The poet himself, a class-conscious aristocrat if ever there was one, had been what it had been in Hesiod’s time. The old secure days of aristocracy are gone.

Phagoi basilees)* who scorn justice and give crooked judgments. The outlook of probably put together at a later time, around a nucleus of genuine poetry written hereditary aristocracy, described by Hesiod as ‘gift-devouring princes’ (doro-

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Theognis, of Megara at some time between the mid-seventh century and the mid-sixth. But now, in Theognis’ world, the situation is very different from what it had been in Hesiod’s time. The old secure days of aristocracy are gone. The poet himself, a class-conscious aristocrat if ever there was one, had been driven into exile and put to death for vengeance, praying for the Good (the agathoi or deilos). Everything, poet bewails the condition of the Good and the Bad. Everything, says, men look for a ‘good’ man (he means of course a man of blue blood) to have a number of slaves as well as the occasional hired hand, the thés, and various kinds of cattle. When the poet advises his reader to have only one son— or, if he has more, to die old (WD 376 ff.)— one remembers that this theme, the desirability of transmitting one’s property undivided to a single heir, has often obsessed members of a privileged class, especially perhaps those who are on the lower edge of that class and whose descendants may fall below it if they inherit only a part of the ancestral estate. The mentality is very different from that of a peasant serf in a ‘labour rent’ system such as that of Poland from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth (as analysed with great acuteness by Witold Kula), where the peasant’s obligation to perform the traditional amount of labour for his lord was paramount, and he could not hope to rent additional land and profit from the sale of its produce unless he could find additional labour inside his own family, with the result that in this economic system, in which the families of rich peasants are those which have the most members, they are not larger because they are richer, but on the contrary, richer because larger.

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

* Theognis of Megara

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

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

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

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

There is one political figure in the age of the tyrants about whom we know much more than any of the others: Solon the Athenian, at the beginning of the sixth century (he was archon in 594/3), whose political outlook and activities can be seen clearly in some of their aspects in his own excellent poems, considerable fragments of which have survived. There is no doubt at all about Solon's
perfectly serious conception of his own role, as a would-be impartial arbiter in a situation of severe class strife, who was pressed by the demos to make himself tyrant, but refused. Although Solon also refused to make a general redistribution of land, as demanded by the impoverished lower classes, he did take the extraordinary step of cancelling all debts, and he forbade for the future not merely enslavement for debt but also any kind of debt bondage. By the simple expedient of prohibiting the giving of the body as security—a much-needed reform affecting Athens alone, of course—we have no idea how many other Greek states, if any, followed the example of Athens here (see III. iv above and its n. 2 below). Other leading political figures who were less reluctant than Solon to take unconstitutional power need not necessarily have had less worthy motives, although no doubt many of them will have been primarily concerned with gaining political power. Cylon, who staged an abortive coup at Athens nearly thirty years before Solon's archonship, failed completely: either the discontent had not yet reached fever-pitch, or the Athenians knew enough about Cylon to reject him. Peisistratus later completed Solon's work at Athens by enforcing (if with a certain amount of 'fiddling') the new constitution of Solon—admirable and progressive in its day—which (in my opinion) the old aristocracy of Eupatrids had been sabotaging.

A subject for investigation that is decidedly more promising than the motives of individual tyrants is the social basis of their power. Here again the evidence is far from satisfactory and its interpretation is much disputed, recently in particular in regard to the extent to which the tyrants received support from which the hoplite class. I think I have said enough above to indicate how I would set about solving such a problem. The fact is that the situation must have varied greatly from polis to polis. In some cases the tyrants might be installed mainly or entirely by superior force from outside, either by a more powerful city, or (as in Asia from the late sixth century to the late fourth) by the king of Persia or one of his satraps or a local dynasty. In other cases the tyrants may have come to power with the aid of a mercenary force, and may have maintained himself in power for some time by his aid. In the absence of any such external pressures, the tyrant would have to rely upon discontented sections of the demos. My own feeling is that the lowest classes (the poorest peasants, the landless labourers, the humbler artisans and the like) would not at this early date have formed a source of strength effective enough to bring to power a tyrant who was not acceptable to the bulk of the hoplite class, whose role, if it came to armed conflict, would surely at this period have been decisive. Many humble citizens in some polis are very likely to have been clients of nobles or to have had such a dependent relationship to them that they could do little to oppose them. I myself have no doubt at all that a considerable proportion of the hoplite class in many polis, especially at its lower levels, must have given support to tyrants. This thesis, first argued in detail by Andrews (GT, 1956) but criticised by Snodgrass in 1965, is now sufficiently established, in my opinion, by Paul Cartledge's excellent article, 'Hoplites and heroes', in JHS 97 (1977) 1-27.

For Aristotle, there was an essential distinction between the two Greek forms of monarchia (one-man-rule), namely basileia, traditional kingship according to established forms of law, and tyrannis, the rule of a tyrant. They differed in their very origin. Kingship, says Aristotle, 'came into existence for the purpose of helping the better classes (hoi epiereis – just another name for the propertied class) against the demos' (the common people), whereas tyrants arose 'from among the common people and the masses, in opposition to the notables (hoi genimoi), so that the demos should not suffer injustice at their hands... The great majority of the tyrants began as demagogues, so to speak, and won confidence by calumniating the notables' (Pol. V. 30, 1310b9-16). A little later he says that the king 'wishes to be a guardian of society, so that those who possess property may suffer no injustice and the demos may not be subjected to arrogant treatment', whereas the tyrant does just the opposite and in practice considers only his own interests (1310b40-112b2). The tyrants, who had fulfilled their historic role long before Aristotle's day and by his time were often the oppressive and despotic figures he conceives most tyrants to have been, receive almost uniformly hostile treatment in our surviving sources. One single figure emerges only slightly tarnished: the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus, who receives some positive encomia from Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristotle (see n. 10 again).

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

The fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

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

Classical Greek democracy is far too large a subject for me to discuss in any detail here, and I shall content myself with a very brief summary of its principal characteristics, as we can see them both in contemporary (and often hostile) specifications of demokratia and in what we know of its practice. Unfortunately,
we have so little information about other Greek democracies that I am obliged to treat the Athenian democracy as if it were typical, as it evidently was not, although it was certainly the most respected and illustrous of Greek democracies, and the most highly developed one of which we have any knowledge.

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

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

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

(iv) We must never forget, of course, that Greek democracy must always have depended to a considerable extent on the exploitation of slave labour, which, in the conditions obtaining in the ancient world, was if anything even more essential for the maintenance of a democracy than of any more restricted form of constitution. (I have explained the reason for this in III. iv above: see the third paragraph of its §1.) However, even though we may regard slavery, sub specie aeternitatis, as an irredeemably evil feature of any human society, we must not allow the fact of its existence under Greek democracy to degrade that democracy in our eyes, when we judge it by even the highest standards of its day, for Greek states could not dispense with slavery under any other constitutional form either, and virtually no objection was ever raised in antiquity to slavery as an institution (see VII.iii below).

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

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

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

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

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

In democracies it is necessary to give the minor magistrates (the majority) to be appointed by lot, for this avoids civil strife, but for the important ones to be elected by the whole citizen body (2.14, 1424f17-20). And the same work goes on to say that even in oligarchies it is desirable to appoint to most offices by lot, reserving only the greatest ones for 'a secret vote under oath and with strict precautions' (2.18, 1425040-043).

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

1. In an ancient Greek poleis the class struggle in the basic economic sense (see my definitions, in II.ii above) proceeded of course without cessation in so far as it was between property-owners and those workers whose labour provided them, directly or indirectly, with their leisure existence: that is to say, chattel slaves in the main, but in a few places principally serfs (see III.iv above); some hired labourers, relatively few in number (see III.vi above); those unfortunates
who were obliged by need to borrow at interest and (probably in the great majority of polis other than Athens) might become debt bondsmen on default; and more indirectly their tenants. This struggle was of course very one-sided: it expressed the master's dominance, and its essence was his exploitation of the labour of those who worked for him. I know of no parallel to the mass liberation of the Messenian Helots (see III.iv above, § II, and its n.18 below), who in 370-369 retained their freedom with the aid of powerful outside intervention at a time of unprecedented Spartan weakness, and became once more the independent polis of Messene.

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

When I speak of control of the 'state' I am referring to what the ancient Greeks called the politeia – literally, the 'constitution', the fundamental laws and customs governing political life; but the Greek word has on occasion something very like the force of the modern expression, 'way of life'. Isocrates describes the politeia as the very soul of the city. Aristotle makes it plain in numerous passages that what one must expect in practice is that the rulers will rule in what they regard as their own personal or class interest. It is worth remarking here, by the way, that Aristotle and other Greek intellectuals did not regard the preservation of the rights of property as a main function of the state, in the way that so many later drinkers have done, in particular Cicero, who fervently believed that states exist primarily in order to protect private property rights (De offic. II.73, cf. 78, 85, 1.21), and of course Locke and the many other political theorists of more modern times who have held similar views.

V. The class struggle on the political plane (ii)

We can accept the fact that what we call 'the state' was for the Greeks the instrument of the politeia, the body of citizens who had the constitutional power of ruling. And as I have already shown (in II.ii above), the Greeks habitually expected an oligarchy to rule in the interests of the propertied class, a democracy mainly in the interests of the poorer citizens. Control of the state, therefore, was one of the prizes, indeed the greatest prize, of class conflict on the political plane. This should not surprise even those who cannot accept the statement in the Communist Manifesto that 'political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another' (MECW VI.5/6)
realised, was likely to be equated with the interests of the propertied class: they
normally felt themselves to be absolutely superior and entitled to make all
political decisions at their own will (see II.iv above). 17

5. An oligarchy, once securely in power, might survive for quite a long time
if it remained vigilant and above all united, and if its members did not abuse their
political power too grossly. (In II.iv above I have quoted some of Aristotle's
remarks on this subject.) Few examples are known of long-lived oligarchy. One
of the most obvious is Corinth, for nearly two centuries from the fall of the
Cypselid tyranny (probably c. 582) until the democratic revolution in 392. The
most enduring oligarchy of all was Sparta (see my OPW 124-49), where successful
revolution was unknown after the setting up of the 'Lycurgan' constitution in
(probably) the mid-seventh century until the coup effected by King Cleomenes
III in 227, when there began a troubled period of two or three generations of civil
strife. Economic distress often drove the impoverished to attempt revolution,
with the aim both of capturing control of the state and of effecting some kind of
reallocation of property — most frequently in the form of a redistribution of land
(-Saharan), or the cancellation of debts (chronon apokope), or both of these
measures (see below, with n.55). There is an important proviso to be added: no
democratic revolution had much chance of success, or of leading to a stable
democracy, unless the impoverished masses received leadership from some
members of the governing class. According to a neglected passage in Aristotle,
however, light-armed forces and naval crews — drawn entirely from the lower
classes and therefore uniformly democratic in outlook — were very numerous in
his day, and since in civil conflicts 'light-armed troops easily overcome cavalry
and hoplites' (he is not thinking of pitched battles, of course), the lower classes
(the demos) got the better of the wealthy (the eupoi). Pol. VI.7, 1321b11-21). I
can say that the only way in which oligarchy could be transformed into
democracy was by revolution; I know of no single case in the whole of Greek
history in which a ruling oligarchy introduced democracy without compulsion
and by a simple vote.

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

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

V. The class struggle on the political plane (ii)

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

* * * * * *

I said earlier that much of the evidence for the history of Greece in the fifth and
fourth centuries relates primarily or exclusively to Athens. Athens was anything
but typical — I have explained why in OPW 34 ff. (esp. 46-7). Yet I propose to
concentrate on that city, simply because the evidence for it is so much more
plentiful than for any other.

The constitution of Cleisthenes in 508/7 gave to Athens what the Greeks
regarded as full democracy, in the sense that, although property-qualifications
were required for the holding of certain offices, 21 every citizen had a vote in the
sovereign Assembly, both in its deliberative and legislative capacity (in which it
was known as the ekklēsia) and in its judicial capacity, when it was the hēllai,
divided for most purposes — if not until later, perhaps even 462/1 — into
dikastēria, 'jury-courts'. Apart from the organs of state at Athens itself there
were numerous and important local political functions, democratically organised,
in the 'demes' (roughly 150 in number) into which the citizen population was
divided. No very important changes were made before the destruction of the
democracy in 322/1 (for which see Section iii of this chapter and its n.2 below),
but there were certain modifications, both in the constitutional structure and in
its practical working, which made it distinctly more democratic, to our way of
thinking, during the fifth century. Apart perhaps from the 'reforms of Ephialtes'
in 462/1, of the precise nature and details of which we know far less than many
modern scholars pretend, much the most important reform was the introduc-
tion by degrees, between the middle of the fifth century and its closing years, of
pay for the performance of political tasks: at first sitting in the jury-courts, and
on the Council (boule) which prepared business for the Assembly, and later (after
403) for attending the Assembly. 22 Although the rates of pay were low (less than
the wages of an artisan), this reform enabled even the poorer citizens to pay a
real part in the political life of the city if they so desired. I would emphasise (since
the contrary has recently been asserted, in defiance of the evidence, by Sir Moses
Finley) that political pay was certainly not peculiar to Athens but was intro-
duced in a number of other democracies by at any rate the fourth century: this is
perfectly clear from a series of passages in Aristotle's Politikē, even if Rhodes is
the only other city we can actually name for the fourth century—see my PPOA.14 Political leadership at state level was long monopolised by a fairly small circle of 'political families'; but Athens' acquisition of an empire in the fifth century created a large number of new openings which made it necessary for this circle to be widened; and in the last thirty years of the fifth century we encounter a group of 'new men', often unfairly satisfied by upper-class writers such as Aristophanes and the other comic poets as jumped-up tradesmen, 'sellers' of this, that or the other (see my OPW 359-62).25 The politicians who played a leading role were often referred to as 'demagogues' (demosagoi), originally a neutral term meaning 'leaders of the demos' but one which soon came to be used most frequently in a disparaging sense. The most famous of these 'demagogues', Cleon, who played a leading role in the late 420s, was a full-time professional politician, very different from the vulgar 'tanner' or 'leather-seller' ridiculed by Aristophanes (and depicted in a very different light, if an almost equally hostile one, by Thucydides). Some other 'demagogues' are known to have been similarly travestied, and there are good reasons for thinking that the time-honoured picture of most of these men is very unreal (see my OPW 234-5, esp. n.7).

I have explained at length elsewhere why members of the Athenian upper class such as Aristophanes and Isocrates should have detested Cleon and his fellow-demagogues (OPW 355-76). To put it in a nutshell—these demagogues were dimitikoi (the equivalent of the Roman populares): they often took the side of the lower classes at Athens against their 'betters', or their 'heteroi', that is one way or other that was considered inimical to the best interests of the Athenian upper class or some of its members. However, the political class struggle at Athens was on the whole very muted in the period we are discussing (I shall notice the two prominent exceptions presently), and the internal political conflicts recorded in our sources seldom arise directly out of class struggle. This is very natural and precisely what we might have expected, for the democracy was firm and unshakeable and it satisfied the aspirations of the humbler Athenians. The Assembly and in particular the courts must have given the poorer citizen a considerable degree of protection against oppression by the rich and powerful. Here it is worth remembering that the control of the courts by the demos was regarded by Aristotle as giving the demos control of the constitution (Asth. pol. 9.1 fin.). The democracy was also remarkably indulgent to the rich, whose financial position was secure and who were not heavily taxed (even if we allow for occasional hardship resulting from the eisphora, a capital levy sometimes imposed in wartime), and who had ample opportunity for achieving honour and esteem, above all through public service. The fifth-century 'empire',15 from which the leading Athenians profited most (Thuc. VIII.48.6),16 it had for a time reconciled many rich men to the democracy, which was widely recognised to be an integral part of the foundation on which the empire rested. It is unique among past empires known to us in that the ruling city relied very much on the support of the lower classes in the subject states (see my OPW 34-43)—in striking contrast with other imperial powers, which have commonly aimed to secure the loyalty of royal houses, aristocracies, or at least (as with Rome; see Section iii of this chapter) the upper classes among the peoples they ruled. The miserable failure of the two oligarchic revolutions of the late fifth century, which I shall briefly describe presently, discouraged any further attempt to attack the democracy, even after the fall of the Athenian empire in 404.

Between 508/7 and the destruction of the democracy by the Macedonians in 322 there were only two episodes in which class struggle at Athens erupted in violent stasis, civil strife. (I need only mention in passing two abortive oligarchic conspiracies in 480-79 and 458-7, and the assassination of the radical-democratic leader Ephialtes in 462.)17 The oligarchy of the Four Hundred in 411, which lasted for only about four months, was altogether a product of fraud;28 the pretence, known to be false by the revolutionaries by the time they put their plans into effect, that if a form of oligarchy were introduced at Athens some desperately-needed financial help for the war against Sparta might be forthcoming from Persia through the agency of Alcibiades. The whole thing was planned from the start by men who were among the wealthiest Athenians: the trierarchs (Thuc. VIII.47.2) and 'the most influential people' (hoi dynatotatoi, 47.2 [twice], 48.1), 'the best people' (hoi heliotai, 47.2). The Samian dynatotatoi joined in the plan (63.3; cf. 73.2. 6). The preparatory moves were carried through amid serious uneasiness on the part of the demos (54.1; cf. 48.3), allayed only by the belief (emphasised by Thucydides) that the demos would be able, when it wanted, to vote away any oligarchic constitutional measures that might have to be imposed as a temporary expedient—a vital consideration which is seldom given sufficient emphasis.29 In the weeks before the climactic stage of the revolution there were a number of assassinations (the first we hear of at Athens for fifty years) and a deliberate campaign of terror (65.2 to 66.5); and actual decisions setting up the oligarchy were taken, nem. con. (69.1), at a meeting of the Assembly convened at Colonus, well outside the walls, to which—since the Spartans had now set up a fortified post at Decelea, only a few miles away—the hoplites and cavalry must have marched out as an army, with few if any ithyphalch (sub-hoplites) present. Meanwhile the fleet (the nautikos ochlos: Thuc. VIII.72.2), based at Samos, remained staunchly devoted to democracy: the passages in Thucydides which bring this out vividly are among the most moving in his work (VIII.72.2, 73.4-6, 75-77; 86.1-4). The oligarchy soon collapsed, and then, after about eight months with a 'mixed constitution',30 the full democracy was restored.

In 404 the narrow oligarchy of the Thirti was forced upon Athens by the victorious Spartan commander, Lysander, some weeks or even months after the capitulation of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war, during which period the Athenian oligarchs had evidently found it impossible to force through a change of constitution on their own.31 The victory of the democratic Athenian Resistance in 403, made possible by a sudden, complete change of policy at Sparta (for which see my OPW 143-6), is one of the most remarkable and fascinating episodes in Greek history, which often fails to receive the attention it deserves, although a whole book has been devoted to it by the French historian Cloché.32 The Athenian demos was surprisingly magnanimous in its victory, and it receives high praise for this from many quarters, notably Aristotle. Arist. pol. 40. (The demos even refused to Sparta money which had been borrowed by the Athenian oligarchs to pay for the garrison supplied by Sparta, said to have amounted to a hundred talents.)33 The two episodes I have just described are clear examples of a struggle to control the state, between the mass of the Athenians and a few 'top people', with
the fortunes of Athens first rising and then falling again, it was taken for granted by virtually all citizens that there was no practicable alternative to democracy for Athens, and for roughly two generations the upper classes evidently gave up hope of any fundamental constitutional change and concentrated on immediate issues, above all on foreign policy, now a rather bewildering problem for the Athenians, who often had cause to wonder where their real interests lay — whether to fight Sparta, or to accept her as an ally against Athens’ immediate neighbour Thebes, now growing ever more powerful; how much effort should be devoted to regaining control of the Thracian Chersonese, at one of the two main bottle-necks on Athens’ vital corn-supply route from the Crimea (see OPW 45 ff., esp. 48-9); and whether to try to reconquer Amphipolis, the key to the timber supply of the area around the River Strymon and the strategic point that controlled the crossing of the Strymon itself. Once or twice we hear of a division on foreign policy at Athens on class lines, between rich and poor (see Hell. Oxy. VII[3], Ar., Ecd. 197-8); but on most issues, home and foreign, there is no clear evidence of any such division: there is not the least reason to expect it at this period.

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

Perhaps the most obviously noticeable failure of Athens in the fourth century was her inability to find the sums of money (very large, by Greek standards of public finance) required to maintain the naval forces which she needed, to a far greater extent than any other Greek state, in order to pursue what I might call her ‘natural’ foreign policy. I have already, in OPW 45-9, explained why Athens was driven by her unique situation, as an importer of corn on an altogether exceptional scale, towards a policy of ‘naval imperialism’, in order to secure her supply routes. (I have also, in the passage just mentioned, listed the principal occasions on which Athens came to grief, or nearly so, when interruption of her corn supply was threatened.) Athens’ whole way of life was involved; and what is so often denounced, as if it were sheer greed and a lust for domination on her part, by modern scholars whose antipathy to Athens is sharpened by her promotion of democratic regimes in states under her control or influence, was in reality an almost inevitable consequence of that way of life. In the fifth century the tribute from the empire made it possible for Athens to maintain a large fleet. After 405 the whole situation changed: because of the rudimentary character of all Greek public finance, and their own failure to innovate in this sphere, the Athenians were perpetually unable to provide the funds necessary to man their essential fleets. Contributions from their allies in the so-called ‘Second Athenian Confederacy’ of 378/7 ff. could not just be demanded by the Athenians (as in the fifth-century empire) but had to be requested, and voted by the allies in their synedrion. In the long run these contributions were not adequate, and Athenian commanders sometimes resorted to what were virtually piratical measures in order to replace the funds they had lost. About 350 B.C. Athens was sufficiently aware of how desperately serious was Athens’ lack of state funds in the fourth century. I have collected a great deal of evidence on this subject, which, since I know of no single presentation of it, I will give here in a note. But it is time to take a more general view of fourth-century Greece and its future.

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

Greece and Poverty had always been foster-sisters, as Herodotus put it (VII. 102.1); but poverty in the fourth century seems to be a more pressing evil than in the fifth. The seventh, sixth and fifth centuries had been an age of steady economic development, with a distinct increase of wealth in at least the more progressive cities; and from the meagre information available one gets the impression that there had been a marked rise in the standard of life practically all sections of the population. There had certainly been a genuine economic expansion, made possible by the growth of commerce, of small-scale industry, and of a money economy, and greatly assisted by the early movement of colonisation, in the eighth and seventh centuries. The export of Greek wine, pottery, metal work and other agricultural and industrial products grew to surprising dimensions, reaching a climax probably in the second half of the fifth century. On the political plane the whole period was characterised by a no-
appropriate a greater share of the small available surplus than in the late fifth century, though probably less so in democratic Athens than in most other states. If so, the real cause of Greek decline is much more deeply rooted in the nature of the Greek economic and social system than Rostovtzeff's theory would allow.

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

In the political sphere, democracy barely held its own in the fourth century, and in many cities outside Athens the class warfare which had already become widespread in the last quarter of the fifth century became more acute. Since a very large part of the surviving evidence for the political history of the fourth century relates specifically to Athens, where (as I said earlier) the class struggle on the political plane was probably much milder than in any other Greek city, it is easy for us to overlook the parlous condition of tension and strife in many of the other cities. Oligarchic and democratic leaders had no hesitation in calling in outside powers to help them gain the upper hand over their adversaries. A particularly interesting example is the situation at Corinth in 387/6, just after the 'King's Peace' or 'Peace of Antalcidas'. Corinth had recently ceased to exist as an independent polis, having been absorbed by the neighbouring democracy of Argos. When the Spartan King Agesilaus appeared before the walls of Corinth, 'the Corinthians' — that is to say, the democratic faction which was now in control at Corinth — at first refused to dismiss the Argive garrison which ensured the maintenance of the existing democratic regime at Corinth (Xen., HG V.13.4). Although they knew that if the garrison withdrew and Sparta regained control of the city, Corinth would be reconstituted as an independent polis, they realised that this would also involve the reimposition of the former oligarchy — and they regarded that as a more unpleasant alternative than accepting the non-
existence of Corinth as an independent polis, and remaining a mere part of Argos! An equally extreme example, this time involving oligarchs instead of democrats, is the surrender of the Cadmeia (the Acropolis of Thebes) to the Spartan general Phoebidas in 382 by the oligarchic Theban faction led by Leontiadas, a devoted partisan of Sparta. Leontiadas then headed a small oligarchy, thoroughly subervient to the Spartans, who installed a garrison on the Theban Cadmeia to keep the puppet regime in power. It is interesting to hear from Xenophon that the Thebans now 'gave the Spartans even more service than was demanded of them' (HG V.ii.36) — just as the Mantinian landowners, when Sparta destroyed the walls of their city and broke it up into its four original villages, were so glad to have an 'aristocracy' and be no longer troubled by 'burdensome demagogues', as under their democracy, that they 'came for military service with the Spartans from their villages far more enthusiastically than when they were under a democracy' (ibid. 7).

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

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

Tyranny, a phenomenon which had become very much rarer in the fifth century than in the seventh and sixth, now occurred again in several cities: its reappearance suggests an intensification of political class strife. It is a great pity that we cannot reconstruct what happened in particular at Heraclea Pontica; the real situation is almost totally obscured by abusive rhetoric in the sources, especially the local historian, Memnon (FGRH 434 F 1), who wrote several centuries later, during the early Roman Principate. Part of the essential truth does come out in a rather unlikely source, Justin (XVI.4v-v, esp. iv.2, 10-20), where we learn that class strife had led to a revolutionary situation, with the lower classes clamouring for a cancellation of debts and a redistribution of the lands of the rich; that the Council, evidently the organ of oligarchic rule, sent for the exiled Clearchus, believing that he would make a settlement in their favour; but that he in fact took the side of the lower classes, who made him tyrant (364-352 B.C.). He evidently pursued a radical policy, in opposition to the interests of the rich: it is hidden from us behind a welter of abuse in Justin, Memnon and others. The 'wickedness' of Clearchus surprised Isocrates (Epist. VII.12), whose pupil he had once been, as he had also been Plato's (Memnon, F 1). In the same letter in which Isocrates refers to Clearchus he shows (§ 8, cf. 4) in what circumstances he would be prepared to accept a tyrant as a kaleo kathagois, an expression we might here translate as 'a high-minded gentleman' (cf. OPW 371-6): he praises Cleomis of Mytilene because he has provided for the security of the property of the citizens; he has not made any confiscations; and when he has restored exiles he has given them back their property and compensated those who had purchased it.

Another interesting figure, a contemporary of Clearchus, is Euphron of Sicyon, who receives much abuse in our two main sources for the 360s, Xenophon and Diodorus, as having made himself tyrant of Sicyon in 367 by taking the side of the demos against those of the citizens whom Xenophon often describes indifferently as 'the richest' (plousiotaï, HG VII.1.44) or 'the most powerful' (kratiotaï, iii.1) or simply 'the best' (beitotaï, iii.4.8), from whose property he is said to have made widespread confiscations (§ 46; iii.8; Diod. XV.7.0.3). Euphron is also said by Xenophon to have proclaimed that he would set up a constitution under which all would participate 'on equal and similar terms' (eis isois kai homoiois, HG VII.1.45). But, for Xenophon and Diodorus, Euphron is a tyrant, and Xenophon is disgusted at the fact that the Sicyonians, after he had been murdered at Thebes, buried him in their Agora and honoured him as a 'founder of the city' (ft. 12), evidently giving him the cult previously reserved for heroes. (Euphron's grandson, also named Euphron, was specially honoured by the Athenians for his friendship and assistance to Athens in the difficult days of the Lamian war and the oligarchy that followed, for which see Section iii of this chapter and its n.2).

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

When I was a boy [this would be the 430s], being rich was considered so secure and honourable that almost everyone pretended he owned more property than he actually did possess, because he wanted to enjoy the prestige it gave. Now, on the other hand, one has to defend oneself against being rich as if it were the worst of crimes ...; for it has become far more dangerous to give the impression of being well-to-do than to commit open crime; criminals are let off altogether or given trivial punishments, but the rich are ruined utterly. More men have been deprived of their property than have paid the penalty of their misdeeds.

But when we put generalisations of this sort on one side and consider such specific factual evidence as we have, we find that the situation is totally different. For example, we shall not take very seriously the gloomy passage I have just quoted from Isocrates when we discover that the orator himself, although a very rich man by ancient standards, had borne a quite remarkably small share of
state burdens. As I have already indicated, outside Athens the political class struggle in the fourth century often became very acute. Rich and poor would regard each other with bitter hatred, and when a revolution succeeded there would be wholesale executions and banishments, and confiscation of the property of at least the leaders of the opposite party. The programme of Greek revolutionaries seems largely to have centred in two demands: redistribution of land, cancellation of debts (ἐναναδόμασις, χρόνων ἀποκόπη). These twin slogans, characteristic of an impoverished peasantry, had appeared at Athens in the early sixth century, in the time of Solon, as we saw earlier (Section i above). They are not much heard of in fifth-century Greece but became ever more inistent in the fourth. At Athens, where the democracy put the poor in a position to exercise a certain amount of political control and thus to protect themselves in some degree against exploitation and oppression, we scarcely hear of them again after the early sixth century. Elsewhere they became the permanent nightmare of the propertied class. The mid-fourth-century writer Aeneas, generally known as Aeneas Tacticus, who wrote not long after 360 (and who may well be the Arcadian general Aeneas from Symphalaeus mentioned in Xenophon's Helenika), affords some interesting evidence of the fear by the propertied class of revolution prompted by the burden of debt: among the measures he recommends to cities under siege is a reduction or cancellation of interest and even of the principal (XIV. 1-2); and in general he shows a positive obsession with the danger that the city will be betrayed to the enemy by political malcontents within. Sometimes a leading political figure might take up the cause of the poor and put at least part of their programme into effect, at the same time perhaps seizing power himself as a tyrant. (We notice one or two examples of this earlier: Clearchus of Heraclea and Euphron of Sicyon—if indeed Euphron is to be classed as a 'tyrant'). But these explosions were futile: even when they did not result in an irresponsible and ultimately repressive tyranny, they merely effected a temporary levelling, after which the same old process started again, intensified by the rancours of civil war.

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

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

In the early Hellenistic period the lower classes, especially among the city-dwellers (who would naturally find it easier to attend the Assembly), may still have played quite an important part in the life of their city, at least in the older Greek cities of the East as well as in some of those of Greece itself — unfortunately, we have not much information on this point, and much of it is epigraphic and scattered over a wide area and has never been properly collated and analysed. Very soon, however, there developed all over the Greek world a tendency for political power to become entirely concentrated in the hands of the propertied class.

The earlier stages of this transformation are difficult to trace: not much firm evidence survives and it is often capable of more than one interpretation. I shall presently single out three aspects of the process: the growth of royal, magisterial, conciliar or other control over the citizen assemblies; the attachment to magistracies of liturgies (the performance of expensive civic duties); and the gradual destruction of those popular law courts, consisting of panels of dikasts (dikasteria, in which the dikasts were both judges and jury), which had been such an essential feature of Greek democracy, especially in Classical Athens. All these were devices invented for the express purpose of getting round the fact that outright oligarchy, the open limitation of political rights to the propertied few, was still likely to meet with strong resistance from the lower classes, and had been discredited in many places by Alexander’s time by its bad record in practice, notably at Athens. In fourth-century Athens even would-be oligarchs found it politic to pretend that they too wanted democracy, only of course it must be the good old democracy of the good old times, not the vicious contemporary form which led to all sorts of unworthy and wicked men gaining power for their own nefarious ends, and so forth — the odious Isocrates furnishes some excellent examples of this kind of disguised right-wing propaganda, notably in his Areopagitica and his treatise On the Peace.

As I shall not have occasion to describe it elsewhere, I must not omit to mention briefly the destruction of the Athenian democracy in 322 B.C., at the end of the ‘Lamian war’, by Antipater, who may be described as the Macedonian viceroy of Greece. When the Athenians received the news of Alexander’s death (which had occurred at Babylon in June 323), they soon led a widespread Greek revolt, which they themselves referred to proudly as a ‘Hellenic war’, against Macedonian domination; but in 322 they were utterly defeated and compelled to surrender, and the Macedonians turned the constitution of Athens into an oligarchy, limiting the exercise of political rights to the 9,000 citizens (out of 20,000, probably, 21,000) who possessed at least 2,000 drachmae (Diod. XVIII.18.4-5, with Plut., Phoc.27.5; 28.7, on which see n.2 below). The figure of 2,000 drachmae may have been roughly equivalent to the property level that would enable a man to serve as a hoplite. After 322/1 Athens was subjected to a whole series of interventions and constitutional changes and was never able to decide herself to its own destiny for very long. There was a short-lived restoration of democracy under the aegis of the Macedonian regent Polyperchon in 318, but in the following year Antipater’s son Cassander regained power over Athens and installed a less restricted oligarchy, excluding from political rights all those who possessed a property qualification of less than 1,000 drachmae (Diod. XVIII.74.3). At the head of this oligarchy was Demetrius of Phalerum, who was virtually tyrant in the Macedonian interest, having been appointed overseer or superintendent of Athens (probably epimeletes, perhaps epistates) by Cassander under the terms of the treaty made when Athens capitulated to him in 317.2 Pausanias calls Demetrius a tyrannous outright (I.xxv.5-6); according to Plutarch his regime was ‘nominally oligarchical but in reality monarchical’ (Demetr. 10.2). Yet the term oligarchy still had a rather unpleasant sound, and Demetrius himself claimed that he ‘not merely did not destroy the democracy but actually reinforced it’ (Strabo IX.1.20, p.398). There was then, to quote W. S. Ferguson’s Hellenistic Athens (95), ‘a new era of internal and external conflict for Athens, which continued almost without intermission for 46 years. Seven times the government changed hands [in 307, 303, 301, 294, 276, 266, and 261], and on as many occasions the constitution was in some degree altered . . . Four times the institutions were modified, and a new government established, through the violent intervention of a foreign prince [in 303, 294, 276, and 261]. Three
uprisings were bloodily suppressed [302, 295, and 287/6], and the city sustained four blockades [302, 296, 287, and 265-1], all with equal heroism, but twice unsuccessfully [294, and 261]. After further vicissitudes the story virtually comes to an end with the heroic and futile resistance to the Roman general Sulla, which ended with the sack of Athens in March 86 (see Appendix IV, §2, and its n.3 below).

The relation of the Hellenistic kings—or, for that matter, of the Romans at first—to the Greek cities within their realms is hard to define with precision, because each side tended to see the relationship differently, although a king, especially when he needed the support of the cities, was often willing to pander to their 'amour propre' by using the diplomatic terminology they preferred. It was rarely that a king so far forgot himself as to issue commands to a city; he was usually scrupulous to give advice and offer suggestions (Jones, GC AJ 111).

While Alexander the Great was actually in the process of conquering Asia Minor and those of the Aegean islands which had been taken over by the Persians or by pro-Persian parties, he did not hesitate to issue some peremptory orders to the cities; when he discovered that the democrats were in general on his side, while many oligarchs and would-be oligarchs were prepared to fight to the death for Persia, he prescribed democracies everywhere (see my OPW 40 n.76). But since he was 'liberating' the Greek cities of Asia from Persian domination, he was quite prepared, when a city was firmly under his control, to avoid speaking of a 'gift' of freedom and to use a technical term which signified recognition (e.g. apodidmi, 'giving back'; instead of the verb apodidmi or some similar word (see the list at the end of n.12 of Magie, RR AM II.828). The difference between these two formulae emerges best from negotiations in the late 340s between Athens and Philip II of Macedon concerning Halonnesus, which the Athenians refused to accept as a 'gift' from Philip, insisting that it should 'recognise' the island as theirs (Ps.-Dem. VII.2–6) — with the result that Philip kept Halonnesus. The essential thing to notice here is that it lay entirely with Philip to decide whether he should 'give' Halonnesus to Athens or 'recognise' it as hers. Similarly, it was purely a matter for Alexander to decide what formula he would use in regard to the freedom of the Asian cities. He was usually prepared to 'recognise' the freedom of Greek cities he 'liberated' from Persia; but the velvet glove could be stripped off when necessary to reveal the iron hand beneath. When Alexander in 324 issued a decree or edict (diagramma) prescribing the return of exiles he of course had all the Greek cities in mind; but the decree will simply have used the expression, 'I restore' (or, more probably, 'We restore', katagonem, the royal plural; cf. Diod. XVIII.8.4; 56.4; Tod, SGHI II.192.10, 17), without addressing a direct order to the cities, and it was therefore possible for them to pass their own decrees recalling their exiles and to pretend to themselves that it was they who were issuing the orders, even if the mask occasionally slipped, as when the Tegeates referred to 'those whom it pleased the city to restore' in a decree which makes repeated reference to the diagramma of Alexander as something binding on the city (Tod, SGHI II.302, esp. 58-9).

The successors of Alexander behaved towards the cities in whatever ways they thought their own interests dictated; and it is just as mistaken in the case of Alexander to press the use of words like apodidmi as if they had some genuine
to those of some free cities (Jones, CLIE 112, 106, 109). As for the 'federate states' (civitates foederate), they 'differed only in the sanction of their privileges: those of free cities were in theory as well as in fact revocable at will, those of federate, being guaranteed by a sworn instrument, were in theory irrevocable' (ibid. 115). But 'in effect the difference was not very great. For free cities were not arbitrarily degraded and if a federate city offended Rome it could generally be found that it had violated the terms of its foedus, which thereupon became void' (Jones, GCAJ 117). And although federate states continued occasionally to be created as late as the early Principate, Suetonius mentions that Augustus deprived of their liberty several cities which were federate but were 'heading for ruin through their lawlessness' (Aug. 47) — in other words, as Jones puts it, 'internal disorders were a good enough excuse for cancelling a foedus' (GCAJ 131, cf. 132). An apt illustration of the Roman attitude to civitates foederate much weaker than themselves is the statement of Appius Claudius to the Achaean League in 184 B.C., reported by Livy (XXXIX.37.19): he strongly advised them, he said, to ingratiate themselves with Rome 'while they still had the power to do so of their own free will' (voluntate sua facere); the alternative was that they would soon have to do as they were told, against their will (inviti et coacti). The Achaenae, needless to say, were afraid to disobey, and they merely allowed themselves the luxury of a 'general groaning' (omnia gemitus: id. 20).

In Jones's great work on the Greek city in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, from which I have already quoted, we read that 'whatever devices the kings might invent to secure their control over the cities, there was one which they could not use, the formal limitation of political power to a small class; ... the kings felt obliged to support democracy in the cities and were thus unable to create and effectively support monarchist parties which should rule in their interest; the few attempts made notably by Antipater and Cassander in 322 BC, to establish oligarchies of their supporters roused such violent discontent that this policy became utterly discredited' (GCAJ 157-60, 111). Apart from the short-lived oligarchies just mentioned, Jones could produce only one exception to his rule: Cyrene, to which the first Ptolemy dictated a moderately oligarchical constitution (replacing a more extreme oligarchy in the last quarter of the fourth century, perhaps in 322 BC). But I think there are likely to have been other exceptions. For instance, in an inscription of Ptolemaios in Upper Egypt, of the third century B.C., we hear that disorders had occurred at meetings of the Council and Assembly, especially at the elections of magistrates; and with a view to remedying this situation the decree (of Council and Demos) proceeds to restrict the choice of those eligible for the Council and the courts of law to a select list of epistlele andres (GIGS 48, 9-11, 13-16). I find it hard to believe that the reigning Ptolemy had not intervened on this occasion, even if he tactfully left it to the organs of city government to provide against repetition of the disturbances (and cf. Jones, GCAJ 104). Also, it is only fair to mention that in many poleis of the newly hellenised East, unlike Old Greece (and the long-settled Greek fringe of Asia Minor), the citizens themselves were often an exclusive oligarchy among the permanent free inhabitants. It is part of the new population (essentially the poorer classes) being excluded from citizenship (see Jones, GCAJ 160-1, with 335 nn. 10-11).

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

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

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

To the most important magistracies should be attached liturgies, in order that the common people may be willing to sequences in their own election from office and may sympathise with those who have to pay so high a price for the privilege. Those who enter into office may also be reasonably expected to offer magnificent sacrifices and to erect some public building, so that the common people, participating in the feasts and seeing their city embellished, with offering and banquets, may readily tolerate a continuance of this constitution [oligarchy]. The leading citizens, too, will have visible memorials of their own expenditure. But this is not the policy pursued by oligarchs today — they do the very opposite: they cover profit as well as honour (Pol. VI.7, 1321b1-24).
The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World

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

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

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

It was only in the Roman period, however, that the last remaining vestiges of democracy were gradually stamped out of the Greek cities. (The evidence for this is very fragmentary and scattered, and I can do no more here than give an oversimplified outline.) It was the regular aim of the Romans to place the government of provincial cities under the sole control (subject of course to the Roman governor) of the property classes. This was effected in various ways, partly by making constitutional changes, but even more by giving steady support to the rich and encouraging them to assume and retain control of local political life, as of course they were only too ready to do. Livy puts it perfectly in a nutshell, in a speech he gives to Nabis, the tyrant of Sparta, in 195 B.C., which almost certainly derives from Livy’s main source for this period, Polybius. Addressing the Roman general, T. Quinctius Flamininus, Nabis says, ‘Your [the Romans] wish that is a few should excel in wealth, and that the common people should be subject to them’ (paucos excetere opibus, plebem subiectam esse illis, multis, XXXIV. xxxvi.17). And, as Plutarch said in the reign of Trajan, the Romans were ‘very eager to promote the political interests of their friends (Mor. 814c). We know enough about this process to be confident of its general outlines, but the particulars are difficult to display in a palatable shape for the general reader, even in summary form, and I have therefore relegated the details to Appendix IV. I will refer at this point only to a single series of incidents, from one small town in the northern Peloponnesian, which may not be in themselves at all typical of what happened in old Greece after its final conquest by Rome in 146 B.C. (‘typical’, in the sense that we might expect many similar occurrences elsewhere), but which certainly brings out very well the significance of the Roman conquest and the effect this could have upon the class struggle in Greek cities.

In the Achaean town of Dyne, probably in 116-114 B.C., there was a revolution, evidently caused in part by the burden of debts, for it began with the burning of the public archives and the cancellation of debts and of other contracts. This was suppressed, with or without the aid of the Roman proconsul of Macedonia (who now had a general oversight of Greece, not yet organised as a separate province); two of the revolutionary leaders were immediately condemned to death by the proconsl and another was sent to Rome for trial. Our only evidence for these events is an inscription recording a letter of the proconsul, Q. Fabius Maximus, to the city of Dyne, which complains bitterly of ‘disorder (tarache), a disregard of contractual obligations and cancellation of debts’ (chrēskopia), and twice speaks of the revolutionary legislation as carried ‘in violation of the constitution given to the Achaenans by the Romans’ – a reference to the oligarchies imposed by the Roman general L. Mummius in various parts of central Greece and the Peloponnesus, when in 146 he had crushed the revolt of the Achaenans and their allies. Much more often, I imagine, any local disturbance would be nipped in the bud by the action of the city magistrates themselves, who would usually be anxious to avoid attracting the attention of the provincial governor by making an appeal to him. Thus we find an inscription of Cibyra (on the borders of Phrygia and Caria in the province of Asia), apparently of the second quarter of the first century of the Christian era, honouring a conspicuously wealthy citizen named Q. Veranius Philagrus who, after the serious earthquake of A.D. 23, had not only reclaimed for the city 107 public slaves who had somehow escaped from their condition (perhaps at the time of the earthquake), but had also suppressed a great conspiracy which was
IV.914.5-6, 9-10).

Ekklesiaia all, for they would come to no good conclusions and they would often create disturbances (LII.xxx.2). I agree with Jones (GCAJ 340 n.42) that this is 'not true even of his [Dio's] own day but must represent the policy which he himself would have favoured'. We have little explicit evidence for constitutional changes brought about directly or indirectly by Roman action; but we can trace the imposition – in Greece itself in the second century B.C., and later elsewhere – of property qualifications for at any rate magistracies and membership of the Council, and in some cases the courts, if not for access to the Assembly (see Appendix IV below, § 2); the gradual turning of Councils (bouloi) into little models of the Roman Senate, with ex-magistrates having life membership, and the exercise of such control over the popular Assemblies that by slow degrees they eventually died out entirely. By at any rate the end of the second century of the Christian era the Assemblies of the Greek cities had either ceased to meet or at least lost all effective power, and the Councils, which had originally been chosen annually (as a rule) from the whole body of citizens or at least a large part of it, had been transformed into permanent, largely hereditary, and more or less self-perpetuating bodies, sometimes enrolled by censors chosen by and from their own number, the counsellors (boulleutai, decuriones in Latin) being drawn only from the wealthier citizens and, with their families, eventually forming the privileged curial order, by which and from which in practice all magistrates were chosen. (I shall have more to say about the curial order in VIII.i and ii below.) Paulus, the Severan jurist, can say that non-decurions (plebii) are excluded from local magistracies, because they are debarred from decurionum honoribus, the offices open only to decurions (Dig. L.iii.7.2). He is speaking specifically of the duumvirate, the principal magistracy in very many towns of the Roman West, but his statement would apply equally, mutatis mutandis, to Greek cities. And of course a city Council might suffer interference from the provincial governor in its choice of magistrates. Legal texts speak of a Roman governor giving directions to a local Council (ordo) to elect a certain man as a magistrate or to confer on him some office or liturgy (honor vel munus: Ulpian, in Dig. XLIX.iv.1.3); and it is contemplated that the governor may himself be present at the meeting of the Council in question (id. 4). A proconsul, says Ulpian elsewhere, ought not to agree to the election of a duumvir by mere 'low-class clamour' (vocibus populairum), in place of the regular legal procedure (Dig. XLIX.i.12).

I know of no detailed description of this process which to my mind sufficiently brings out its elaborate, purposive character. The 'Great' pupils I used to teach at Oxford, who study one period of Greek history and one of Roman, with quite a large gap in between, were often puzzled by the way in which Greek democracy, so vigorous in the fifth century and even in the fourth, has by the beginning of the Roman Principate become but a shadow of its former self. The books sometimes note this as a fact in passing, but most of them make no attempt to supply an explanation of it, and when it is noticed at all it tends to be recorded as something that 'just happened'. Characteristic is the statement of Hugh Last, in CAH XI.458-9: 'In the East democracy had been in decline even before Rome came to throw her influence on the side of the more substantial elements, and in Rome itself circumstances had combined to make oligarchy the one possible alternative to monarchy. In the municipalities the same forces were at work ...' Rome showed no enthusiasm for democracy. 'I on the other hand would see the whole process as part of the class struggle on the political plane: the Greek propertied classes, with the assistance first of their Macedonian overlords and then of their Roman masters, gradually undermined and in the end entirely destroyed Greek democracy, which before the end of the Principate had become extinct. Of course the suppression of Greek democracy was gratifying to the Romans; but it is clear that the Greek propertied classes did not merely acquiesce in the process: they assisted in it – and no wonder, because they themselves, after the Romans, were the chief beneficiaries of the system. An important letter of Cicero's congratulates his brother Quintus because he has made sure, during his government of the province of Asia, that the municipalities have been administered by the deliberations of the leading men, the optimates (Ad Q.Jr. I.1 25; cf. De rep. II.39, and passages from the Pro Flacco quoted below). Pliny the Younger, writing in c. A.D. 107-8 to his friend Caelcetrius Tiro, who was then proconsul of Baetica (southern Spain), reminds him of the necessity to preserve distinctions of rank and dignity (disrimina ordinum dignitatumque). 'Nothing,' he declares, 'is more characteristic of a Roman perversity, 'is more marked in the inequality' (Ep. IX.v.1.3; cf. II.xii.5). Doubtless Pliny was familiar with the curious oligarchical argument for the superiority of 'geometrical' over 'arithmetical' proportion, which was known to Cicero (see VII.i below & its nn 10-11). The 'greatest and most influential men of every city' are said by Aelius Aristides, in the mid-second century, to act as guards of their native places for the Romans, making it unnecessary for them to be garrisoned (Onf. XXVI.64). Those of the principal propertied families of the Greek world who were prepared to accept Roman domination wholeheartedly and co-operate with their masters sometimes flourished remarkably. In Asia, with its great natural wealth, they might become immensely rich and aspire to membership of the imperial nobility, the Roman Senate (cf. III.ii above). Even in Old Greece, with its comparatively lack of resources, they might at least achieve great prestige locally by holding office through several generations, like the four leading families of Roman Athens recently studied by Michael Woloch, who held a high proportion of the most important magistracies (as well as some major priesthoods) in the period 96-161; and occasionally they might eventually enter the senatorial class, like the family of Flavius from the insignificant little city of Theopæ in Bœotia, whose history, from the third century B.C. to the third of our era has been ably reconstructed by C. P. Jones. A man who could claim to have expended much of his fortune for the benefit of his city (as some did, eager for the prestige it could bring) might sometimes receive from the city a real 'golden handshake': in the reign of Domitian, 40,000 drachmæs/decimari (nearly 7 talents) were given to Julius Piso by a decision of the Council and Assembly of Amium, on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Trajan had issued instructions to Pliny, as his special governor of Bithynia-Pontus, forbidding such gifts; but he gave a special exemption to Piso.
because his present had been made to him more than twenty years earlier (Pliny, Ep. X, 110-111). And at about the end of the third century the lawyer Hermogenian regarded it as settled law that pensions (alimenta) might be decreed to ruined councillors, especially if they had 'exhausted their patrimony through munificence towards their native place' (Dig. L. i.8) — a claim which was by no means infrequent (see Dio Chrys. XLVI.3 etc.).

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

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

V. The class struggle on the political plane (iii)

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

'Nowadays, when the affairs of the cities do not include leadership in war, or the overthrow of tyrannies, or the making of alliances, what opening for a conspicuous and splendid career could one find?' Well, reflects Plutarch, 'there remain public lawsuits and embassies to an emperor, which require a man of ardent temperament and one with courage and intelligence!' (805ab). He suggests various ways of doing good turns to friends (809a). He protests against being laughed at when he is seen (as he says he often may be) supervising the measuring of tiles or the transport of concrete or stones, as a magistrate of his native town of Chaeronea (811bc). And then he really comes to the point: 'When you take up some magistracy,' he says, 'you must say to yourself, "You who rule are a subject, and the state you rule is dominated by proconsuls, the agents of Caesar", . . . whose boots you see above your head. You should imitate those actors who . . . listen to the prompter and do not take liberties with rhythms and metres beyond those permitted by those in authority over them, for a failure in your part now brings not just hissing or mockery or jeering, but many have experienced "the terrible avenger: the axe that cleaves the neck" (a quotation from some unidentified Greek tragedy), and others have been exiled to islands (813def). Let others do their rabble-rousing with the common herd. Plutarch advises, "stupidly advocating imitation of the deeds and designs of those actors of their ancestors, which are out of proportion with present opportunities and conditions" (814a). "Leave it to the schools of the Sophists to praise Marathon and the Eurymedon and Platea and all the other examples which make the masses swell with pride and prance" (814bc). 'The politician should not only show himself and his state blameless towards our rulers; he should also have some friend among those men of the greatest influence, as a firm bulwark of his administration, for the Romans themselves are very eager to promote the political interests of their friends' (814c). Plutarch is scornful about the highly profitable procuratorships and provincial governorships in pursuit of which most men in public life grow old at the doors of other men's houses, neglecting their own affairs' (814d). He insists that the politician, while making his native land amenable to its rulers, ought not to humble it unnecessarily, 'or, when the leg has been fettered, go on to place the neck under the yoke, as some do when they refer everything, great or small, to our rulers, and thus bring the reproach of slavery upon us, or rather, altogether destroy its constitutional government, making it dazed and timid and powerless in everything' (814ef). Those who invite the rulers' decision on every decree or meeting or privilege or administrative act are obliging their rulers to become their masters [depotai] more than they themselves wish to be: the principal cause of this is the greed and contentiousness of the leading men, who . . . call in their superiors, and as a result the Council and Assembly and courts and every magistracy lose their authority. One should placate the ordinary citizens by offering them equality and the powerful by corresponding concessions, and thus control affairs within the constitution and dispose of difficulties' (814f-5b). 'The statesman will not allow to the common people any high-handed treatment of the citizens or any confiscation of the property of others or distribution of public funds, but will firmly
content aspirations of that sort with persuasion, instruction and threats — although
harmless expenditures may on occasion be permitted' (818cd). Plutarch proceeds
to cite some instructive precedents for the making of concessions to the people
to divert their feelings into harmless channels (818de, cf. 818b). One remembers
here that Pliny the Younger, writing to a friend in 107, describes a certain
leading citizen of Ephesus, Claudius Aristion, as *innux ius popularis*, which
should perhaps be translated 'inclined towards the common people, but harm-
lessly so' (Ep. VI.xxxi.3). Above all, says Plutarch a little later, civil strife *(statis)*
must never be allowed to occur: its prevention should be regarded as the greatest
and noblest function of statesmanship (824bc). After all, he goes on, war has
been done away with, and 'of liberty the common people have as much as our
rulers grant them; and perhaps more would not be better for them' (824c).
The wise statesman will aim at bringing about concord and friendship *(homonoian . . .
kai philian)*; he 'will lay stress on the weakness of Greek affairs, in which it is
better for prudent men to accept one benefit: to live quietly and in harmony,
since Fortune has left us no prize to compete for . . . What sort of power is it
which a small edict of a proconsul may abolish or transfer to someone else, and
which, even if it should last, has nothing worthy of enthusiasm?' (824def).

It is anything but an inspiring picture. Not that Plutarch and his like were at all
basically dissatisfied with Roman rule:26 the Greek propertied class had greatly
benefited from it politically, when everything is taken into account (cf. VI.iv-vi
below). They had even managed to preserve most of the old respect, if with
the loss of some of the nobler qualities of the Classical period.

As Rostovtzeff and others have seen,27 there is an interesting correspondence
between the work of Plutarch which I have just been discussing and certain
speeches delivered by Dio Chrysostom,28 mainly in the last decades of the first
century and the first decade or so of the second. Particularly striking are Dio's
advice to his native city (Prusa in Bithynia, north-west Asia Minor) to give up
its futile quarrels with its neighbours, 'for leadership and power are vested in
others' (meaning of course the Romans); and his apt comparison of such
squabbles with 'the strife of fellow-slaves *(homodoules)* with one another for
glory and precedence' (Dio XXXIV.48, 51). Dio could warn his fellow-citizens
to be particularly careful not to give offence to the neighbouring city of
Apamea, a Roman citizen colony, which, as long as it behaves itself, he says, can
enjoy prestige and influence *(timen tina kai dynamin)* with the proconsuls
(of Bithynia: XL.22; cf. XLI.9). Even the status of a 'free city' was a very precarious
one and might be lost by some act to which the Roman government objected
(see below and n.23).

It seems likely, from some of the passages quoted above from Cicero's *Pro
Flacco* and similar evidence, that as late as the mid-first century B.C. the poorer
classes among the citizen population of a Greek democracy might derive some
protection against exploitation and oppression by the rich from the control they
could exercise on occasion over their popular Assembly — in which, so long as
there was no property-qualification for the exercise of basic political rights, they
would form a majority if enough of them could manage to attend. The local
notables, however, could normally rely on receiving Roman support, and if an
Assembly were driven by exceptional circumstances to act too strongly against
their (or the Romans') interests, the result might be what Plutarch calls 'a small
edict of a proconsul', inflicting a penalty on the city (see above, and Appendix IV
below, § 3B). And if the people dared to come together in a spontaneous
Assembly, like the Ephesians who gathered in tumult to defend their precious
goddess Artemis against St. Paul (and are said to have shouted their rhythmic
civic slogan for a whole two hours), the city might well be punished by the
proconsul, as the town clerk contemplated on that occasion (Acts XIX.21-41,
esp. 40). This might involve withdrawal of the right to hold Assemblies (see Dio
Chrys. XLVIII., or, in the case of a 'free city', the cancellation of that status — a
step of which we know several examples,29 and which Augustus (as we saw
carlier) is said by Suetonius (Aug. 47) to have taken even in regard to cities which
were actually *civitates foederatae*. 'Nothing in the cities escapes the notice of
the provincial governors,' remarked Dio of Prusa at the end of one of his speeches
(XLV.I.14), delivered perhaps in the 70s, before the Assembly of his home city,
when a band of his fellow-citizens had threatened to burn down his house and
stone him, in the belief that he was partly to blame for a grain shortage (cf.
below). It is interesting, by the way, to notice the threatened resort to *lynch
law*, which indeed we find at intervals throughout the period of Roman rule in
the Greek world, even in the Later Empire, when there are some striking
examples of murderous riots, usually occurring as a result of famines, although
in the fourth century onwards it is often Christian fanaticism which is re-
 sponsible.30 (I shall return presently to the subject of riots.)

By the age of Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch the Greek popular Assemblies,
the very nerve-centre of Classical Greek democracy, were already in full decay,
although some of them still met and might even occasionally discuss important
matters, as is evident from the works of Dio and Plutarch themselves. Gradually,
however, they died out altogether, as their functions became too trivial to be
worth preserving. There is a great deal of scattered evidence of general As-
semblies continuing to function in Greek cities well into the third century, but by
then it is never possible to detect evidence that they are acting with any
independence, let alone deciding policy. One of the latest decrees that have
survived at any length, that passed at Athens in c. 230 in honour of M. Ulpius
Eubius Lurus (and first published in 1941), records the making of a manual
vote for and against the resolution; but the issue was entirely non-contentious,
for the vote was unanimous — and no wonder, for Eubius, a man of consular
rank, had given the city 250,000 drachmai (= £5 1 million) and much free
wheat during a famine.31 I know of no recent general discussion of the evidence
for the functioning of Greek Assemblies in the Roman period, a subject well
worth studying in detail.

Curiously enough, we happen to know from an edict of Constantine that in
Roman Africa the elections of city magistrates were still being ratified by
popular vote — no doubt a pure formality — as late as the 320s (CTH XII v.1). Far
more characteristic of the whole Graeco-Roman world by the late third century
is the situation we see depicted in an imperial letter (in Latin, and probably of
the time of Diocletian, A.D. 284 E.) regarding the raising of Tymandus in Pisidia
(southern Asia Minor) from the rank of village to that of city (FIRA 1.1545-S,
no. 92 = MAMA IV.236 = ILS 6090). Great emphasis is placed on an assurance
given by the inhabitants that they will be able to provide a sufficient supply of
decurions (town councillors), and reference is made to the fact that they will

V. The class struggle on the political plane

(iii)

...
now have the ‘right of meeting in council’ (oomedēs in curiam) and of passing decrees etc., and will have to create magistrates, armies and questors – there is no hint anywhere of a general Assembly. Well over a century earlier, in A.D. 158, a recently discovered letter of the Emperor Antoninus Pius to a city (perhaps Parthicopolis) in the Strymon valley in the province of Macedonia, at the site of the modern Sandanski in Bulgaria, had authorised a Council of 80 members, emphasizing the dignity or repute (axios) which the citizens would derive from the size of such a Council – which, incidentally, seems to have been below rather than above average size (IG. Bulg. IV. 2263). With one possible exception, from Pisidian Antioch (noticed in Appendix IV below, near the end of §38), the last meeting I have been able to discover of the public Assembly of a Greek city of which we have any detailed record took place within a few years either side of A.D. 300 at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt – an area where, of course, proper city life never developed in the way it did in most of the Greek world. We happen to possess part of the shorthand record of this meeting, which graphically conveys the utter futility of the political life of the cities under the Later Roman Empire. The people, for some reason which is not apparent, are bent on passing a decree that very day in honour of Dioscorus, their Prytanis (the Chairman of the Town Council, we might call him), during a visit from the provincial governor and the principal financial officer of the province, the Katholikos. This is the record (which I have abbreviated slightly), consisting of little more than acclamations (P. Oxy. 1444 = Hunt and Edgar. SP II. 1444-7, no. 239):

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

As part of the general decline of democracy during the Hellenistic period, the popular courts, like the Assemblies, evidently came more and more into the hands of the propertied class, although it is rare for us to be able to find any such specific evidence as that which I quoted above from a third-century inscription from Ptolemais in Egypt (OGIS 48), confining the choice of dicasts, as of councillors, to a chosen few. In the absence of sufficient evidence (which I
believe does not exist) I would assume both that the participation of the poorer citizens in such dicastic courts as continued to exist became increasingly rare, and that in many cities legal cases came to be tried more and more extensively by small boards of magistrates, even where words like dikasterion continued to be used, as they did generally.

I agree with Jones that in the sphere of jurisdiction the Romans 'interfered far more systematically than had the kings' (GCAJ 121-3, cf. 119). During the Republic and early Principate different rules obtained in different provinces, and moreover the position of an individual city might vary to some extent according to whether or not it was a 'free' or 'free and federate' state (but see above for the precarious nature of these statuses, especially the former). Our best information during the Republican period is from Sicily (ibid. 121-2, and see Appendix IV below, § 1 ad fin.). We also know something of the position in Cyrenaica in the early Principate (see Appendix IV, § 3). In both provinces we find the collective body of resident Romans (sorumus civium Romanorum, of whom I shall have more to say in Appendix IV) providing judges for lawsuits. From the language used by Cicero in letters written while he was governing the province of Cilicia in 51-50 B.C., pluming himself on his generosity in allowing the Greeks to try their own cases, it seems that the cities of that province had no guaranteed constitutional rights of jurisdiction, and that the position was probably the same in the province of Asia (Cic., Ad Att. vii.4; 15.4). Otherwise, most of our evidence comes from documents giving special privileges, including resort to Roman courts, to Greeks who were prominent pro-Romans, such as Asclepiades of Clazomenae and others in 78 B.C. and Sceicus of Rhousus in 41. 32 I believe that Jones may well be right (at any rate for some areas) in thinking it 'possible that the Romans abolished the jury system, which was already moribund, and substituted for it in the cities an arrangement like their own civil procedure, whereby a judge was appointed to try each case, perhaps by the local magistrates' (GCAJ 123). At any rate, I can see no sign of dicastic courts still functioning widely, although they continued for a time at Rhodes and perhaps a few other places (see below).

In the Principate interference with Greek judicial autonomy was intensified, with several 'free cities' losing their privileged status; and we now begin to find specific mention of the transfer of cases to the emperor's court, 33 a practice which became more and more widespread. Sometimes we find the court of the provincial governor mentioned, 34 and sometimes we may suspect that our source is referring to the governor's court rather than that of the city (see perhaps Plut., Mor. 805ab). Even if there is a clear reference to a city court, 35 we can hardly ever be sure that the case will be tried by any larger body than a board of magistrates or a panel of judges drawn from the more well-to-do citizens, 36 and this is true, unfortunately, even in examples where the word dikasterion is used. 37 In particular, we find many times such expression as metapempton dikasterion, in the sense of a small panel of judges (one or more) sent by one city to try legal cases in another, by special request. 38 I think it is significant when we find Hadrian's well-known law regulating the production of olive oil in Attica decreeing that certain offenders are to be prosecuted in the Athenian Assembly (see n.34 again) - the Assembly still existed, but the old Athenian dikasteria had presumably disappeared entirely by now (cf. Appendix IV below, § 2). As far as
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most vigorous elements in the empire would tend to live by brigandage (LII.xxvii.3-5). When Fronto thought he was going to become proconsul of a relatively peaceful province, Asia, in c. 155, one of the first things he did was to send to Mauretania, on the other side of the empire, for a man he happened to know, Julius Senex, who was particularly skilled at dealing with brigands or bandits, *latro* in *Dig. I.xviii. 13.pr.*, about the importance to a *libertus* of being treated as an accomplice in brigandage (ibid. xxxi. 1). He could not have been much more like what we should call social revolutionaries, with at least the rudiments of an ideology different from that of the ruling class of their day; a good example is the Italian Bulla, in the Severan period (see VIII.iii below). It is salutary to recall that in the series of 'suppression' and 'encirclement' campaigns waged by the Kuomintang against the Chinese Communists from 1927 onwards the term regularly applied to the Communists by the government was 'bandits'. In VIII.iii below I quote the statement of Ulpian, which contains a series of animadversions, sometimes hard to interpret, on the public behaviour of the citizens (Orat. XXXII, passim, esp. 4, 25-32, 33, 35, 41-2, 51-2, 55: for the date, see VIII.iii n.1 below).

One of the last references, during the period covered by this book, to a popular movement inside a major city is made by the historian Evagrius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (completed in 594), concerning the situation at Antioch in 573, in the reign of Justin II, when a Persian army under a commander called MacMullen, *ERO* ch. vi and Appendix B, and Léa Flam-Zuckermann, in an article in *Latinus* (1970). Doubtless most of those called brigands in antiquity were indeed essentially robbers, who had no wish to change the social order and were concerned only with their own personal advantage. Some, however, may well have been much more like what we should call social revolutionaries, with

The poor townsman, or the peasant who lived near enough to a city, had more effective means of making his protests known: he could riot, or, if his city was large enough to have a hippodrome (circus), an amphitheatre or a substantial theatre, he might be able to organise a demonstration there. I need say nothing here about the very marked quasi-political role played during the Principate and the Later Empire by demonstrations in these places of public entertainment, sometimes in the very presence of the emperor himself, as this subject has been admirably dealt with in the Inaugural Lecture by Alan Cameron as Professor of Latin at King's College London in 1973, entitled *Bread and Circuses: the Roman Emperor and his People*, and also — up to a point — in his book, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (1976). Such demonstrations could often take place, of course, quite apart from the presence of the emperor or even the provincial governor. Those organised (roughly from the mid-fifth century to the reign of Theodosius II) by the circus factions, the 'Blues' and 'Greens' mainly, were often futile affairs, sometimes apparently no more 'political' in intent than an outbreak of 'aggro' at a modern football match, for the factions as such had no specifically political characteristics — although I believe they may have acquired a political significance more often than Cameron would allow: this question, for me, remains open. 'Outright abuse of an emperor in the circus in particular, was not unknown. John the Lydian preserves an exceptionally entertaining example: a lampoon in four elegiac couples, posted up in the hippodrome at Constantineople in the early years of the sixth century (c. 510-15), attacking the Emperor Anastasius at a time when his financial policy was being carried out through Marinus the Syrian, and indeed was probably inspired by Marinus, who was praetorian prefect of the East from 512 to perhaps 515. Anastasius is named; he is addressed as *basileus kosmophoros*, 'World-destroying emperor'; he is accused of 'money-grubbing' (*philochremysyn*); Marinus is named only as Scylla to his Charbdys (De Magistr. III.46). The most famous example of a major disturbance arising out of the games is the so-called 'Nika Riot' at Constantineople in 532: it began as a demonstration against certain oppressive officials, developed into a revolution against the Emperor Justinian, and ended in a frightful massacre by Belisarius and Mundus and their 'barbarian' troops of vast numbers of the common people, estimated by even the most conservative of the sources — no doubt with the usual exaggeration — at thirty to thirty-five thousand (see e.g. Stein, *HBE* II.449-56).

That, one cannot help remarking, is the sort of price that may have to be paid for the total suppression of proper democratic rights. Occasionally we hear of milder demonstrations, like the one at Alexandria mentioned by Philo, who says he saw an audience rising to its feet and shouting with enthusiasm at the mention of 'the name of freedom' in the *Auge*, a play of Euripides now lost to us (*Quod omn. prob. lib. 141*). That remark of Philo's may make us think of some passages in Dio Chrysostom's insufferably verbose speech to the Alexandrians, which contains a series of animadversions, sometimes hard to interpret, on the public behaviour of the citizens (*Orat. XXXII, passim, esp. 4, 25-32, 33, 35, 41-2, 51-2, 55: for the date, see VIII.iii n.1 below).*
add that there is but a brief and vague account of these events in Ammianus, who, although one of the best historians the ancient world produced, was himself a member of the propertied class of Antioch and sympathised strongly with the councillors. Ammianus merely tells us disparagingly that Julian, without good reason and out of zest for popularity, tried to lower prices, ‘a thing which sometimes, when not done in a fitting manner, is apt to produce scarcity and famine’ (XXII.xiv.1; cf. XIV.vii.2) – Ammianus was evidently what would be regarded today in the capitalist world as an orthodox economist! But he does give us rather more details concerning a somewhat similar situation at Antioch in 354 (XIV.vii.2,5-6). The Caesar Gallus, who was ruling the East, realised that a corn shortage was at hand and advised the councillors of Antioch to fix a lower price – inopportune, as Ammianus believed (§ 2, vilitatem intempestivam). The councillors of course objected, whereupon Gallus ordered the execution of their leading members, some of whom were put to death (Liban., Orat. 1.96), although the majority were saved by the intervention of Honoratus, the Comes Orientis. The common people begged the Caesar to help them. According to Ammianus, Gallus virtually accused Theophilus, the provincial governor (consulans) of Syria, of being responsible for the crisis, he was torn to pieces by the crowd, and the people also burnt down the house of a rich Antiochene, Eubulus – who, as we happen to know from Libanius, only just escapedstoning (Orat. 1.103). The way the riot is referred to by Julian (Misop. 363c, 370c), and the failure of the authorities to take any very adverse measures (except against a few humble people), suggest that Theophilus and Eubulus between them had perhaps been conspicuously responsible for allowing the threat of famine to develop. Thus was a rough sort of justice sometimes done in the Later Empire – but at what a cost!

Justice through ordinary channels was virtually out of the question for the poor man by now, unless of course he could obtain the help of some powerful protector, at a price. In the way I have described elsewhere (SVP) and in IV.ii above. Emperors like Julian, and some imperial officials, might be well-intentioned, but if so they were likely to be defeated by the intrigues of the dynatoi or potentieri, the great landlords. Even the autocratic Justianin, in a rescript dealing with a case of oppression by a government official in Egypt, which I described in IV.ii above, could say apologetically, ‘The intrigues of Theodosius proved stronger than our commands’ (P. Caiio Mass. 1.67024.15-17). In a constitution of 336 the same emperor complains that in Cappadocia (central Asia Minor) many small possessions and even the greater part of the imperial estates have been appropriated by the great landowners, ‘and no one has

The Greek term demokratia became steadily more devalued during the process
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I have been describing it as possible to distinguish two phases in this development: the first began quite early in the Hellenistic period; the second is not evidenced (as far as I know) until the mid-second century of the Christian era and may not have evolved much earlier than that. During the third and second centuries B.C., *demokratia* increasingly came to signify no more than an internally self-governing republic, whether democratic or oligarchic, and it could be used merely for the very limited degree of autonomy accorded by Rome to complacent Greek cities, or to celebrate a restoration of constitutional republican government. The best early illustration of this that I can find is the bilingual dedication by the Lycian League to Capitoline Jupiter at Rome, probably of the 160s B.C. (IGR R 1.61). The Lycians themselves refer to Greece in the restoration of their 'ancestral democracy' (*he patris demokratia*), equating it in Latin with their 'ancestors' liberty' (*maiorum libertas*). By the last century B.C. this sense of *demokratia* seems to have become the standard one. The Romans, of course, had no word of their own for 'democracy' and never resorted to a transliteration of the Greek word. When Cicero, for example, is speaking in his *De republica* of democracy in the original Greek sense, he usually substitutes for *demokratia* either *liber populi* or *just populus* (e.g. *LG* 1.42-9; 53, 55, 60; cf. 62-5), where Cicero is partly paraphrasing Plato, *Rep*. VIII.502a ff.), and on one occasion he says that a state in which the people are all-powerful is called a *citizens popularis* (L.42). The original meaning of *demokratia* is still occasionally found in Greek until well into the Principate, although this is more usually expressed not by the same word, such as *olokratia* ('mob-rule').

I do not know when the Greek word *demokratia* was first used for the constitution of the Roman Republic, but it seems likely that this happened by the last century B.C., or anyway by the first century of our era, when the *demokratia* of the Republic could be contrasted with the *monarchia* of the Principate. This was a perfectly natural usage, given the previous Hellenistic developments: it was simply an application to Rome of the terminology already in use for Greek cities. The earliest texts I happen to know in which the Roman Republic is clearly seen by an author writing in Greek as a *demokratia* are of the late first century: Josephus, *AJ* XIX.162, 167, and Plutarch, *Galba* 22.12. Josephus tells us that the soldiers who made Claudius emperor on the assassination of Caligula did so because they realised that a *demokratia* (which here can only mean a restoration of the Republic) could never have sufficient control of the great affairs of state, and anyway would not be favourable to themselves (id. 162). And Plutarch says that the oaths sworn to Vitellius as emperor in 69 by the army in Upper Germany were given in breach of oaths sworn but a short time before to the Senate — in fact, to the 'Senate and People of Rome' (22.4), which Plutarch describes as *demokratia*. One could certainly translate *demokratia* here 'republican', especially since the very giving of those oaths had been an open repudiation of the existing emperor, Galba, if not of the Principate itself. Greek writers of the first, second and third centuries commonly refer to the Roman Republic as *demokratia*, in contrast with the Principate, which is almost always an outright *monarchia* (id. VI.11 below). Occasionally they apply to the Republic some other term than *demokratia*. For Strabo, in a passage written early in the reign of Tiberius (before the death of Germanicus in 19), the Republican constitution was a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy (politism...
discussion by historians of the later uses of the word démokratia, perhaps because it occurs in a work of much greater literary than historical interest: the last surviving chapter of the partly preserved treatise in Greek, *On the sublime* (Peri hypous, or *De sublime*), a piece of literary criticism which used to be attributed to 'Longinus' or 'Dionysius' (and often to Cassius Longinus in the mid-third century) but is now generally agreed to be the work of an otherwise unknown author, writing in one of the first three centuries and perhaps most probably in the first, or the first half of the second. The writer states a problem put to him by 'a certain philosopher', who may of course be a creature of his own imagination -- a common literary device. The 'philosopher' stresses the world-wide dearth of great literature, and asks whether it is right to accept 'the oft-repeated view [ekéno to thyloumenon] that démokratia is the effective nurse of great achievements [or, 'of great men'], and that literary genius flourished almost exclusively under it and perished with it. Démokratia is then virtually equated with freedom (eleutheria) and contrasted with the 'slavery' which is represented as universally prevailing (44.1-3). By 'slavery', of course, political subjection is meant; and it is described as 'douleia', an adjective I find puzzling: is it 'legalised, legal, legitimate', or 'deserved, justified', or 'just'? (I think that perhaps 'deserved [or 'just'] political subjection' gives the best sense.) The reply by the author of the treatise is bitterly disappointing: it hardly notices the 'philosopher's' statement and, in a very traditional manner, characteristic of the Stoics among others, attributes the prevailing 'frivolity' (rhathymia) to avarice and the pursuit of pleasure, and all the evils accompanying such qualities (44.6-11).

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

Two very puzzling references to démokratiai (in the plural), for which I have never been able to find a parallel, or an explanation, occur in the works of Hippolytus, Pope (or Antipope) of Rome and martyr: one is in section 27 of that curious work, *On the Antichrist*, which seems to have been written very near the year 200, and the other is in a slightly later work, the *Commentary on Daniel* II.xii.7.41 (For the Book of Daniel itself, see VII.v and its n.4 below.) Of the image depicted in Dan. II.31 ff. it is the toes (verses 41-2) which are singled out by Hippolytus as symbolising democracies -- I cannot understand why, since they play no significant or independent role in Daniel or in the Apocalypse and are not given any particular explanation there, unlike the ten horns, interpreted as ten kings, with which they could be equated. (It is interesting, by the way, to find Porphyry, the great pagan scholar and anti-Christian polemicist, giving as is now universally admitted -- a far better interpretation of Daniel's beasts than any of the early Christian Fathers. I need do no more here than refer to G. Baldy, in the *Sources chretiennes* edition of Hippol., *Comm. in Dan.* , mentioned in n.61, at pp.23-4, 271 note a.)

Real democracy had always been anathema to the upper classes of the Graeco-Roman world. By the time of the Later Empire it had become a vaguely-remembered bogey, now -- happily -- extinct, but still something that a rich man might shudder at. It was probably in 330 that the historian and bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea, delivered his *Triakontaetikos* (or *Oratio de laudibus Constantini*), a panegyric announcing for the first time the full history, including the theology, of the new Christian monarchy of Constantine, on the thirteenth anniversary of that emperor's accession. (I shall have a little more to say about
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this speech in VI.vi below, and see its n.77.) Eusebius contrasts with Constantine's *monarchia* the *ex isotimias polyarchia*, 'the rule of the Many, founded on equality of privilege'. He may well mean any form of rule other than monarchy, but *isotimia* suggests democracy above all. And he declares that such *polyarchia* is mere 'anarchy and civil strife' (*anarchia kai stasis*). 64 This was very much what Plato had thought about democracy. But in the seven eventful centuries between Plato and Eusebius democracy had perished utterly. Its spirit had been partly broken before the end of the fourth century B.C., and its institutions had then been gradually stamped out by the combined efforts of the Greek propertyed classes, the Macedonians and the Romans. In Byzantine writers from at least the early fifth century onwards, the word *demokratia* and its verb *demokratein* can denote 'mob violence', 'riot', even 'insurrection'. 64 The democracy which revived in the modern world was something new, which owed little directly to Greek *demokratia*. But by the very name it bears it pays a silent but well-deserved tribute to its ancient predecessor. 65

VI

Rome the Suzerain

(i)

'The queen and mistress of the world'

This book is concerned primarily with what I am calling 'the Greek world' (see I.ii above) and not with Rome. But Rome became the mistress of the whole Greek world by stages during the last two centuries B.C. (roughly between 197 and 30; see Section iv of this chapter), and my 'Greek world' was therefore ruled by Rome and part of the Roman empire for more than half the period of thirteen to fourteen hundred years dealt with in this book. Moreover, the portion of the Roman empire which preserved its unity and its character as an urban civilisation longest was actually the Greek portion, in the sense of the area within which Greek was spoken by the upper classes (see I.ii-iii above). It is therefore necessary for me to say something about the Romans and their empire, and its effects upon the Greek world.

We commonly, and rightly, speak of 'Graeco-Roman' civilisation; and indeed the Greek contribution to the culture of the Roman empire was very great, and actually dominant in many parts of the intellectual and artistic field. If we ignore two or three Roman contributions in the realm of technology we can say that the Romans of the Latin West showed a conspicuously higher genius than the Greeks in two spheres only, one practical and the other intellectual. First, they excelled in ruling (both themselves and others) in the interests of their own propertyed class, above all its richest members. Vergil expressed this perfectly when he made the shade of Anchises (the mythical ancestor of the Roman race) tell the Romans to leave the practice of metal work and sculpture, of oratory and of astronomy to others who can manage such arts better (i.e. means of course the Greeks) and to concentrate on ruling:

Let it be your work, Roman, to rule the peoples with your sway - these shall be your arts: to impose the habit of peace, to spare the conquered and put down the proud (parcere subiectis, et debellare superbus: *Aen.* VI.847-53).

The proud, the *superbi*, were simply those who refused to submit to Roman domination; and beaten down they were, by 'the queen and mistress of the world' (Frontinus, *De aquis* II.88), whose people was 'the lord of kings, conqueror and commander of all nations' (Cic., *Pro domo sua ad pontif.* 90). The full force of the verb 'debellare' emerges nicely from a passage in Tacitus (Ann. II.22.1), where Germanicus sets up a trophy of his victory over some Germans in A.D. 16, with an inscription recording that the peoples between Rhine and Elbe had been *debellati* by the army of Tiberius; the preceding chapter (21.3) tells how Germanicus had given his soldiers instructions to be 'steadfast in slaughter;