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Politics in Classical Greece: The Nature of the Polis and the Origins of the Rule of Law

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Cover Page Footnote

This article is based on a lecture delivered at the The Greeks Institute, a series of lectures presented to secondary school teachers in the Bridgeport Public Schools during the spring of 1989. Co-sponsored by the Connecticut Humanities Council, Sacred Heart University, and the Bridgeport Public Schools, the purpose of the institute has been to provide teachers with an interdisciplinary exploration of classical Greece for the purposes of professional enrichment and curriculum development.

THOMAS D. CURRAN

***Politics in Classical Greece: The Nature of the Polis
and the Origins of the Rule of Law***

Most historians of classical Greece consider the characteristic feature of Greek political life to have been the city-state or *polis*. Finley Hooper in his introduction to Greek history and culture emphasizes the cellular nature of the Greek world, composed as it was not of a unified people with a common political tradition but, rather, of a “family of small independent states” which shared a common language, religion and literature but which remained essentially autonomous.¹ Others have cited the fragmentation of the peninsula into a multitude of sovereign states, which tended to vent their tempers at one another rather than to cooperate in the face of a threat to them all, as a significant factor leading to the ultimate collapse of Greek freedom before the might of Alexander the Great in the fourth century, B.C.² So cherished was the independence of a typical Greek city-state, and so jealously was it guarded, that the political history of classical Greece might easily be viewed in a series of parallel columns, one for each *polis*, rather than as a continuous narrative that attempts to weave together the threads of a single story.

To give the term *polis* itself too precise a definition is thus to risk losing sight of the city-states’ great diversity. There were roughly 700 city-states in Greece, ranging in size from small towns claiming no more than a few hundred citizens to metropolises offering citizenship to tens of thousands. In some city-states, such as Sparta, which possessed large amounts of fertile land, agriculture remained the basis of the economy and ownership of the land was a key factor in the evolution of political structures. Others, such as Corinth and Aegina, that were less well endowed with farm land found themselves dependent upon manufacturing and trade for the necessities of life. In such places, political power might be exercised in much the same way as in a more land-based power but its source would be control of commercial wealth and the objects of political struggle would more likely be trade and commercial policy. Meanwhile, Athens, which boasted both a large rural hinterland (approximately 1,000 sq. miles) and a strong trading economy, developed a panoply of institutions

which can only be considered, in the phrase of historian Malcolm McGregor, "a full and direct democracy."³ The point is not that one can not generalize safely about politics in classical Greece, but that aspects of social, economic and political life in the Greek city-states were sufficiently various to require caution.

What, then, were the common features of the political life of the Greek city-states? The first thing that comes to mind is the physical orientation of the Greek community toward an urban center, the city proper, which was fortified, provided a market (*agora*) and a place of assembly, and served as the seat of justice and government. This should not be taken to mean that the *polis* was a strictly urban institution. In fact, in most cases the majority of the citizenry was composed of inhabitants of rural areas outside the city walls. It has been estimated, for example, that roughly two thirds of the citizens of Athens lived in rural districts at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431.⁴ Nor was it the case that the city ruled the countryside, since citizens were citizens whether they resided in the city proper or in the countryside. It is true, however, that the political and economic life of agricultural districts occupied by farmhouses and villages was normally oriented toward a focal point, usually a city, that performed a number of crucial religious, political and administrative functions.

Perhaps symbolic of the urban roots of Greek community life were the festivals and religious celebrations that city-states held on traditional dates in honor of the gods. In Athens, for example, the city held an annual three-day festival in honor of Dionysus, the god of fertility and wine. Each day the city sponsored a dramatic arts competition in which five comedies and three tragedies involving more than one thousand participants were performed before an audience of some 14,000 citizens. The whole affair was a great communal celebration, both solemn and festive, in which the entire citizenry was invited to participate. It was organized and administered by priests who were city officials, and the religious and patriotic character of the occasion acted to reinforce the solidarity of the entire community.

As important as the urban base of the *polis* was in establishing the identity of the city-state, an even more salient feature of its political culture was the sense of community that was shared by its members. More than anything else, a *polis* was a body of citizens whose status was to a substantial degree defined by their position

within a corporate community and who, in theory, were expected to regard participation in the political life of the city-state to be both a privilege and an obligation.

Aristotle expressed the Greek ideal of citizenship by observing that man is by definition a "political animal." A man, Aristotle noted, possesses a social instinct that is part of the natural endowment with which he enters the world. A man who does not feel the need for association with other men, or who is self-sufficient enough to live totally apart from others, can not experience the full development of his character as a human being. Rather, he "must be either a beast or a god" (*Politics*, Book I, chapter 2). Indeed, it is precisely through his participation in the social life of the community that a man distinguishes himself from both the gods and the lower creatures. He becomes fully human only through his association with other men in a political world.

The participatory nature of Greek citizenship placed boundaries around what Greek theorists felt should constitute an ideal *polis*. The ideal city-state ought to be, even if in fact it rarely was, large enough to be self-sufficient. It must be able to defend itself against external aggression, and it must be populous enough so that its members can fulfill their humanity within the context of a functioning political organism. Turning once again to Aristotle, we find that "a state . . . only begins to exist when it has attained a population sufficient for a good life in a political community" (*Politics*, Book 7, chapter 2). On the other hand, while a state must be large enough to provide an adequate community life for all of its members, it must not be too large for its members to participate in the life of the community on a face-to-face basis. It can not be a true *polis* if it is composed of so many citizens that it becomes impossible for each citizen to formulate well-informed judgments regarding the merits and character of each of the other citizens. Again, Aristotle writes,

. . . as I was saying, there must be a limit. What the limit should be will be easily ascertained by experience. For both governors and governed have duties to perform. The special functions of governors are to command and to judge. But if the citizens of a state are to judge and distribute offices according to merit they must know each other's

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characters. Where they do not possess this knowledge, both the election to offices and the decision of lawsuits will go wrong. When the population is very large they are manifestly settled at haphazard, which clearly ought not to be. Besides, in an over-populous state, foreigners and foreign-born will readily acquire the rights of citizens, for who will find them out? *Clearly then the best limit of the population of a state is the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life and can be taken in at a single view.*"

(Book 7, chapter 2; emphasis added)

Thus, even the physical dimensions of a *polis* are to be ideally determined by the communitarian nature of Greek citizenship. The optimal size of a city-state is that size which is most conducive to the performance of one's civic responsibilities.

Despite all that has been said above regarding the participatory and inclusive nature of Greek citizenship, the *polis* was in fact a highly exclusive community. In Sparta, for example, citizenship was restricted to males thirty years of age and of Dorian descent. In Athens during much of the classical period it was a privilege reserved for male children of marriages where both parents were of the citizen class. All outsiders, including resident foreigners (*metics*) and their children were excluded. Nor was there a routine procedure for naturalization. Naturalization was possible, but only through formal action by the government on a case by case basis.⁵ Usually, the community proper consisted of a minority who governed a much larger population of non-citizens.

Even though in most city-states political rights were limited by such factors as age, gender, property ownership and even heredity, all residents, citizen and non-citizen alike, were usually considered equally subject to the laws of the state. Indeed, the power of the *polis* was total. It was restrained in the formation of laws by no conception of the existence of natural rights such as that which underlies the modern democracies in the West. The modern view, derived from eighteenth century liberal thinkers (especially Locke and Rousseau), holds that man possesses at birth innate rights which are sacred and inalienable. The state cannot violate the natural rights of men

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because it has in effect been created by men themselves for the express purpose of protecting their rights. It receives its authority conditionally from the citizens on the expectation that it shall use the powers given to it to defend the liberties that individual citizens claim as their natural rights. The people are therefore sovereign, and in Western liberal theory they may reclaim the powers they have delegated to the state if the state should attempt to abuse them. The powers of the *polis*, by contrast, were in theory and in practice unconditional and unrestricted by such concerns over individual liberty as those which inspired Locke and Rousseau. Pericles, for example, in his famous "Funeral Oration" does describe a democracy which is grounded upon the values of majority rule and equality before the law, but nowhere does he mention natural rights or suggest that the state derives its powers from the consent of the governed.⁶ Aristotle himself made the case directly that the state, rather than the individual, is itself a creation of nature and exists prior to the individual.⁷ Indeed, the state must exist, he felt, before an individual can fulfill his humanity, and it therefore constitutes the source of all rights and obligations. Likewise, for Plato the very purpose of the state is not to protect the rights of men but, rather, to act upon men in order to make them good. "The principle which our laws have in view," he wrote, "is to *make* the citizens as happy and harmonious as possible" (emphasis added).⁸ It is therefore the state, rather than the people, that possess sovereignty. It, not the people, grants rights; and its authority must be inviolable. It might in theory, and in reality it often did, attempt to reach into every sphere of human activity without exception.

If this is so, then in what sense were the Greeks free men, as they often claimed to be?⁹ They were free in so far as they were governed by a code of laws that was honored and respected by all and to which all were equally bound. Indeed, it may be argued that the greatest contribution of the Greeks to the Western political tradition is not such notions as the freedom of the individual and the inalienability of human liberties but, rather, the belief that all societies ought to be governed by laws. The state, of course, might possess the power to make laws; but all subjects of the *polis* were to be bound by them; and even the government itself was expected to function according to law and to respect the rights of the citizens once the state itself had granted them. The Greek ideal of government by law was perhaps

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best exemplified by Socrates who, when condemned to death and offered exile as an alternative, could not conceive of life beyond the walls of his beloved Athens.¹⁰ It was not mere patriotism that drove Socrates to his death. Far more important to him was his conviction that by having lived in Athens and accepted the rights and privileges of citizenship he had entered into an implicit contract which obliged him to obey the laws of the state regardless of the consequences to himself. His condemnation, he felt, was not the result of his having agreed to abide by Athenian laws. Rather, it was the product both of the intemperance of his enemies and of his own inability to convince the jury that he was innocent of the charges brought against him. He was, in his own words, "a victim, not of the laws, but of men."¹¹

The particular forms of government that were produced in classical Greece varied greatly from city-state to city-state. Here there was an oligarchy, there tyranny, elsewhere democracy. Yet, of greater significance than the existence of these variations is the fact that, in the words of George Forrest, "common to all [of them was] the achievement in the end of some sort of what we are prepared to describe as the constitutional government of the city-state."¹² The principle which provided the foundation for such an achievement, and for which Socrates had sacrificed his life, i.e., that government ought properly to be by law rather than by men, was itself very much a product of forces which by the sixth century, B.C., were working toward change in Greece. It was a time when many Greek city-states faced a serious threat of political instability. Because of the poverty of natural resources and the tendency of land to become concentrated in the hands of the few; because of the rise of a commercial class whose increasing economic power surpassed its limited opportunity to pursue its political interests; and because of tensions and factional rivalry within each class, many city-states found themselves in a state of more or less constant turmoil. The problem with which they had ultimately to contend was, in the most general terms, how best to mediate the differences between socio-economic classes so as to prevent the self-destruction of the *polis* through inter-class warfare. Sparta, for example, found itself having to deal with a discontented and potentially dangerous agrarian underclass. Governed by an elite sub-ethnic group composed of the descendants of early iron age

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invaders, the Dorians, Sparta occupied vast tracts of conquered territory and faced the task of subjugating a hostile population seven to ten times the size of the ruling class. Fearing rebellion, the Spartans laid down rules for military training that converted the Dorian elite into a professional-warrior caste and turned Sparta into the most effective military power in Greece.

In Athens, the social crisis of the sixth century led in a quite different direction. Whereas the Spartan solution to lower class discontent was repression, in Athens the efforts of the state to address the issues raised by groups excluded from political power led to democracy. As the sixth century opened Athens found itself in the hands of an aristocratic monopoly. The chief executive body of the state was a group of nine magistrates, *archons*, who were appointed for one-year terms and who collectively exercised the executive power that had at an earlier time been the prerogative of a king. In addition, there was a council, the *boule*, the origins of which remain obscure, which was composed of ex-archons and exercised a general supervisory function over virtually all of the affairs of state, including the selection of magistrates.¹³ Perhaps foreshadowing the future, there was also a citizen assembly which appears not to have been permitted an important role except in moments of crisis when there was a need for public opinion to be tested.¹⁴ For political purposes the population of Athens was divided into three ranks: the *hippes*, or knights, who owned horses and could serve the state as cavalry; the *zeugitai*, who had the means to equip themselves as heavily-armed foot soldiers (*hoplites*); and the *thetes*, hired laborers who fought as lightly armed infantry. Only the first two ranks were granted the privileges of citizenship and only the knights could serve as magistrates, judges, or priests.¹⁵ It was a system that served primarily to place the balance of power securely in the hands of the older families with the largest land holdings.

Economically, the population was divided again into three groups. At the top was the landed aristocracy, the *eupatrids*, who lived in relative luxury in the towns of Attica while slaves, tenant-farmers, and share-croppers tilled their farms and merchants made profits for them on their loans. Next was the middle class of professional men, craftsmen and traders who found their fortunes improving as the introduction of coinage stimulated trade and colonization opened up new markets for the export of Athenian olive

oil and pottery. It was in large measure the rising power of this class that provided the dynamic element in the move toward more broadly-based government in Athens. Finally, there were the *georgoi*, small peasant owner-cultivators, renters, and share-croppers. By the end of the seventh century a significant proportion of this class had become impoverished as a consequence of an increasingly unfavorable *man/land ratio and the tendency for the ownership of farm land to become concentrated in the hands of the eupatrid elite*. Indeed, the seventh century had seen the population of Attica expand while both the material base for agriculture and farming technology remained stagnant. As a result, the average size of peasant landholdings (which were customarily divided among sons upon the death of the father) declined, and many small farmers were either forced into debt or had to migrate to Athens or lesser towns to become craftsmen, traders, or laborers. The economic grievances of both the rural poor and the dispossessed who had no choice but to look for work in the towns of Attica, when combined with the desire for political influence felt by the upwardly mobile commercial classes, posed a serious challenge to the stability of the state. By the sixth century these forces together brought Athens nearly to a state of revolution, providing thereby a fertile environment for institutional innovation.

It is nevertheless remarkable, given the gravity of the situation, that Athens was able to find a solution to its problems which not only averted civil war but established as well the framework for the world's first constitutional democracy. For reasons which are not entirely clear, in 594 B.C. the leadership of Athens elected an aristocrat named Solon to be chief magistrate and two years later gave him a temporary commission to reorganize the government with the objective of avoiding social war and restoring stability to the state.

Solon's first measures were directed not at constitutional reform but at addressing the basic economic grievances of the poor and middle classes. To that end he canceled all existing debts and made illegal the practice by which a person could offer his freedom as surety on a loan. At one stroke he had eliminated debt-slavery and cleared Attic lands of all mortgages. Meanwhile, in the interest of promoting trade and industry he adopted a new system of coinage and launched a program to attract skilled craftsmen from abroad by offering them Athenian citizenship in exchange for their agreement to settle in Attica.¹⁶

Important as the above measures were in stimulating economic development and relieving the burdens on the poor, of more lasting significance was the series of constitutional reforms enacted by Solon.¹⁷ The key element of his program was an effort to open up public offices to men of property on the premise that those who had earned wealth could not have done so without possessing abilities that would qualify them for service to the state. First, he divided the free population of Attica up into four categories according to their income, determined by an assessment of the value of each man's annual income in terms of bushels of produce. The wealthiest citizens, those whose annual incomes were the monetary equivalent of 500 bushels of grain, were made eligible to become *archons* and to hold military commands. Members of the second and third categories were made eligible for lesser offices; and while the poorest were excluded from public office they were accorded the privileges of sitting as jurymen and voting in the Assembly, which was now opened to the participation of all citizens and given the power to choose magistrates from among the 500-bushel men. Next, Solon created a new Council (*boule*), open to members of the top three classes. To it was given the administrative responsibility of directing the day-to-day affairs of the state and deciding which measures were to be brought before the Assembly.

Perhaps Solon's greatest achievement was the enactment of legislation that in effect institutionalized the regulation of human affairs by means of written law. In addition to his constitutional reforms, Solon issued a body of laws concerning a number of the less fundamental issues of his day. He passed a laws pertaining to such matters such as property rights and inheritance, manners and public morality, and various offenses against the state including sedition. To all of his laws there were attached specific penalties, and it was made clear that each citizen was to be held accountable to them regardless of his social or economic status. Indeed, provisions were made to guarantee that any citizen could bring action against any person whom he might feel guilty of a crime regardless of their relative standing in society. The cumulative impact of these measures was to firmly implant in Athens the habit of government in accordance with written and permanent laws by which all, including the high-born, were mutually bound. By enacting legislation that applied equally to all free men, rich and poor, Solon laid the legal basis for the further

evolution of democracy in Athens.

Equally important for the time being was that his reforms gave a substantial share of the government to the mercantile and industrial class. By opening up eligibility for top office to the top class, Solon doubled the potential number of candidates for high office; and by giving the Assembly the power to elect officials from among a list of candidates chosen on the basis of their wealth rather than family background, he legitimated the rise to power of individuals whose lack of support from the old line families would have otherwise kept them on the outside. In broadening the base of government and introducing new criteria for the selection of officials Solon had in effect weakened the kinship organization that had provided the mechanism through which the *eupatrid* oligarchy had maintained its grip upon the reigns of power. The overall direction of national policy would still remain in the hands of the well-to-do; but the elite would no longer be limited to those with hereditary titles. Solon did not succeed in establishing democracy, nor is it apparent that he intended to do so. He did, however, in Finley Hooper's phrase, "remove certain roadblocks from its path."¹⁸

The major hurdle still to be overcome in the destruction of the old regime in Attica, and in the triumph of democracy in Athens, was to be the breaking of the aristocracy's hold upon power at the local level. Since archaic times the power structure in Attica had rested upon an alliance of four Ionian tribes. Each of the tribes was composed of approximately 90 clans that were held together by lines of authority based upon kinship and rooted in an assumed common ancestry. Every family native to Attica, therefore, belonged to a tribe whose members claimed descent from the same divine ancestor, participated in a common religious tradition, shared certain communal lands, and acknowledged obligations of mutual aid and defense. Leadership within each tribe was the province of a clannish aristocracy of leading families whose hereditary status sanctified their mastery of the commoners around them. Solon's reforms had done little to diminish the local influence of these land-owning tribal leaders. Indeed, not only were the 400 members of his Council (the body that selected, prepared and censored all business that could be brought before the Assembly) elected by the tribes themselves by a process which preserved the influence of the tribal leaders intact, but nothing at all had been done to weaken the clan leaders' domination

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over the affairs of the villages, townships and city wards that functioned below the superstructure of the Athenian central government. Thus, the final steps in the removal of tribal authority and the consolidation of democracy had yet to be made.

Those steps were taken near the end of the sixth century by Cleisthenes, the head of a great noble family (the Alcmeonidae) that had supported Solon.¹⁹ Amidst the turmoil that ended the tyranny of the Peisistratids,²⁰ Cleisthenes was able to establish a dictatorship and to introduce a program of radical changes that removed the final barriers to popular democracy in Athens. His first move was to strike down the tribal system which formed the very foundation of aristocratic power in Attica. The four tribes that had been bound together by ancient kinship ties were abolished and replaced by ten new tribes organized along territorial lines. The building-blocks of the system were self-governing local communities called *demes*, each of which chose its own mayor and town council, kept registers of citizens, conducted elections, and managed recruitment for the army and navy as well as other local matters. For state purposes these *demes* were combined into geographical blocks called *tritties*, which were then combined in groups of three to form the new tribes. Each tribe was thus composed of three *tritties*, one encompassing districts from the rural interior of Attica, one coming from a coastal region, and one from the city. The significance of these divisions is that they cut across the boundaries of traditional lineage authority. The composition of each new tribe was in effect gerrymandered in such a way as to weaken the hold of the tribal elite upon local affairs. By building a new and artificial hierarchy of political organization based upon territorial rather than blood lines, Cleisthenes created a new structure that the aristocracy could no longer so easily control.

Having successfully attacked the principle of aristocracy, Cleisthenes proceeded to significantly broaden the base of Athenian democracy so as to restrain the domination of wealth as well. Under the constitution of Solon the Council of 400 had become a bastion of upper class power, since it was closed to citizens without a substantial level of income and since its members were elected under the influence of clan elders. Now, however, the Council was opened to the participation of all citizens. It was enlarged from 400 to 500 members; 50 members from each new tribe; and councilors were selected by lottery (rather than by elections which might have allowed

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for manipulation by local leaders) from among lists of all citizens within a tribe who had reached the age of thirty, passed a test for physical and mental fitness, and not already served two terms. Routine administrative tasks such as the oversight of public revenues, operation of the harbor, and the management of public festivals were performed by "boards of ten"; i.e., groups of officials also chosen by lottery for one-year terms. At any one time during the fifth century there were perhaps 700 such officials serving in Attica; and there were in addition numerous other officials administering territories that by the middle of the fifth century had been incorporated into the Athenian empire. Since selection for service as a board member or councilor was by lottery, and since all such appointments were for terms of one year only and could not be held successively, the chances were quite good that every citizen at least once in his life would be called upon to serve in some official capacity.

Under Cleisthenes and afterward the most powerful governing body of Athens became the Assembly. Open to all citizens over the age of twenty, the Assembly met regularly;²¹ and it had the power to decide virtually any issue of concern to the state. It routinely examined the account books of state officials; it elected and supervised the activities of the generals who commanded the Athenian military; and it passed judgment upon such important matters as tax policy and whether to go to war or to remain at peace. By any definition of sovereignty which implies the exercise of supreme powers the Assembly must be considered a sovereign body. It was also an organ that embodied the values of popular participation in government that were such an important component of the Greek notion of citizenship articulated by Aristotle and others. It was open to all citizens of Athens regardless of their economic class or social status. Merchants, potters, blacksmiths, farmers, rich property-owners, cobblers, tanners, sausage-makers, public workmen - all were members of the political community and all had the right (if not the duty) to personally participate in the deliberations of the Assembly and vote on all legislative and public policy matters that passed before it. Athens had achieved a direct and, at least potentially, fully participatory democracy which was based upon the principles of equality before the law and the right of every citizen to share in the governing of the state.

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Historians have for centuries wrestled with the question of precisely how democratic the government of Athens was in practice. Thucydides himself raised the issue by claiming that, while the structure of Athenian politics was nominally democratic, in the hands of a capable statesman such as Pericles it was converted into something more akin to monarchy.²² Modern historians have been perhaps more interested in the problem of whether a state can be considered truly democratic that significantly limits the franchise to a privileged minority, consigns women to a subordinate social status, employs slaves and maintains an empire.²³ Space will not permit discussion of these issues here, but it is worth pointing out that there is a great deal of room for comparison of Athenian democracy and Greek notions of citizenship in general with the analogous features in modern Western culture. The ideal of a corporate community of individuals bound to one another by a common body of interests is certainly a central and unifying theme lying at the heart of our own political tradition;²⁴ and the significance to Americans of such Greek values as government by the will of the majority and the sanctity of laws which apply equally to all citizens is obvious. To introduce for classroom discussion concepts which are made manifest by the history of Greek politics is therefore to offer students a potentially fruitful opportunity both to explore the roots of the democratic tradition in the West and to cultivate a deeper understanding of the institutions and values that have perhaps become second-nature to us all:

Notes

¹Finley Hooper, *Greek Realities: Life and Thought in Ancient Greece*, reprint edition (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1978), p. 10.

² See Hornblower, "Greece: The History of the Classical Period," John Boardman, et al, eds., *The Oxford History of the Classical World: Greece and the Hellenistic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 122.

³Malcolm McGregor, "The Politics of the Historian Thucydides," *Phoenix*, 10 (1956), 98.

⁴M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Greeks* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 70.

⁵Finley, p. 56.

⁶Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book II, No. 37.

⁷According to Aristotle, "the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand is no better than that. . . . The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole." See *Politics*, Book I, chapter 2.

⁸Quoted by Sir R. W. Livingstone, *Greek Ideals and Modern Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 93.

⁹This issue is raised by Finley, p. 58.

¹⁰Plato, *Apology*, in Plato, Loise Ropes Loomis, ed. Classics Club edition (Roslyn, New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1969); p. 56.

¹¹Plato, *Crito*, in Loomis, ed., p. 78.

¹²George Forrest, "Greece: The History of the Archaic Period," in Boardman, et al, *The Oxford History*, p. 20.

¹³This council has often been referred to as the *Areopagus* because it met on top of the hill by that name in Athens.

¹⁴Forrest, p. 26.

¹⁵This and the following analysis of Athenian socio-economic structure is derived largely from Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Part II, The Life of Greece* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), pp. 110-12.

¹⁶Hooper, p. 140.

¹⁷The following summary of Solon's political reforms is taken from Durant, pp. 114-18; see also Hooper, pp. 140-41.

¹⁸Hooper, p. 141.

¹⁹The following description of Cleisthenes' constitutional reforms is drawn from Durant, pp. 123-26; Forrest, p. 29; and W. G. Hardy, *The Greek and Roman World* (Westwood, Massachusetts: The Paperbook Press, 1976), pp. 9-10.

²⁰The tyrant Peisistratus and his descendants controlled Athenian politics from 546 to 510 B.C. In general their policy was to generate a substantial measure of popular support for their rule by attacking the aristocracy while defending the interests of the poor and middle classes. Their reign was brought to an end in 510 B.C. by means of a coup conducted by an alliance of Athenian aristocrats backed by Spartan military power.

²¹At the time of Cleisthenes, regular meetings were held once about every 36 days. By the end of the fifth century, however, it met on the average every ten days. See Hardy, p. 9.

²²Referring to Pericles, Thucydides wrote, "It was he who led them [the citizens of Athens], rather than they who led him, and since he never sought

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power from any wrong motive, he was under no necessity of flattering them: in fact he was so highly respected that he was able to speak angrily to them and to contradict them. Certainly when he saw that they were going too far in a mood of over-confidence, he would bring back to them a sense of their dangers; and when they were discouraged for no good reason he would restore their confidence. So, in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen." See *The Peloponnesian War*, Book II, number 65.

²³These issues have been addressed by a number of historians including A. H. M. Jones, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957); W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971); P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972); H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (New York: Penguin, 1951, 1957); M.I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); and J. K. Davies, *Wealth and the Power of Wealth in Classical Athens* (New York, 1981). A guide to some of these issues which classroom teachers at the secondary and college level may find useful is Brian Tierney, Donald Kagan and L. Pearce Williams, eds., *Periclean Athens — Was It a Democracy?*, Random House Historical Pamphlet Edition, no. 2 (New York: Random House, 1977).

²⁴Though rarely providing the dominant perspective in the political ideology of the United States, communitarian values did underlay the establishment of Puritan settlements in colonial Massachusetts and they were present in the thinking of such advocates of strong government as Alexander Hamilton. See George C. Lodge, *The New American Ideology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 113; and George C. Lodge, "The United States," George C. Lodge and Ezra F. Vogel, eds., *Ideology and National Competitiveness: An Analysis of Nine Countries* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press; 1987), p. 109.