. Whereas he, by permitting a man who had no children to give his property to whom he wished, ranked

friendship above kinship, and favour above necessity, and made a man's possessions his own property. On the other hand, he did not permit all manner of gifts without restriction or restraint, but only those which were not made under the influence of sickness, or drugs, or imprisonment, or when a man was the victim of compulsion or yielded to the persuasions of his wife. He thought, very rightly and properly, that being persuaded into wrong was no better than being forced into it, and he placed deceit and compulsion, gratification and affliction, in one and the same category, believing that both were alike able to pervert a man's reason.

He also subjected the public appearances of the women, their mourning and their festivals, to a law which did away with disorder and licence. When they went out, they were not to wear more than three garments, they were not to carry more than an obol's worth of food or drink, nor a pannier more than a cubit high, and they were not to travel about by night unless they rode in a waggon with a lamp to light their way. Laceration of the flesh by mourners, and the use of set lamentations, and the bewailing of any one at the funeral ceremonies of another, he forbade. The sacrifice of an ox at the grave was not permitted, nor the burial with the dead of more than three changes of raiment, nor the visiting of other tombs than those of their own family, except at the time of interment. Most of these practices are also forbidden by our laws, but ours contain the additional proviso that such offenders shall be punished by the board of censors for women, because they indulge in unmanly and effeminate extravagances of sorrow when they mourn.

22 Observing that the city was getting full of people who were constantly streaming into Attica from all quarters for greater security of living, and that most of the country was unfruitful and worthless, and that seafaring men are not wont to import goods for those who have nothing to give them in exchange, he turned the attention of the citizens to the arts of manufacture, and enacted a law that no son who had not been taught a trade should be compelled to support his father. It was well enough for Lycurgus, whose city was free from swarms of strangers, and whose country was, in the words of Euripides,

"For many large, for twice as many more than large,"

and because, above all, that country was flooded with a multitude of Helots, whom it was better not to leave in idleness, but to keep down by continual hardships and toil, — it was well enough for him to set his citizens free from laborious and mechanical occupations and confine their thoughts to arms, giving them this one trade to learn and practice. But Solon, adapting his laws to the situation, rather than the situation to his laws, and observing that the land could give but a mere subsistence to those who tilled it, and was incapable of supporting an unoccupied and leisured multitude, gave dignity to all the trades, and ordered the council of the Areiopagus to examine into every man's means of livelihood, and chastise those who had no occupation.

But that provision of his was yet more severe, which, as Heraclides Ponticus informs us, relieved the sons who were born out of wedlock from the necessity of supporting their fathers at all. For he that avoids the honourable state of marriage, clearly takes a woman to himself not for the sake of children, but of pleasure; and he has his reward, in that he robs himself of all right to upbraid his sons for neglecting him, since he has made their very existence a reproach to them.

23 But in general, Solon's laws concerning women seem very absurd. For instance, he permitted an adulterer caught in the act to be killed; but if a man committed rape upon a free woman, he was merely to be fined a hundred drachmas; and if he gained his end by

persuasion, twenty drachmas, unless it were with one of those who sell themselves openly, meaning of course the courtesans. For these go openly to those who offer them their price. Still further, no man is allowed to sell a daughter or a sister, unless he find that she is no longer a virgin. But to punish the same offence now severely and inexorably, and now mildly and pleasantly, making the penalty a slight fine, is unreasonable; unless money was scarce in the city at that time, and the difficulty of procuring it made these monetary punishments heavy. In the valuations of sacrificial offerings, at any rate, a sheep and a bushel of grain are reckoned at a drachma; the victor in the Isthmian games was to be paid a hundred drachmas, and the Olympic victor five hundred; the man who brought in a wolf, was given five drachmas, and for a wolf's whelp, one; the former sum, according to Demetrius the Phalerian, was the price of an ox, the latter that of a sheep. For although the prices which Solon fixes in his sixteenth table are for choice victims, and naturally many times as great as those for ordinary ones, still, even these are low in comparison with present prices. ⁴ Now the Athenians were free of old great enemies of wolves, since their country was better for pasturage than for tillage. And there are those who say that their four tribes were originally named, not from the sons of Ion, but from the classes into which the occupations were divided; thus the warriors were called Hoplitai, the craftsmen Ergadeis; and of the remaining two, the farmers were called Geleontes, the shepherds and herdsmen Aigikoreis.

Since the country was not supplied with water by ever-flowing rivers, or lakes, or copious springs, but most of the inhabitants used wells which had been dug, he made a law that where there was a public well within a "hippikon," a distance of four furlongs, that should be used, but where the distance was greater than this, people must try to get water of their own; if, however, after digging to a depth of ten fathoms on their own land, they could not get water, then they might take it from a neighbour's well, filling a five-gallon jar twice a day; for he thought it his duty to aid the needy, not to provision the idle. He also showed great experience in the limits which he set to the planting of trees; no one could set out a tree in a field within five feet of his neighbour's field, or, in case it was a fig-tree or an olive-tree, within nine. For these reach out farther with their roots, and injure some trees by their proximity, taking away their nourishment, and emitting an exhalation which is sometimes noxious. He that would dig a pit or a trench, must dig it at the distance of its own depth from his neighbor's; and he that would set out hives of bees, must put them three hundred feet away from those which another had already installed.

²⁴ Of the products of the soil, he allowed oil only to be sold abroad, but forbade the exportation of others; and if any did so export, the archon was to pronounce curses upon them, or else himself pay a hundred drachmas into the public treasury. One cannot, therefore, wholly disbelieve those who say that the exportation of figs was anciently forbidden, and that the one who showed up, or pointed out such exporters, was called a "sycophant," or fig-shower. He also enacted a law concerning injuries received from beasts, according to which a dog that had bitten anybody must be delivered up with a wooden collar three cubits long fastened to it; a happy device this for promoting safety. But the law concerning naturalized citizens is of doubtful character. He permitted only those to be made citizens who were permanently exiled from their own country, or who removed to Athens with their entire families to ply a trade. This he did, as we are told, not so much to drive away other foreigners, as to invite these particular ones to Athens with the full assurance of becoming citizens; he also thought that reliance could be placed both on those who had been forced to abandon their own country, and on those who had left it with a fixed purpose. Characteristic of Solon also was his regulation of

the practice of eating at the public table in the townhall, for which his word was "parasitein." The same person was not allowed to eat there often, but if one whose duty it was to eat there refused, he was punished. Solon thought the conduct of the first grasping; that of the second, contemptuous of the public interests.

25 All his laws were to have force for a hundred years, and they were written on "axones," or wooden tablets, which revolved with the oblong frames containing them. Slight remnants of these were still preserved in the Prytaneium when I was at Athens, and they were called, according to Aristotle, "kyrbeis." Cratinus, also, the comic poet, somewhere says:—

"By Solon, and by Draco too I make mine oath,
Whose kyrbeis now are used to parch our barleycorns."

But some say that only those tablets which relate to sacred rites and sacrifices are properly called "kyrbeis," and the rest are called "axones." However that may be, the council took a joint oath to ratify the laws of Solon, and each of the "thesmothetai," or guards of the statutes, swore separately at the herald's stone in the market-place, vowing that if he transgressed the statutes in any way, he would dedicate at Delphi a golden statue of commensurate worth.

Observing the irregularity of the month, and that the motion of the moon does not always coincide with the rising and setting of the sun, but that often she overtakes and passes the sun on the same day, he ordered that day to be called the Old and New, assigning the portion of it which preceded the conjunction to the expiring month, and the remaining portion to the month that was just beginning. He was thus the first, as it would seem, to understand Homer's verse, which speaks of a day when

"This month is waning, and the next is setting in,"

and the day following this he called the first of the month. After the twentieth he did not count the days by adding them to twenty, but by subtracting them from thirty, on a descending scale, like the waning of the moon.

No sooner were the laws of Solon put into operation than some would come to him every day with praise or censure of them, or with advice to insert something into the documents, or take something out. Very numerous, too, were those who came to him with inquiries and questions about them, urging him to teach and make clear to them the meaning and purpose of each several item. He saw that to do this was out of the question, and that not to do it would bring odium upon him, and wishing to be wholly rid of these perplexities and to escape from the captiousness and censoriousness of the citizens (for "in great affairs," as he says himself, "it is difficult to please all"), he made his ownership of a vessel an excuse for foreign travel, and set sail, after obtaining from the Athenians leave of absence for ten years. In this time he hoped they would be accustomed to his laws.

26 In the first place, then, he went to Egypt, and lived, as he himself says,

"Where Nile pours forth his floods, near the Canobic shore."

He also spent some time in studies with Psenophis of Heliopolis and Sonchis of Saïs, who were very learned priests. From these, as Plato says, he heard the story of the lost Atlantis, and tried to introduce it in a poetical form to the Greeks. Next he sailed to Cyprus, and was greatly beloved of Philocyprus, one of the kings of the island. This prince had a small city, founded by Demophon, the son of Theseus, and lying near the river Clarius, in a position which was strong, but otherwise incommodious and

Commented [SD14]: An official political building in later Athens.

sorry. Solon therefore persuaded him to remove the city to the fair plain which lay below it, and make it more spacious and pleasant. He also remained and took charge of the new city's consolidation, and helped to arrange it in the best possible manner both for convenience of living and for safety. The result was that many colonists flocked to Philocypus, and he was the envy of the other kings. He therefore paid Solon the honour of naming the new city after him, and called it Soli; its name had been Aipeia. Solon himself also makes mention of this consolidation. In his elegies, namely, he addressed Philocypus, and says:—

"Now mayest thou long time be lord and master of the Solii here,
Dwelling in this city thyself, and thy family after thee;
But may I and my swift ship, as we leave this storied isle,
Be brought upon our way in safety by Cypris of the violet crown.
Upon this settlement of thine may she bestow favour and glory;
And upon me an auspicious return to my fatherland."

2) Herodotus' *Histories*

Herodotus, who wrote the *Histories* of the Persian war, tells us about Solon's reputation as a wise man. Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, has a conversation with him which does not go in the direction Croesus wants...

Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.29-33

[...] and after these were subdued and subject to Croesus in addition to the Lydians, all the sages from Hellas who were living at that time, coming in different ways, came to Sardis which was at the height of its property; and among them came Solon the Athenian, who, after making laws for the Athenians at their request, went abroad for ten years, sailing forth to see the world, he said. This he did so as not to be compelled to repeal any of the laws he had made, since the Athenians themselves could not do that, for they were bound by solemn oaths to abide for ten years by whatever laws Solon should make.

So for that reason, and to see the world, Solon went to visit Amasis in Egypt and then to Croesus in Sardis. When he got there, Croesus entertained him in the palace, and on the third or fourth day Croesus told his attendants to show Solon around his treasures, and they pointed out all those things that were great and blest. After Solon had seen everything and had thought about it, Croesus found the opportunity to say, "My Athenian guest, we have heard a lot about you because of your wisdom and of your wanderings, how as one who loves learning you have travelled much of the world for the sake of seeing it, so now I desire to ask you who is the most fortunate man you have seen." Croesus asked this question believing that he was the most fortunate of men, but Solon, offering no flattery but keeping to the truth, said, "O King, it is Tellus the Athenian."

Croesus was amazed at what he had said and replied sharply, "In what way do you judge Tellus to be the most fortunate?" Solon said, "Tellus was from a prosperous city, and his children were good and noble. He saw children born to them all, and all of these survived. His life was prosperous by our standards, and his death was most glorious: when the Athenians were fighting their neighbors in Eleusis, he came to help, routed

the enemy, and died very finely. The Athenians buried him at public expense on the spot where he fell and gave him much honor.”

When Solon had provoked him by saying that the affairs of Tellus were so fortunate, Croesus asked who he thought was next, fully expecting to win second prize. [Solon says it is Cleobis and Biton, two young men from Argos of modest means who nevertheless lived good and honourable lives and died well].

Thus Solon granted second place in happiness to these men. Croesus was vexed and said, “My Athenian guest, do you so much despise our happiness that you do not even make us worth as much as common men?” Solon replied, “Croesus, you ask me about human affairs, and I know that the divine is entirely grudging and troublesome to us. [...] The very rich man is not more fortunate than the man who has only his daily needs, unless he chances to end his life with all well. Many very rich men are unfortunate, many of moderate means are lucky.

The man who is very rich but unfortunate surpasses the lucky man in only two ways, while the lucky surpasses the rich but unfortunate in many. The rich man is more capable of fulfilling his appetites and of bearing a great disaster that falls upon him, and it is in these ways that he surpasses the other. The lucky man is not so able to support disaster or appetite as is the rich man, but his luck keeps these things away from him, and he is free from deformity and disease, has no experience of evils, and has fine children and good looks. If besides all this he ends his life well, then he is the one whom you seek, the one worthy to be called fortunate. But refrain from calling him fortunate before he dies; call him lucky [...]”

By saying this, Solon did not at all please Croesus, who sent him away without regard for him, but thinking him a great fool, because he ignored the present good and told him to look to the end of every affair.

Herodotus 1.59 – Herodotus’ account of Pisistratus’ many attempts to hold onto power

Athens (Croesus) learnt had been split by faction and was now under the tyranny of Pisistratus the son of Hippocrates...When there was strife in Attica between the coastal villages under the leadership of Megacles, son of Alcmaeon, and the inland settlements under Lycurgus, son of Aristoleides, Pisistratus with a view to seizing power for himself organized a third party. He collected adherents and coming forward as the professed champion of the hillmen, he devised the following ruse: he cut himself and his mules about the body and then drove his cart into the market square, and pretended that he had escaped from his enemies who tried to kill him as he was driving out of town. Then, relying on the reputation he had won during his command of the expedition against Megara, during which the capture of Nisaea was not the least of his distinguished services, he asked the people to give him a guard. The Athenians, who were taken in by the trick, consented, and assigned a number of men to his bodyguard, who followed him armed with clubs instead of spears. With their assistance Pisistratus captured the Acropolis, and from the moment found himself master of Athens. In this way he ruled the Athenians, governing in accordance with custom, and neither eliminating the existing magistracies nor changing the laws. And he adorned the city beautifully.

Not long afterwards the two parties under Megacles and Lycurgus agreed to combine, and drove Pisistratus out, so that in this first phase of his tyranny he lost his power before it had really taken root. His rivals, however, falling foul of one another once again, Megacles found himself so harassed that he made overtures to Pisistratus and promised to restore him to power if he would consent to marry his daughter. Pisistratus agreed to the terms which Megacles proposed, and then, to bring about his return to power, they devised between them what seems to me the silliest trick which history has to record. The Greeks have never been simpletons; for centuries past they have been distinguished from other nations by superior wits; and of all the Greeks the Athenians are allowed to be the most intelligent: yet it was at the Athenians' expense that this ridiculous trick was played. In the village of Paeania there was a handsome woman called Phye, nearly six foot tall, whom they fitted out in a suit of armour and mounted in a chariot; then, after getting her to pose in the most striking attitude, they drove into Athens, where messengers who had preceded them were already, according to their instructions, talking to the people and urging them to welcome Pisistratus back, because the goddess Athene herself had shown hi extraordinary honour and was bringing him home to her own Acropolis. They spread this nonsense all over the town, and it was not long before rumour reached the outlying villages that Athene was bringing Pisistratus back, and both villagers and townsfolk, convinced that the woman Phye was indeed the goddess, offered her their prayers and received Pisistratus with open arms."

Herodotus Book 5.62

"I must now get back to my original theme: the liberation of Athens from despotic rule, and how that liberation was brought about. Hippias was still tyrant and embittered against the Athenians because of the murder of his brother. The Alcmaeonidae, an Athenian family which had been driven into exile by the house of Pisistratus, attempted with the help of the other exiles to procure their return by force and liberate Athens. Resolved to attempt any device which might help them against the Pisistratidae, they got a contract from the Amphictyons to build the temple which stands today at Delphi, but at that time did not exist. They were wealthy men, and came of a long and distinguished line; and the temple they built was better in various respects than the plan required; in particular, they gave it a façade of Parian marble, whereas the agreement had been to use freestone for the whole. The Athenians say that these men, during their stay at Delphi, bribed the Priestess to tell any Spartans that might happen to consult the oracle, either on state or private business, that it was their duty to liberate Athens; and the Spartans, as a result of the constant repetition of the same injunction, sent Anchimolius, the son of Aster, a distinguished citizen, at the head of an army to drive out the Pisistratidae. The Pisistratidae were good friends of theirs: but no matter – the commands of God were more important to them than human ties. Anchimolius and his force were sent by sea, and landed at Phalerum; but the Pisistratidae, who already knew of their intentions, had sent for help to Thessaly, with which country they had an alliance. The Thessalians responded to the appeal, and dispatched a troop of cavalry, a thousand strong, under their king, Cineas of Condia. The plan the Pisistratidae adopted, on the strength of this reinforcement, was to clear the ground round Phalerum of trees so as to give horses freedom of movement, and then to launch a cavalry attack. The attack succeeded; many Lacedaemonians were killed, Anchimolius amongst them, and the survivors driven back to their ships. That was the end of the first Spartan attempt; Anchimolius was buried at Alopecae in Attica, and his tomb can be seen near the temple of Heracles in Cynosarges. Later, however, they tried again; and this time the expedition was on a larger scale; it was commanded by their king, Cleomenes the son of

Anaxandrides, and went by land instead of by sea. The army crossed the border into Attica, and was met by the Thessalian cavalry, which was routed after a short engagement, leaving more than forty dead; the remainder made their way straight back to Thessaly. Cleomenes then marched to Athens, and, together with those Athenians who wished for freedom, besieged Hippias and his party on the Acropolis. The Lacedaemonians had not intended to undertake a siege, and the Pisistratidae had ample supplies of food and drink; it is likely, therefore, that, but for an unexpected accident, Cleomenes would have kept up the siege for days and then retired to Sparta; but luckily for the Spartans, and unluckily for their enemies, the children of the Pisistratidae were caught as they were being smuggled out of the country for safety. This disaster upset all their plans; in order to recover the children, they were forced to accept the Athenians' terms, and agreed to leave Attica within five days. They afterwards withdrew to Sigeum on the Scamander. The family had enjoyed despotic power in Athens for thirty-six years... This then is the story of how Athens was freed from the tyrants."

3) Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.126 & 6.53-59

a) Thucydides tells of Cylon's attempted coup before Solon's reforms

"In former generations there was an Athenian of the name of Cylon, a victor at the Olympic games, of good birth and powerful position, who had married a daughter of Theagenes, a Megarian, at that time tyrant of Megara. Now this Cylon was inquiring at Delphi; when he was told by the god to seize the Acropolis of Athens on the grand festival of Zeus. Accordingly, procuring a force from Theagenes and persuading his friends to join him, when the Olympic festival in Peloponnese came, he seized the Acropolis, with the intention of making himself tyrant, thinking that this was the grand festival of Zeus, and also an occasion appropriate for a victor at the Olympic games. Whether the grand festival that was meant was in Attica or elsewhere was a question which he never thought of, and which the oracle did not offer to solve. For the Athenians also have a festival which is called the grand festival of Zeus Meilichios or Gracious, viz. the Diasia. It is celebrated outside the city, and the whole people sacrifice not real victims but a number of bloodless offerings peculiar to the country. However, fancying he had chosen the right time, he made the attempt. As soon as the Athenians perceived it, they flocked in, one and all, from the country, and sat down, and laid siege to the citadel. But as time went on, weary of the labour of blockade, most of them departed; the responsibility of keeping guard being left to the nine archons, with plenary powers to arrange everything according to their good judgment. It must be known that at that time most political functions were discharged by the nine archons. Meanwhile Cylon and his besieged companions were distressed for want of food and water. Accordingly Cylon and his brother made their escape; but the rest being hard pressed, and some even dying of famine, seated themselves as suppliants at the altar in the Acropolis. The Athenians who were charged with the duty of keeping guard, when they saw them at the point of death in the temple, raised them up on the understanding that no harm should be done to them, led them out and slew them. Some who as they passed by took refuge at the altars of the awful goddesses were despatched on the spot. From this deed the men who killed them were called accursed and guilty against the goddess, they and their descendants. Accordingly these cursed ones were driven out by the Athenians, driven out again by Cleomenes of Lacedaemon and an Athenian faction; the living were driven out, and the bones of the dead were taken up; thus they were cast out. For all that, they came back afterwards, and their descendants are still in the city."

- b) After Solon's death, Thucydides tells us about the killing of Hipparchus, a member of the tyrant Pisistratus' family and celebrated as a moment of liberation by Athenians.

"The commons had heard how oppressive the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons had become before it ended, and further that that tyranny had been put down at last, not by themselves and Harmodius, but by the Lacedaemonians, and so were always in fear and took everything suspiciously. Indeed, the daring action of Aristogiton and Harmodius was undertaken in consequence of a love affair, which I shall relate at some length, to show that the Athenians are not more accurate than the rest of the world in their accounts of their own tyrants and of the facts of their own history. Pisistratus dying at an advanced age in possession of the tyranny, was succeeded by his eldest son, Hippias, and not Hipparchus, as is vulgarly believed. Harmodius was then in the flower of youthful beauty, and Aristogiton, a citizen in the middle rank of life, was his lover and possessed him. Solicited without success by Hipparchus, son of Pisistratus, Harmodius told Aristogiton, and the enraged lover, afraid that the powerful Hipparchus might take Harmodius by force, immediately formed a design, such as his condition in life permitted, for overthrowing the tyranny. In the meantime Hipparchus, after a second solicitation of Harmodius, attended with no better success, unwilling to use violence, arranged to insult him in some covert way. Indeed, generally their government was not grievous to the multitude, or in any way odious in practice; and these tyrants cultivated wisdom and virtue as much as any, and without exacting from the Athenians more than a twentieth of their income, splendidly adorned their city, and carried on their wars, and provided sacrifices for the temples. For the rest, the city was left in full enjoyment of its existing laws, except that care was always taken to have the offices in the hands of some one of the family. Among those of them that held the yearly archonship at Athens was Pisistratus, son of the tyrant Hippias, and named after his grandfather, who dedicated during his term of office the altar to the twelve gods in the market-place, and that of Apollo in the Pythian precinct. The Athenian people afterwards built on to and lengthened the altar in the market-place, and obliterated the inscription.

That Hippias was the eldest son and succeeded to the government, is what I positively assert as a fact upon which I have had more exact accounts than others, and may be also ascertained by the following circumstance. He is the only one of the legitimate brothers that appears to have had children; as the altar shows, and the pillar placed in the Athenian Acropolis, commemorating the crime of the tyrants, which mentions no child of Thessalus or of Hipparchus, but five of Hippias, which he had by Myrrhine, daughter of Callias, son of Hyperechides; and naturally the eldest would have married first. Again, his name comes first on the pillar after that of his father, and this too is quite natural, as he was the eldest after him, and the reigning tyrant. Nor can I ever believe that Hippias would have obtained the tyranny so easily, if Hipparchus had been in power when he was killed, and he, Hippias, had had to establish himself upon the same day; but he had no doubt been long accustomed to over-awe the citizens, and to be obeyed by his mercenaries, and thus not only conquered, but conquered with ease, without experiencing any of the embarrassment of a younger brother unused to the exercise of authority. It was the sad fate which made Hipparchus famous that got him also the credit with posterity of having been tyrant.

To return to Harmodius; Hipparchus having been repulsed in his solicitations insulted him as he had resolved, by first inviting a sister of his, a young girl, to come and bear a

basket in a certain procession, and then rejecting her, on the plea that she had never been invited at all owing to her unworthiness. If Harmodius was indignant at this, Aristogiton for his sake now became more exasperated than ever; and having arranged everything with those who were to join them in the enterprise, they only waited for the great feast of the Panathenaea, the sole day upon which the citizens forming part of the procession could meet together in arms without suspicion. Aristogiton and Harmodius were to begin, but were to be supported immediately by their accomplices against the bodyguard. The conspirators were not many, for better security, besides which they hoped that those not in the plot would be carried away by the example of a few daring spirits, and use the arms in their hands to recover their liberty.”

4) Aristotle, Constitution of Athens, 4-19 – Extension work.

Aristotle is credited with writing down his account of Athen’s governance, called the Constitution of Athens. In reality it may well have been one of his pupils. He details the crisis in Athenian society and Solon’s solutions to it. This is a tricky text to read so do not worry if you struggle with parts of it.

Part 4

Such was, in outline, the first constitution, but not very long after the events above recorded, in the archonship of Aristaichmus, Draco enacted his ordinances. Now his constitution had the following form. The franchise was given to all who could furnish themselves with a military equipment. The nine Archons and the Treasurers were elected by this body from persons possessing an unencumbered property of not less than ten minas, the less important officials from those who could furnish themselves with a military equipment, and the generals [Strategi] and commanders of the cavalry [Hipparchi] from those who could show an unencumbered property of not less than a hundred minas, and had children born in lawful wedlock over ten years of age. These officers were required to hold to bail the Prytanes, the Strategi, and the Hipparchi of the preceding year until their accounts had been audited, taking four securities of the same class as that to which the Strategi and the Hipparchi belonged. There was also to be a Council, consisting of four hundred and one members, elected by lot from among those who possessed the franchise. Both for this and for the other magistracies the lot was cast among those who were over thirty years of age; and no one might hold office twice until every one else had had his turn, after which they were to cast the lot afresh. If any member of the Council failed to attend when there was a sitting of the Council or of the Assembly, he paid a fine, to the amount of three drachmas if he was a Pentacosimedimnus, two if he was a Knight, and One if he was a Zeugites. The Council of Areopagus was guardian of the laws, and kept watch over the magistrates to see that they executed their offices in accordance with the laws. Any person who felt himself wronged might lay an information before the Council of Areopagus, on declaring what law was broken by the wrong done to him. But, as has been said before, loans were secured upon the persons of the debtors, and the land was in the hands of a few.

Part 5

Since such, then, was the organization of the constitution, and the many were in slavery to the few, the people rose against the upper class. The strife was keen, and for a long

time the two parties were ranged in hostile camps against one another, till at last, by common consent, they appointed Solon to be mediator and Archon, and committed the whole constitution to his hands. The immediate occasion of his appointment was his poem, which begins with the words:

I behold, and within my heart deep sadness has claimed its place,
As I mark the oldest home of the ancient Ionian race
Slain by the sword.

In this poem he fights and disputes on behalf of each party in turn against the other, and finally he advises them to come to terms and put an end to the quarrel existing between them. By birth and reputation Solon was one of the foremost men of the day, but in wealth and position he was of the middle class, as is generally agreed, and is, indeed, established by his own evidence in these poems, where he exhorts the wealthy not to be grasping.

But ye who have store of good, who are sated and overflow,
Restrain your swelling soul, and still it and keep it low:
Let the heart that is great within you be trained a lowlier way;
Ye shall not have all at your will, and we will not for ever obey.

Indeed, he constantly fastens the blame of the conflict on the rich; and accordingly at the beginning of the poem he says that he fears 'the love of wealth and an overweening mind', evidently meaning that it was through these that the quarrel arose.

Part 6

As soon as he was at the head of affairs, Solon liberated the people once and for all, by prohibiting all loans on the security of the debtor's person: and in addition he made laws by which he cancelled all debts, public and private. This measure is commonly called the *Seisachtheia* [= removal of burdens], since thereby the people had their loads removed from them. In connexion with it some persons try to traduce the character of Solon. It so happened that, when he was about to enact the *Seisachtheia*, he communicated his intention to some members of the upper class, whereupon, as the partisans of the popular party say, his friends stole a march on him; while those who wish to attack his character maintain that he too had a share in the fraud himself. For these persons borrowed money and bought up a large amount of land, and so when, a short time afterwards, all debts were cancelled, they became wealthy; and this, they say, was the origin of the families which were afterwards looked on as having been wealthy from primeval times. However, the story of the popular party is by far the most probable. A man who was so moderate and public-spirited in all his other actions, that when it was within his power to put his fellow-citizens beneath his feet and establish himself as tyrant, he preferred instead to incur the hostility of both parties by placing his honour and the general welfare above his personal aggrandisement, is not likely to have consented to defile his hands by such a petty and palpable fraud. That he had this absolute power is, in the first place, indicated by the desperate condition the country; moreover, he mentions it himself repeatedly in his poems, and it is universally admitted. We are therefore bound to consider this accusation to be false.

Part 7

Next Solon drew up a constitution and enacted new laws; and the ordinances of Draco ceased to be used, with the exception of those relating to murder. The laws were inscribed on the wooden stands, and set up in the King's Porch, and all swore to obey them; and the nine Archons made oath upon the stone, declaring that they would dedicate a golden statue if they should transgress any of them. This is the origin of the oath to that effect which they take to the present day. Solon ratified his laws for a hundred years; and the following was the fashion in which he organized the constitution. He divided the population according to property into four classes, just as it had been divided before, namely, Pentacosimedimni, Knights, Zeugitae, and Thetes. The various magistracies, namely, the nine Archons, the Treasurers, the Commissioners for Public Contracts (Poletae), the Eleven, and Clerks (Colacretae), he assigned to the Pentacosimedimni, the Knights, and the Zeugitae, giving offices to each class in proportion to the value of their rateable property. To who ranked among the Thetes he gave nothing but a place in the Assembly and in the juries. A man had to rank as a Pentacosimedimnus if he made, from his own land, five hundred measures, whether liquid or solid. Those ranked as Knights who made three hundred measures, or, as some say, those who were able to maintain a horse. In support of the latter definition they adduce the name of the class, which may be supposed to be derived from this fact, and also some votive offerings of early times; for in the Acropolis there is a votive offering, a statue of Diphilus, bearing this inscription:

The son of Diphilus, Athenion hight,
Raised from the Thetes and become a knight,
Did to the gods this sculptured charger bring,
For his promotion a thank-offering. And a horse stands in evidence beside the man,
implying that this was what was meant by belonging to the rank of Knight. At the same time it seems reasonable to suppose that this class, like the Pentacosimedimni, was defined by the possession of an income of a certain number of measures. Those ranked as Zeugitae who made two hundred measures, liquid or solid; and the rest ranked as Thetes, and were not eligible for any office. Hence it is that even at the present day, when a candidate for any office is asked to what class he belongs, no one would think of saying that he belonged to the Thetes.

Part 8

The elections to the various offices Solon enacted should be by lot, out of candidates selected by each of the tribes. Each tribe selected ten candidates for the nine archonships, and among these the lot was cast. Hence it is still the custom for each tribe to choose ten candidates by lot, and then the lot is again cast among these. A proof that Solon regulated the elections to office according to the property classes may be found in the law still in force with regard to the Treasurers, which enacts that they shall be chosen from the Pentacosimedimni. Such was Solon's legislation with respect to the nine Archons; whereas in early times the Council of Areopagus summoned suitable persons according to its own judgement and appointed them for the year to the several offices. There were four tribes, as before, and four tribe-kings. Each tribe was divided into three Trittyes [=Thirds], with twelve Naucraries in each; and the Naucraries had officers of their own, called Naucrari, whose duty it was to superintend the current receipts and expenditure. Hence, among the laws of Solon now obsolete, it is repeatedly written that the Naucrari are to receive and to spend out of the Naucratic fund. Solon also appointed a Council of four hundred, a hundred from each tribe; but he assigned to the Council of the Areopagus the duty of superintending the laws, acting as before as the guardian

of the constitution in general. It kept watch over the affairs of the state in most of the more important matters, and corrected offenders, with full powers to inflict either fines or personal punishment. The money received in fines it brought up into the Acropolis, without assigning the reason for the mulct. It also tried those who conspired for the overthrow of the state, Solon having enacted a process of impeachment to deal with such offenders. Further, since he saw the state often engaged in internal disputes, while many of the citizens from sheer indifference accepted whatever might turn up, he made a law with express reference to such persons, enacting that any one who, in a time civil factions, did not take up arms with either party, should lose his rights as a citizen and cease to have any part in the state.

Part 9

Such, then, was his legislation concerning the magistracies. There are three points in the constitution of Solon which appear to be its most democratic features: first and most important, the prohibition of loans on the security of the debtor's person; secondly, the right of every person who so willed to claim redress on behalf of any one to whom wrong was being done; thirdly, the institution of the appeal to the juries; and it is to this last, they say, that the masses have owed their strength most of all, since, when the democracy is master of the voting-power, it is master of the constitution. Moreover, since the laws were not drawn up in simple and explicit terms (but like the one concerning inheritances and wards of state), disputes inevitably occurred, and the courts had to decide in every matter, whether public or private. Some persons in fact believe that Solon deliberately made the laws indefinite, in order that the final decision might be in the hands of the people. This, however, is not probable, and the reason no doubt was that it is impossible to attain ideal perfection when framing a law in general terms; for we must judge of his intentions, not from the actual results in the present day, but from the general tenor of the rest of his legislation.

Part 10

These seem to be the democratic features of his laws; but in addition, before the period of his legislation, he carried through his abolition of debts, and after it his increase in the standards of weights and measures, and of the currency. During his administration the measures were made larger than those of Pheidon, and the mina, which previously had a standard of seventy drachmas, was raised to the full hundred. The standard coin in earlier times was the two-drachma piece. He also made weights corresponding with the coinage, sixty-three minas going to the talent; and the odd three minas were distributed among the stater and the other values.

Part 11

When he had completed his organization of the constitution in the manner that has been described, he found himself beset by people coming to him and harassing him concerning his laws, criticizing here and questioning there, till, as he wished neither to alter what he had decided on nor yet to be an object of ill will to every one by remaining in Athens, he set off on a journey to Egypt, with the combined objects of trade and travel, giving out that he should not return for ten years. He considered that there was no call for him to expound the laws personally, but that every one should obey them just as they were written. Moreover, his position at this time was unpleasant. Many members of the upper class had been estranged from him on account of his abolition of debts, and

both parties were alienated through their disappointment at the condition of things which he had created. The mass of the people had expected him to make a complete redistribution of all property, and the upper class hoped he would restore everything to its former position, or, at any rate, make but a small change. Solon, however, had resisted both classes. He might have made himself a despot by attaching himself to whichever party he chose, but he preferred, though at the cost of incurring the enmity of both, to be the saviour of his country and the ideal lawgiver.

Part 12

The truth of this view of Solon's policy is established alike by common consent, and by the mention he has himself made of the matter in his poems. Thus:

I gave to the mass of the people such rank as befitted their need,
I took not away their honour, and I granted naught to their greed;
While those who were rich in power, who in wealth were glorious and
great,
I bethought me that naught should befall them unworthy their
splendour and state;
So I stood with my shield outstretched, and both were sale in its
sight,
And I would not that either should triumph, when the triumph was
not with right.

Again he declares how the mass of the people ought to be treated: But thus will the
people best the voice of their leaders obey, When neither too slack is the rein, nor
violence holdeth the sway; For indulgence breedeth a child, the presumption that spurns
control,

When riches too great are poured upon men of unbalanced soul.

And again elsewhere he speaks about the persons who wished to redistribute the land: So
they came in search of plunder, and their cravings knew no bound, Every one among
them deeming endless wealth would here be found. And that I with glozing smoothness
hid a cruel mind within. Fondly then and vainly dreamt they; now they raise an angry din,
And they glare askance in anger, and the light within their eyes Burns with hostile flames
upon me. Yet therein no justice lies. All I promised, fully wrought I with the gods at
hand to cheer, Naught beyond in folly ventured. Never to my soul was dear With a
tyrant's force to govern, nor to see the good and base Side by side in equal portion share
the rich home of our race.

Once more he speaks of the abolition of debts and of those who before were in
servitude, but were released owing to the Seisachtheia:

Of all the aims for which I summoned forth
The people, was there one I compassed not?
Thou, when slow time brings justice in its train,
O mighty mother of the Olympian gods,
Dark Earth, thou best canst witness, from whose breast
I swept the pillars broadcast planted there,
And made thee free, who hadst been slave of yore.

And many a man whom fraud or law had sold
For from his god-built land, an outcast slave,
I brought again to Athens; yea, and some,
Exiles from home through debt's oppressive load,
Speaking no more the dear Athenian tongue,
But wandering far and wide, I brought again;
And those that here in vilest slavery
Crouched 'neath a master's frown, I set them free.
Thus might and right were yoked in harmony,
Since by the force of law I won my ends
And kept my promise. Equal laws I gave
To evil and to good, with even hand
Drawing straight justice for the lot of each.
But had another held the goad as
One in whose heart was guile and greediness,
He had not kept the people back from strife.
For had I granted, now what pleased the one,
Then what their foes devised in counterpoise,
Of many a man this state had been bereft.
Therefore I showed my might on every side,
Turning at bay like wolf among the hounds.

And again he reviles both parties for their grumblings in the times that followed:

Nay, if one must lay blame where blame is due,
Wer't not for me, the people ne'er had set
Their eyes upon these blessings e'en in dreams:-
While greater men, the men of wealthier life,
Should praise me and should court me as their friend. For had any other man, he says,
received this exalted post,

He had not kept the people hack, nor ceased
Til he had robbed the richness of the milk.
But I stood forth a landmark in the midst,
And barred the foes from battle.

Part 13

Such then, were Solon's reasons for his departure from the country. After his retirement the city was still torn by divisions. For four years, indeed, they lived in peace; but in the fifth year after Solon's government they were unable to elect an Archon on account of their dissensions, and again four years later they elected no Archon for the same reason. Subsequently, after a similar period had elapsed, Damasias was elected Archon; and he governed for two years and two months, until he was forcibly expelled from his office. After this, it was agreed, as a compromise, to elect ten Archons, five from the Eupatridae, three from the Agroeci, and two from the Demiurgi, and they ruled for the year following Damasias. It is clear from this that the Archon was at the time the magistrate who possessed the greatest power, since it is always in connexion with this office that conflicts are seen to arise. But altogether they were in a continual state of internal disorder. Some found the cause and justification of their discontent in the abolition of debts, because thereby they had been reduced to poverty; others

were dissatisfied with the political constitution, because it had undergone a revolutionary change; while with others the motive was found in personal rivalries among themselves. The parties at this time were three in number. First there was the party of the Shore, led by Megacles the son of Alcmeon, which was considered to aim at a moderate form of government; then there were the men of the Plain, who desired an oligarchy and were led by Lycurgus; and thirdly there were the men of the Highlands, at the head of whom was Pisistratus, who was looked on as an extreme democrat. This latter party was reinforced by those who had been deprived of the debts due to them, from motives of poverty, and by those who were not of pure descent, from motives of personal apprehension. A proof of this is seen in the fact that after the tyranny was overthrown a revision was made of the citizen-roll, on the ground that many persons were partaking in the franchise without having a right to it. The names given to the respective parties were derived from the districts in which they held their lands.

Part 14

Pisistratus had the reputation of being an extreme democrat, and he also had distinguished himself greatly in the war with Megara. Taking advantage of this, he wounded himself, and by representing that his injuries had been inflicted on him by his political rivals, he persuaded the people, through a motion proposed by Aristion, to grant him a bodyguard. After he had got these 'club-bearers', as they were called, he made an attack with them on the people and seized the Acropolis. This happened in the archonship of Comeas, thirty-one years after the legislation of Solon. It is related that, when Pisistratus asked for his bodyguard, Solon opposed the request, and declared that in so doing he proved himself wiser than half the people and braver than the rest, wiser than those who did not see that Pisistratus designed to make himself tyrant, and braver than those who saw it and kept silence. But when all his words availed nothing he carried forth his armour and set it up in front of his house, saying that he had helped his country so far as lay in his power (he was already a very old man), and that he called on all others to do the same. Solon's exhortations, however, proved fruitless, and Pisistratus assumed the sovereignty. His administration was more like a constitutional government than the rule of a tyrant; but before his power was firmly established, the adherents of Megacles and Lycurgus made a coalition and drove him out. This took place in the archonship of Hegesias, five years after the first establishment of his rule. Eleven years later Megacles, being in difficulties in a party struggle, again opened negotiations with Pisistratus, proposing that the latter should marry his daughter; and on these terms he brought him back to Athens, by a very primitive and simple-minded device. He first spread abroad a rumour that Athena was bringing back Pisistratus, and then, having found a woman of great stature and beauty, named Phye (according to Herodotus, of the deme of Paenia, but as others say a Thracian flower-seller of the deme of Collytus), he dressed her in a garb resembling that of the goddess and brought her into the city with Pisistratus. The latter drove in on a chariot with the woman beside him, and the inhabitants of the city, struck with awe, received him with adoration.

Part 15

In this manner did his first return take place. He did not, however, hold his power long, for about six years after his return he was again expelled. He refused to treat the daughter of Megacles as his wife, and being afraid, in consequence, of a combination of the two opposing parties, he retired from the country. First he led a colony to a place called

Rhaicelus, in the region of the Thermaic gulf; and thence he passed to the country in the neighbourhood of Mt. Pangaeus. Here he acquired wealth and hired mercenaries; and not till ten years had elapsed did he return to Eretria and make an attempt to recover the government by force. In this he had the assistance of many allies, notably the Thebans and Lygdamis of Naxos, and also the Knights who held the supreme power in the constitution of Eretria. After his victory in the battle at Pallene he captured Athens, and when he had disarmed the people he at last had his tyranny securely established, and was able to take Naxos and set up Lygdamis as ruler there. He effected the disarmament of the people in the following manner. He ordered a parade in full armour in the Theseum, and began to make a speech to the people. He spoke for a short time, until the people called out that they could not hear him, whereupon he bade them come up to the entrance of the Acropolis, in order that his voice might be better heard. Then, while he continued to speak to them at great length, men whom he had appointed for the purpose collected the arms and locked them up in the chambers of the Theseum hard by, and came and made a signal to him that it was done. Pisistratus accordingly, when he had finished the rest of what he had to say, told the people also what had happened to their arms; adding that they were not to be surprised or alarmed, but go home and attend to their private affairs, while he would himself for the future manage all the business of the state.

Part 16

Such was the origin and such the vicissitudes of the tyranny of Pisistratus. His administration was temperate, as has been said before, and more like constitutional government than a tyranny. Not only was he in every respect humane and mild and ready to forgive those who offended, but, in addition, he advanced money to the poorer people to help them in their labours, so that they might make their living by agriculture. In this he had two objects, first that they might not spend their time in the city but might be scattered over all the face of the country, and secondly that, being moderately well off and occupied with their own business, they might have neither the wish nor the time to attend to public affairs. At the same time his revenues were increased by the thorough cultivation of the country, since he imposed a tax of one tenth on all the produce. For the same reasons he instituted the local justices, and often made expeditions in person into the country to inspect it and to settle disputes between individuals, that they might not come into the city and neglect their farms. It was in one of these progresses that, as the story goes, Pisistratus had his adventure with the man of Hymettus, who was cultivating the spot afterwards known as 'Tax-free Farm'. He saw a man digging and working at a very stony piece of ground, and being surprised he sent his attendant to ask what he got out of this plot of land. 'Aches and pains', said the man; 'and that's what Pisistratus ought to have his tenth of'. The man spoke without knowing who his questioner was; but Pisistratus was so pleased with his frank speech and his industry that he granted him exemption from all taxes. And so in matters in general he burdened the people as little as possible with his government, but always cultivated peace and kept them in all quietness. Hence the tyranny of Pisistratus was often spoken of proverbially as 'the age of gold'; for when his sons succeeded him the government became much harsher. But most important of all in this respect was his popular and kindly disposition. In all things he was accustomed to observe the laws, without giving himself any exceptional privileges. Once he was summoned on a charge of homicide before the Areopagus, and he appeared in person to make his defence; but the prosecutor was afraid to present himself and abandoned the case. For these reasons he held power long, and whenever he was expelled he regained his position easily. The majority alike of the

upper class and of the people were in his favour; the former he won by his social intercourse with them, the latter by the assistance which he gave to their private purses, and his nature fitted him to win the hearts of both. Moreover, the laws in reference to tyrants at that time in force at Athens were very mild, especially the one which applies more particularly to the establishment of a tyranny. The law ran as follows: 'These are the ancestral statutes of the Athenians; if any persons shall make an attempt to establish a tyranny, or if any person shall join in setting up a tyranny, he shall lose his civic rights, both himself and his whole house.'

Part 17

Thus did Pisistratus grow old in the possession of power, and he died a natural death in the archonship of Philoneos, three and thirty years from the time at which he first established himself as tyrant, during nineteen of which he was in possession of power; the rest he spent in exile. It is evident from this that the story is mere gossip which states that Pisistratus was the youthful favourite of Solon and commanded in the war against Megara for the recovery of Salamis. It will not harmonize with their respective ages, as any one may see who will reckon up the years of the life of each of them, and the dates at which they died. After the death of Pisistratus his sons took up the government, and conducted it on the same system. He had two sons by his first and legitimate wife, Hippias and Hipparchus, and two by his Argive consort, Iophon and Hegesistratus, who was surnamed Thessalus. For Pisistratus took a wife from Argos, Timonassa, the daughter of a man of Argos, named Gorgilus; she had previously been the wife of Archinus of Ambracia, one of the descendants of Cypselus. This was the origin of his friendship with the Argives, on account of which a thousand of them were brought over by Hegesistratus and fought on his side in the battle at Pallene. Some authorities say that this marriage took place after his first expulsion from Athens, others while he was in possession of the government.

Part 18

Hippias and Hipparchus assumed the control of affairs on grounds alike of standing and of age; but Hippias, as being also naturally of a statesmanlike and shrewd disposition, was really the head of the government. Hipparchus was youthful in disposition, amorous, and fond of literature (it was he who invited to Athens Anacreon, Simonides, and the other poets), while Thessalus was much junior in age, and was violent and headstrong in his behaviour. It was from his character that all the evils arose which befell the house. He became enamoured of Harmodius, and, since he failed to win his affection, he lost all restraint upon his passion, and in addition to other exhibitions of rage he finally prevented the sister of Harmodius from taking the part of a basket-bearer in the Panathenaic procession, alleging as his reason that Harmodius was a person of loose life. Thereupon, in a frenzy of wrath, Harmodius and Aristogeiton did their celebrated deed, in conjunction with a number of confederates. But while they were lying in wait for Hippias in the Acropolis at the time of the Panathenaea (Hippias, at this moment, was awaiting the arrival of the procession, while Hipparchus was organizing its dispatch) they saw one of the persons privy to the plot talking familiarly with him. Thinking that he was betraying them, and desiring to do something before they were arrested, they rushed down and made their attempt without waiting for the rest of their confederates. They succeeded in killing Hipparchus near the Leocoreum while he was engaged in arranging the procession, but ruined the design as a whole; of the two leaders, Harmodius was killed on the spot by the guards, while Aristogeiton was arrested, and

perished later after suffering long tortures. While under the torture he accused many persons who belonged by birth to the most distinguished families and were also personal friends of the tyrants. At first the government could find no clue to the conspiracy; for the current story, that Hippias made all who were taking part in the procession leave their arms, and then detected those who were carrying secret daggers, cannot be true, since at that time they did not bear arms in the processions, this being a custom instituted at a later period by the democracy. According to the story of the popular party, Aristogeiton accused the friends of the tyrants with the deliberate intention that the latter might commit an impious act, and at the same time weaken themselves, by putting to death innocent men who were their own friends; others say that he told no falsehood, but was betraying the actual accomplices. At last, when for all his efforts he could not obtain release by death, he promised to give further information against a number of other persons; and, having induced Hippias to give him his hand to confirm his word, as soon as he had hold of it he reviled him for giving his hand to the murderer of his brother, till Hippias, in a frenzy of rage, lost control of himself and snatched out his dagger and dispatched him.

Part 19

After this event the tyranny became much harsher. In consequence of his vengeance for his brother, and of the execution and banishment of a large number of persons, Hippias became a distrusted and an embittered man. About three years after the death of Hipparchus, finding his position in the city insecure, he set about fortifying Munichia, with the intention of establishing himself there. While he was still engaged on this work, however, he was expelled by Cleomenes, king of Lacedaemon, in consequence of the Spartans being continually incited by oracles to overthrow the tyranny. These oracles were obtained in the following way. The Athenian exiles, headed by the Alcmeonidae, could not by their own power effect their return, but failed continually in their attempts. Among their other failures, they fortified a post in Attica, Lipsydrium, above Mt. Parnes, and were there joined by some partisans from the city; but they were besieged by the tyrants and reduced to surrender. After this disaster the following became a popular drinking song:

Ah! Lipsydrium, faithless friend!
Lo, what heroes to death didst send,
Nobly born and great in deed!
Well did they prove themselves at need
Of noble sires a noble seed.

Having failed, then, in very other method, they took the contract for rebuilding the temple at Delphi, thereby obtaining ample funds, which they employed to secure the help of the Lacedaemonians. All this time the Pythia kept continually enjoining on the Lacedaemonians who came to consult the oracle, that they must free Athens; till finally she succeeded in impelling the Spartans to that step, although the house of Pisistratus was connected with them by ties of hospitality. The resolution of the Lacedaemonians was, however, at least equally due to the friendship which had been formed between the house of Pisistratus and Argos. Accordingly they first sent Anchimolus by sea at the head of an army; but he was defeated and killed, through the arrival of Cineas of Thessaly to support the sons of Pisistratus with a force of a thousand horsemen. Then, being roused to anger by this disaster, they sent their king, Cleomenes, by land at the head of a larger force; and he, after defeating the Thessalian

cavalry when they attempted to intercept his march into Attica, shut up Hippias within what was known as the Pelargic wall and blockaded him there with the assistance of the Athenians. While he was sitting down before the place, it so happened that the sons of the Pisistratidae were captured in an attempt to slip out; upon which the tyrants capitulated on condition of the safety of their children, and surrendered the Acropolis to the Athenians, five days being first allowed them to remove their effects. This took place in the archonship of Harpactides, after they had held the tyranny for about seventeen years since their father's death, or in all, including the period of their father's rule, for nine-and-forty years.