THE DECINE OF THE EUPATRIDAE

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DEBT BONDAGE

In the 6th century B.C., interests of the Athenian commercial class encroached on the political hegemony of the agrarian aristocracy. Concentration of wealth in the land-holding aristocracy and the aristocratic constraint of liberties for other classes engendered perceived common interests for the demos and the commercial class. The nobility had squelched non-aristocratic interests by capturing the small-holders in debt-serfdom, legislating and enforcing laws that entangled them.

In the archaic period, agriculture was conducted by free men rather than slaves.\(^1\) Why? Aristotle suggests that the ordinary smallholder could not afford to purchase a slave. If extra seasonal labor was needed, the farmer would hire a day-laborer (thes). This account seems to be true, but it evades a more penetrating question; if land were predominantly the property of the eupatrids, then there would have been some form of slave labor; on the contrary, slave labor was recessive because smallholders owned the land. Why, in the archaic period, could smallholders predominate in land-holding to the disadvantage of the aristocrats?\(^2\) It is necessary to investigate as far as possible the nature of land possession in archaic Greece.

From the earliest tribal invasions the Greek communities allotted land relatively equally to clan members; clan heads appropriated more land, and tribal members too far on the periphery received no allotment, and became thetes. Whereas smallholders

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1 Aristotle, Pol. 1323a
prevailed in the archaic period prior to taxation, initial independence gradually declined not into social alienation vis-vis the polis, but into personal debt-slavery in the 6th century B.C. This transition seems to have depended on one obscure point in the kinship organization of landholding. Equal allotments were made to all of the smallholders, but landed property ultimately belonged to the clan; the private smallholder could not sell his land, nor could he bequeath it to anyone but his sons. Even in the archaic period there were distinct social positions, which would solidify into aristocrat and commoner; the more highly placed individuals were the clan heads. If the clan had ultimate ownership over a smallholder’s property, and the clan elders were the arbitrators, the clan heads might confusingly be considered the ultimate owners. This obscurity might have attenuated the notion of the smallholder as the absolute owner, thus justifying susceptibility to a tax or rent on his land.

The smallholder might have existed due to the absence of taxes, but he gradually had to depend on a patron, a great landowner, to persist. The eupatridae therefore did not have to develop a slave class, nor need to aggrandize personal ownership, because the growing dependence of the smallholder gave the great landowner as much disposal over labor as slavery would have provided. The rise of the polis ought to have engendered taxation, but in the early stages 1) the polis was too weak to enforce taxation and 2) the early polis, governed by aristocrats, supported rent instead of tax. The patrons, the eupatridae, protected the smallholders from tax obligation; the small holder in effect became dependent on his landlord rather than on the polis.\textsuperscript{3} The polis,

\textsuperscript{2}Although rural slavery existed, there is no evidence to suggest that freeholders were widely replaced by slaves in the Archaic period. Even after Aristotle observed that ‘the poor man, not having slaves, is compelled to use his wife and children’, and the farmer of only four hectares could scarcely have had either the capital to buy a slave or the surplus food to feed him day by day. For casual labor the landowners relied on the pool of landless thetes, who amounted to something like half the population of Attica. Cf. Starr, C.G.; \textit{Economic and Social Conditions in the Greek World}, in The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C., edited by Boardman, John, F.B.A., and Hammond, N.G.L., F.B.A., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p.423.
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under aristocratic control, legislated factors that aggravated the dependency of the demos. Smallholders retained their status, for the meantime, as citizens, but they paid their agricultural surplus to the eupatrid or the polis. Subjugation of the smallholder was probably the principal purpose of debt bondage; land ownership was not the main motivation.

A very wealthy person might be supposed not to be harmed in the case that an equally wealthy party emerges, under the condition that the other neither competes nor in any other way encroaches on the principal’s wealth. When however wealth goes into

3 The major development lay rather in the reduction of the smaller farmers to the status of peasants, i.e. no longer self-sufficient farmers but producers dependent on a secondary group which used their surpluses on itself and other non-farming elements. This evolution was the product of changes in many aspects of Hellenic society. The rise of the polis found its citizens together more fully, though down to the sixth century the Greek state made only limited demands on their production. The polis had initially a weak structure of government, manned almost entirely by unpaid officials; from the early seventh century its army consisted of serried infantry hoplites who provided their own armor and food; only if the state tried to support a navy was any extensive financial organization required. Transfer payment existed at this time mainly in the provision of public meals and gifts to victorious athletes. Greek states relied on harbor tolls, market dues, rent of public lands and a variety of indirect taxes; landowners could resist taxation to such a degree that only under tyrants do we hear of direct levies on agricultural production. Cf. Starr, C.G.; Economic and Social Conditions in the Greek World, in The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C., edited by Boardman, John, F.B.A., and Hammond, N.G.L., F.B.A., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p.424.

4 Varied procedures, both public and private, could be used to reduce weaker farmers to a dependent position so that they had to yield their tiny surpluses, and the results in the many states of Greece were equally varied. In Thessaly, Sparta, and Crete, the rural population as a whole was legally bound to the soil. In remote mountain districts farmers remained independent; but the rural elements in more open and accessible districts seem commonly to have become peasants in the anthropological sense, yielding food to greater landowners, to the market, or to the religious and secular machinery of the polis. Even so, the dynamic character of progress prevented the small farmers in the more advanced areas from being formally depressed into helotry. If many Athenians in 500 could economically be termed peasants, they still were citizens of the polis and could exhibit the attitudes of the chorus in Aristophanes’ Acharnians. Cf. Starr, C.G.; Economic and Social Conditions in the Greek World, in The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C., edited by Boardman, John, F.B.A., and Hammond, N.G.L., F.B.A., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p.425.
the extreme, it becomes more intelligible as power than as wealth. A multipolar world of different concentrations of wealth diminishes the power of any one concentration of wealth, without diminishing the wealth per se. The aristocratic government of archaic Greece depended on the condition that all wealth be agricultural wealth.

In roughly the same period in which smallholders were succumbing to debt-slavery, the introduction of money economy provided opportunities for smallholders. Small coinage and retail trade enabled the peasant recalcitrance against their overlords in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.\(^5\) Possibly the smallholder would not have been able to react against debt slavery if small coinage had not penetrated the local economy. The earliest effect of the innovation of coin economy occurred in the growth of Greek commerce on the Mediterranean and Black Seas; shifting class lines appeared at the borders of exchange with different cultures. The kapelos, connoting local retail trader, emerged coevely with coin of small denomination; smallholders who had been dispossessed entered into commercial professions such as that of kapelos. The accelerated retail volume resulting from small coin denomination catalyzed class interests in this sort of profession.\(^6\) Coin money and retail trade had enlivened both local and foreign trade, and where the liberation of trade was most poignant (Attica, Corinth, Sicyon), class resistance to the eupatridae took place.\(^7\) Instead of the oriental accumulation of money in the priest-class, the gradual accumulation of peasant money occurred at the same time as the Greek priesthood disappeared as a political power, with most of the priests reverting instead to identities as noble warlords. The small money accumulation made

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5 There also emerged a new group, which took its place beside the ancient landowning clans, commoners who rose out of the lower middle classes and gained wealth. Cf. Weber, Max; The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations, Verso, London, 1988, p.173.

6 Herodotus reports about the invention of the coin in the appearance of this new profession (kapelos: resident local trader) in the same passages simultaneously, probably intending to link both phenomena together. In fact the new coin economy must have brought with it an increased intensity and refinement in this sector of local trade very quickly, so that a professional kapelos could find his full livelihood in this field for the first time. Cf. Heichelheim, Fritz; An Ancient Economic History, Volume 1, A.W. Sijthoff’s Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., Leiden 1958, p.251.
the Greek peasant more resilient to aristocratic oppression than his brethren in the oriental theocracies.  

Small denominations of money, introduced following the success of large money denomination, created fractional amounts that enabled peasants to acquire and keep small amounts of money that would have been instantly washed away in the non-denominated barter exchange. Why? If a \textit{georgos} exchanged in barter, he consigned his total surplus on the great landholder for the vent. The smaller the quantity of the exchange commodity, the more cumbersome became the means of exchange. Absence of small money meant that small exchanges were too cumbersome because the units of payment were not finely divisible; hence, the whole produce, and its final profit, was transferred at once to the great landlord. The small coinage of Greece ameliorated individual exchange because equitable exchange could be made on piecemeal units.

Land was the fundamental capital of the ancient world, but land without labor was worthless. This accounts for the purpose in debt-slavery to concentrate on labor rather
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than land acquisition. The aristos could not utilize large landholdings by his own labor. If there were large holdings, the aristos, to be an aristos, had to find labor to occupy his land. The Spartans solved the problem by enslaving the helots, previous occupants of the land, Messenians, who did not belong to the Dorian tribe. However, where there was not enslavement of the conquered race there would initially be a shortage of war-captives susceptible to slave labor. Athens did not have a population of the previous members of the overrun Mycenaean civilization; the Mycenaevans had mixed with the invading Ionians, so that there was not a separate underclass available for enslavement. Debt bondage had to overlook the distinction Mycenaean-Ionian in the effort to create a serfdom like that of Sparta. Debt-slavery might have provided the same service as the helots. Its failure may have been due to its oversight of smallholders who were Ionian. The situation in Athens was different because those chosen for slave labor had been free smallholders who belonged to the same Ionian tribe as the aristoi. Debt bondage resulted from the effort to accumulate labor, but met with an obstacle that the Spartans did not face.9

An alternative hypothesis might be that debt-bondage was intended to accumulate money. But debt bondage materialized exclusively as a relation between aristocrat and smallholder; the analogous never formed between aristocrats, nor between aristocrat and artisan; it seems that the enemy finely identified was the smallholder, the georgos.10

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9 In early Greece and Rome, how did the rich and well-born, the holders of the large estates, obtain and increase their labor force? Both hired labor and chattel slaves are known from our earliest sources, the Homeric poems and the 12 Tables, but it is clear that they were not the answer. Labor was essentially dependent labor-clients, helots, pelatai or whatever else they were called-and debt-bondsmen. As between the social orders, that was a deliberate device on the part of the creditor to obtain more dependent labor rather than a device for enrichment through interest. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.155.

10 It was only between classes, between rich and poor, that debt led to bondage in practice. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York,1982, p.153.
It would be more reasonable for someone to lend only to a wealthy person, in which case he could be secure of repayment; lending to a small holder almost always ended in default. Lending could not have been conducted for the sake of interest. Lending to the wealthy did not occur because in the archaic stage there was no commercially developed manufacture, so that a wealthy person would have no reason not to pay himself or to delay payment to the agent of the service or product. Furthermore, a wealthy person would accept a loan only on good terms, because he would have the alternative to pay with his own money. Until commerce developed, only the subsistence loan was on demand, which could impose high terms of interest because of the desperation in which the borrower needed the loan. This did apply to the georgos; the aristocrat took advantage of the desperation of the georgos, but the motive for making the loan was nevertheless not for the sake of interest. Rather, the excessive interest rate was designed so that the debtor would default.\footnote{Why should a rich man lend -for we must come to loans in the end-except to another rich man? The conventional answer is that he seeks profit through the interest he charges (at excessive rates, of course). At best, however, that is a partial answer, for the earlier stages, indeed largely a false answer. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.153.}

It seems plausible that the Greeks adopted the idea of debt bondage from the orient, since the practice started in the Orient long before Greece. It was a pandemic device used by the higher classes to subjugate the lower classes in every society throughout the history of the ancient world.\footnote{The element of social conflict hovers above the history of debt-bondage everywhere in the ancient world. There are distinctions, however, both in the institution and in its later history, which reflect differences among the social systems in which debt-bondage flourished. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.162.} Unlike the Greeks, the Jews enslaved Jews, which contradicts the premise that kinship would prohibit enslavement. The factor that induced and justified the Jews in the Sassanid period to enslave fellow-Jews was debt and poverty. Considering the strong element of compassion in Jewish culture, it is imaginable that the Jews used enslavement as a constructive, non-punitive means to
resolve problems of poverty, just as modern societies use welfare payment. Throughout ancient history, labor was conceived as an amicable device to pay off debt. Despite the Greek revulsion at being a slave, it appears that slavery had become a conventional social status.\textsuperscript{13}

Debt-bondage had thus become annexed to the universal instrument of slavery previously embedded in ancient society. In a society that made no conceptual distinction between dependent labor and slavery, there was no alternative for extracting labor but to enslave the laborer; there was no concept of contractual free labor. There was no idea to compete against debt-bondage, and no alternative labor that could substitute for slavery and debt-bondage.\textsuperscript{14} One ground for the declension from smallholder to serf to slave was this lack of an explicit concept of wage labor, i.e. the articulated concept that the laborer could sell his labor, without being himself a property; the prevalent concept was that a person laboring for another was, in that condition, the possession of the employer. This conceptual form had the consequence that a citizen developed a revulsion from laboring for another person, for in that condition he was nothing more than a slave.\textsuperscript{15}

The institution of Greek debt bondage was ingenious. First, a smallholder defaulted on a debt. It seemed unobjectionable to put him in the condition of a hektemerios, in which condition he was presumably repaying his debt. The first devious moment was that, as a hektemerios, he was not paying the capital of his debt, but its interest. He retained his land, but five sixths of the crop had to be given to the landlord-creditor. Greek society recognized the equivalence of money and labor-time. If a smallholder

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Mendelsohn, I.; Slavery in the Ancient Near East, New York, Oxford University press, 1949, page 75.
wanted a loan but did not have money to pay interest, it was possible for him to take the loan and pay his interest with labor-time. His land remained in his possession, but served as collateral. Theoretically, he could pay interest with his labor for the creditor, and repay the capital of the loan from his own agricultural produce. In reality it was improbable that the smallholder could repay the capital, so that his slave-like labor obligation to the creditor might extend limitlessly. If at this point the debtor defaulted, he might tentatively lose his collateral, i.e. his land, but put up his person as a second collateral. This circumstance poses an ambiguity as to whether the smallholder not only foresaw, but intended, himself to become a perpetual debt bondsman, or whether such a possibility was dreaded.  

The hektemorios could feel secure in that his land was not in the control of the creditor; the creditor could neither sell the land nor transfer its cultivation to himself or another person. The second devious moment was in the payment of five sixths of the produce; the overpowering anxiety of the smallholder might sufficiently motivate him to deceive himself, to wishfully think that he could just bear to manage the burden. The smallholder had the incentive to believe erroneously that he would eventually pay off his debt and retrieve the full possession and yield of his land. In this he was deluded; a drought or other natural shortcoming would make the one-sixth due to himself absolutely inadequate for subsistence, and the second stage of debt bondage would set in; the creditor took full possession of the land, the debtor was now changed into the status of a chattel-slave, and the creditor was entitled to sell him abroad as a slave, on the ground that the sale would be his final means of retrieving his loan. The debtor

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16 In lieu of interest on a “loan” of 400 drachmas, the debtor agreed, in the typical language of the Greek paramone, to remain with the “creditor” performing slave-like services and to repay the money after one year. There follows a renewal clause which seems designed to prevent the borrower from repaying the loan, thereby perpetuating the slave-like relationship, and they do not believe there can be any doubt that this was understood and intended by both parties from the outset. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.154.
would have no means whatever to instigate complaint or resistance to the contractual scheme. The enslavement progressed by small steps, to each of which the victim might not object, until he was powerless to react.\(^\text{17}\)

It might be hypothesized that debt bondage was deliberate, not merely on the part of the creditor, but on the part of the victim; the bondsman foresaw and accepted his bondage as a form of security in return for the sale of his labor.\(^\text{18}\) In similar circumstances in the late Roman Empire, the small freeholder would surrender his holding and his freedom to a patron, in exchange for security. Might not a georgos similarly have offered his servitude to a great landholder in exchange for the security in being his serf? The hypothesis is more plausible in the case of the Roman paganus, who outside of serfdom was vulnerable to the depredations of the barbarians; this type of insecurity did not apply to the georgos. Secondly, the hypothesis requires an explanation for an intentional dissonance; why would a georgos deliberately set himself in serfdom, and afterwards rebel against the serfdom he had sought? It goes against the traditional Greek mentality, which regarded dependent labor as a disgrace for any free man, and which idealized the oikos and smallholding. If the georgos slipped into debt bondage unintentionally, it would be more coherent if he afterwards sought means of release.\(^\text{19}\)

We get the impression from Aristotle that debt bondage was not an event in progress, but a fait accompli; “The poor together with their children and their wives were enslaved to the rich.” (Aristotle, Constitution of Athens, 2.2) The expression implies that all of the poor were enslaved, rather than that the poor, who were not yet

\(^{17}\) Solon’s “lifting of the burden” from the Athenian poor consisted of three distinct steps: (1) he abolished the status of hektemoros; (2) he brought back, insofar as he could, Athenians who had been sold abroad under the law, the agogimoi, among whom were defaulting hektemoroi; (3) he canceled existing debts and prohibited debts on the person in the future, thereby both freeing the debt-bondsman of his stay and abolishing the category from Athens henceforth. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.157.

\(^{18}\) This hypothesis is to the credit of M.I. Finley, Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982.
enslaved, led the insurrection. Significantly, debt bondage never fomented rebellion in the oriental societies. The lower classes of the theocratic societies in fact never staged a revolt against an upper class as such, whereas quite early in the major western societies, the lower classes did revolt, consciously against what was an upper class, and were to a great degree successful; why should lower class turmoil have been operative in the western societies, but not in the older oriental civilizations?

It was in order to avert imminent civil war that the aristocrats (not the demos) appointed Solon to the archonship, in order that he might appease the lower classes. If the demos had brought Solon to power, it would seem consistent, but in fact it was the aristocracy who appointed him; it appears inconsistent that the aristocrats would appoint someone who would legislate against themselves. Solon’s ensuing seisachtheia was highly detrimental to the aristocracy. In both Greece and Rome the same phenomenon occurred at about the same time of their respective developments. In Rome the plebeians did not win, inasmuch as they did not regain their farms and became a permanently useless mob whose labor was displaced by slavery. Their only victory was not to have been enslaved; the victory of the lower classes in Athens brought forth the eventual development of democracy. The eupatrids appointed Solon because only a concession of some kind would prevent the imminent outbreak of civil war; the seisachtheia, in the full context of Solon’s other measures, merely balanced with concessions made to the aristocracy.

19 It is just this kind of one-sided assumption which has prevented a correct appreciation of the notorious debt-bondage crises in the early history of Greece and Rome. We are too quick with talk of default and personal execution, a possibility, of course, but not the only possibility. “Debt” may also have been arranged in order to create a state of bondage, just as, between equals, its purpose may have been to maintain bonds of solidarity or to provide a kind of insurance against the future need. Cf. Finley, M. I.; Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.155.

Debt bondage in the oriental societies had been a long-established convention, different from the Greek practice in two points; it had not been a class-action for the deliberate purpose of subjugating a social group, and second, its application had not been confined to *georgoi*, but to anyone who defaulted on a loan. A person in default was required not only to serve as a slave for the period equivalent to the value of the debt, but served further time for the value of the interest of the time during which he was a slave. All debts were inherited, so that a son would be enslaved for his father’s debt, and the creditor used any inheritance to the slave to pay the debt. The law of Greek debt bondage was purely on the side of the aristos, the creditor. The law did not exonerate the debtor in the case of drought or plunder. Since the law offered no protection, the borrower might have sought the aid of the creditor to protect him against the measures of the law; in effect the borrower would give up his land ownership to the creditor, and place himself together with his family in debt slavery to the creditor, in order to preempt the action of the law. Again, it seems plausible in the late Roman Empire, but in the case of the Athenian georgos it would be necessary to imagine what formal legal procedure against the georgos, would be worse than enslavement of the debtor and his family.

The abolition of debt bondage did not suggest the abolition of slavery. Any interpretation that the idea of “freedom,” such as in Greece, germinated from ideas of human rights, is anachronistic. The idea that slavery per se was an injustice could not have emerged in the ancient world. When a georgos sank into debt bondage, he was no longer a citizen, but he remained an Athenian. It was the quality “Athenian,” not the

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21 In both Athens and Rome the debt-bondage crisis involved a substantial section of the citizenry. Aristotle’s “the poor were enslaved to the rich” may be exaggerated, but neither Solon’s reforms nor the complex history of the patrician-plebeian struggle in Rome makes any sense at all unless the generalization is near enough true. Cf. Finley, M. I.; *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, Viking Press, New York, 1982, p.160.
quality “slave” that was operative in this crisis. Servitude in exchange for tenancy was objectionable because the victims were formerly not slaves, but Athenians. Solon was able to abolish debt-bondage- indeed, he had been brought to power for that express purpose- following a political struggle that bordered on civil war. Athenian bondsmen had remained Athenians; now they re-asserted their rights as Athenians, and they forced an end to the institution- servitude for tenure- which had deprived them \textit{de facto} of all or most of these rights. They were not opposed to slavery as such, only to the subjection of Athenians by other Athenians. Hence, whatever the superficial similarity, this was not a slave revolt; nor did ancient commentators ever make such a connection, despite their resort to slave terminology.\textsuperscript{24}

There was a striking tenet in Solon’s abolition of debt-bondage. The previous land allotments were given back to the georgoi who had been the owners. Slaves who had been sold abroad from debt-bondage were also given back their previous smallholdings. However, kinship had made possession of a smallholding inalienable; the farmer was not allowed to buy or sell farmland, in the intention that land should be maximally distributed in order to promote procreation. Solon took this occasion to abolish this law; it was illegal for smallholders to be enslaved for debt, and it was illegal for smallholders to take a loan on the collateral of their person, but 1) smallholders could no longer obtain loans on the security of the person, and 2) land was no longer inalienable. That is, at the same time as Solon abolished debt bondage

\textsuperscript{23} The only fixed point is that there was a sharp class division, in which all the power, including the right to protect one’s interests, was on one side. A debtor had little chance. In fact, he had little chance before he even became a debtor, because he was poor and essentially defenseless, against bad harvests and famine, against war and its depredations, against the one-sidedness of the law. When his luck was bad his only defense was to put himself \textit{in fcidem}, in the power of the powerful. In practice that could mean a range of possibilities, including actual loans and fictitious loans, immediate servitude or delayed servitude, permanent or temporary bondage. Cf. Finley, M. I.; \textit{Economy and Society in Ancient Greece}, Viking Press, New York,1982, p.161.

he commodified land possession. This made it far easier to alienate land, liberalizing a land market. Thus it became possible for the lender to take possession of the debtor’s land, without the correlative impediment of making the debtor a slave.25

**TYRANNOS**

The commercial class successfully disputed natal political authority (aristocracy), promoting the demands of the small-holder and the urban class; the demos developed abilities to confiscate aristocratic wealth by insurrection or by vote. The term *tyrannos* was coined by the aristocracy; a monarch whose position was not justified by lineage was a “tyrant” because he did not meet the traditional religious standards for entitlement to monarchy. There are other features, but there was a single, definitive moment that divided the tyrannos from the basileus. Until the age of tyranny, there had already been violent factions that fought for possession of sovereignty. However, these conflicts were always between aristocratic factions. The tyrannos signified the earliest appearance of the class struggle; it was a conflict between aristocratic factions and the demos. Tyranny was an elastic concept; some tyrannies resulted from palace revolts, whereas some tyrants came to power by invitation or election. Although the aristocratic connotation of “tyrant” persisted (e.g. Napoleon), some of the original Greek tyrants were not in this sense particularly tyrannical, but some were; they abolished debt, confiscated land, rebuilt public institutions, and redistributed concentrated wealth. The tyrant promoted commerce and minted coinage. Only the landed aristocracy had an interest in considering such measures tyrannical, which benefitted the commercial and smallholder classes in contravention of the archaic aristocratic ideology.

Most tyrants were members of the aristocracy, in principle justified by lineage; however, the tyrant’s political power depended on popularity rather than descent from

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25 The farmers were being established as freeholders on their ancestral holdings (though the old tradition of inalienability was of course swept away). Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; *The Greek Commonwealth*; The Modern Library, New York, p.130.
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Zeus. This involved a mediating position; the tyrannos, being an aristos, was in that respect entitled to govern. If he could not draw enough support from one aristocratic party against another, he would turn to the demos to augment his power. This was in the eyes of the aristocracy delinquent; in order to obtain popular support the tyrannos would need to adopt popular in opposition to aristocratic preferences. The tyrannos was inevitably a reformer animated by vox populi. Perhaps ironically, the tyrant’s demise was due not to resurgence of aristocratic values, but was a result of agenda that the tyrant advocated in order to raise his (plebeian) popularity.  

CLEISTHENES

Under the primitive economic precept that one has more wealth only when others have less, the agricultural nobility had tried to arrest growth of the commercial class.

26 The “journey” of Peisistratus was part of a general movement in the commercially active cities of 6th century Greece, to replace the feudal rule of the landowning aristocracy with the political dominance of the middle-class in temporary alliance with the poor. Such dictatorships were brought on by the pathological concentration of wealth, and the inability of the wealthy to agree on a compromise. Forced to choose, the poor, like the rich, love money more than political liberty; and the only political freedom capable of enduring is one that is so pruned as to keep the rich from denuding the poor by an ability or subtlety and keep the poorer from robbing the rich by violence or votes. Hence the road to power in Greek commercial cities was simple: to attack the aristocracy, defend the poor, and come to an understanding with the middle classes. [Aristotle, Politics, 1310a]. Arrived in power, the dictator abolished debts, or confiscated large estates, taxed the rich to finance public works, or otherwise redistributed the over-concentrated wealth; and while attaching the masses to himself through such measures, he secured the support of the business community by promoting trade with state coinage and commercial treaties, and by raising the social prestige of the bourgeoisie. Forced to depend upon popularity instead of hereditary power, the dictatorships for the most part kept out of war, supported religion, maintained order, promoted morality, favored the higher status of women, encouraged the arts, and lavished revenues upon the beautification of their cities. They did all these things while preserving the forms and procedures of popular government, so that even under despotism the people learned the ways of liberty. When the dictatorship had served to destroy the aristocracy, the people destroyed the dictatorship; and only a few changes were needed to make the democracy of freemen a reality as well as a form. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 122.
Peisistratos had introduced a more elastic conception of wealth that was meant to reconcile the conflict; by means of colonization, treaties with other polities, and liberal commercial law, the wealth of the Athenian demos increased greatly, without detriment to the wealth of the agricultural nobility. This was a compromise; aristocrats were not deprived of land holding, but the growth of commercial wealth, while not diminishing aristocratic wealth, did diminish aristocratic power. Following Solon, Peisistratos legislated a division of public land, and land belonging to banished aristocrats, for redistribution to the demos. Although legislation forbore from impairment of aristocratic wealth, the power of agrarian nobility gradually subsided by attrition, at the same time as smallholders were no longer so strongly motivated to mount protests against land concentration.

Peisistratos did not repeal any of Solon’s legislation; he instead advanced the democratic proclivity in Solon’s policies by distributing public land, and that of banished aristocrats, to small-holders, by which the unemployed felt more attachment to their polis, and more partiality for Peistratos against the oligarchs; following Peisistratos’ land reform there was never again rural insurrection in Attica. Colonization in the Dardanelles and proliferation of commercial treaties brought wealth to the demos; the economic innovations alleviated extreme difference in wealth between rich and poor. Correction of income extremes worked in the direction of the upcoming democracy only because readjustment of wealth was offset by exploitation

27 Peisistratus’ economic policies carried on that demand of the people which Solon had begun. He settled the agrarian question by dividing among the poor the lands that belonged to the state, as well as those of banished aristocrats; thousands of dangerously idle Athenians were settled upon the soil; and for centuries afterward we hear of no serious agrarian discontent in Attica. [Calhoun, G. M.: Business Life of Ancient Athens, Chicago, 1926, 29.] He planted strategic colonies on the Dardanelles, and made commercial treaties with many states. Under his rule trade flourished, and wealth grew not among a few only, but in the community as a whole. The poor were made less poor, the rich not less rich. That conception of wealth which had nearly torn the city into civil war was brought under control, and the spread of comfort and opportunity laid the economic bases of Athenian democracy. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 121.
of groups not comprised in the dichotomy of “rich” and “poor;” the poor in this dichotomy were free citizens. The “citizens,” rich and poor, benefited from their ascendancy over slaves, liberti, and metics. The social reform benefited the “poor” in the category of citizen by preventing the great landlord from expropriating the surplus of the smallholder.28 This was the first instance of “equality.”

Republican government ought not to exacerbate inequalities. Given broad economic classes, republicanism persists if the lower classes are retained in consideration, or perishes if exclusively aristocratic interests eventually prevail. Guidance of government by popular participation, in its commitment to popular interests, is diametrically opposed to theocracy. After eschewal of theocratic reference, the idea of popular consent substitutes as the justification of collective obligation.29 However, popular participation was yet inchoate; it might comprise only a small sector of the population, i.e. the primary beneficiaries, or it could connote an anti-aristocratic moment for the sake of popular ascendency.

Popular participation, meaning participation by a sector of non-aristocrats, may mutate into a concept of broad popular participation by virtue of a second, distinct event. Both Greece and Republican Rome had used “honor,” an idea surviving from kinship society, to account for the aristocratic occupation of all government posts.

28 On the first dimension, citizens had power over noncitizens, especially over slaves and serfs. On the second dimension, some citizens wielded economic power over other citizens. This reflected the fact that there were two major modes of production, both highly politicized but nonetheless distinct. The first was the extraction of surplus in production from the slave or serf by the free citizen; the second was the less direct extraction of surplus from the small citizen landowner by the great landowner. Cf. Mann, Michael, The Sources of Social Power, Volume I, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.218.

29 Republican government should not act so as to increase existing inequalities. Government should be run by the active participation of citizens. With the development of citizenship based on consent comes also the sense of collective obligation, first reflected in voluntary donation (the liturgies) and then superseded by taxes-devices to enforce common contribution to the city-state. Cf. Webber and Wildavsky; A History of Taxation and Expenditure in the Western World, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 145.
D. Morgan Pierce

It was the original condition for the aristocrat to govern because such employment was unpaid; the occupant did not dedicate himself to the public service in pursuit of money, but for “honor.” Government office, being unpaid, was generally closed to commoners; this circumstance prevented the demos from understanding at first hand the manipulation of fiscal dispositions. Those who occupied non-paying government office steered the polity with laws remunerative to the polis and to the elite class, as had been exemplified by the debt laws.

A conception of personal interest was an essential factor in the emergence of class envy (*phthonos*). Given a fatalistic mentality, the individual might be selfish, but would be incapable of articulating justified claims of self-interest; his conception was a holistic absorption of himself in the God. In the polities of Greece and Republican Rome the formation of the State was a preoccupation with what the individual was to give and receive vis-à-vis the State and vice versa. Given the conception that the polis was in the “ownership” of the people, not of God, the Athenians thought that the polis should pay for the cost of festivals, food shortages, and entertainment; when mining yielded a surplus, the polis was to distribute the surplus wealth to all of the citizens, rather than retain it in a civic treasury. In theocratic societies, there was no thought of what the State owed the individual; the individual and all of his property belonged to the State, and by extension, to God. The monopolistic organizations of the theocracies collectivized all labor in one point, God; dedication of all things to God hindered the coalescence of antagonistic classes. Greek and Roman class antagonism was a measure of their separation from theocracy. Thought of benefit to oneself generated conceptions of justice in terms of collective benefit divided amongst subgroups.\(^30\)

Nonpayment of government service had been a bulwark against popular intrusion into political activity; payment for office was introduced only much later, by Pericles, when a change of prevalent values made it appear that non-aristocratic occupation of office would benefit the polis. When war depleted the economy so much that law could no longer mulct the lower classes, the ideas of honor and public service lost their
effect. In Greece and Republican Rome, the valuation of public over private wealth tenuously maintained an appearance of citizen equality, which however succumbed to the growth of wealth. Sincere motivation from public obligation emerges either when the whole society is on the verge of extinction, or when a government position floats in an insecure social environment. The demos would not perform government service unpaid; aristocrats would perform for “honor,” but when liturgy and war tax exhausted the reserves of the wealthy, the thirst for honor disappeared.\(^{31}\) An individual would thirst for honor only so long as it was coupled with control of government. The attenuation of “honor” as a motivating force was concomitant with the decline of aristocracy, but its diminution was nevertheless also a loss to the polis. The value placed on “honor” in public duty was contingent on whether there was a liability that the public might cease to perceive the person as deserving his social position.\(^{32}\)

Kinship society persevered for as long as aristocrats could perform unpaid

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\(^{30}\) Were a society based entirely on hierarchical principles there would be no place for private perspectives and interests. With a sacrificial ethic subordinating the parts to the whole controlling society, the public sector would prevail over the private sector (if, indeed, a private sector existed). The distinction between public and private we seek to explore presumes a conception of each in relation to the other; in government the very ideas of public and private are interdependent. Thus a distinction between public and private is barely discernible in the ancient empires discussed in the previous chapter, because everything and everyone belonged to the ruler. Monopolistic, tightly structured, ancient societies served the collectivity by serving the ruler; as those societies were organized, there was little differentiation among social orders. Without a combination of cultures, the distinction between public and private had no basis in social life. Cf. Webber and Wildavsky; *A History of Taxation and Expenditure in the Western World*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 144.

\(^{31}\) A materialist explanation is not hard to find. Men must live one way or another. If public service is not reserved to the wealthy, honest administration cannot exist unless public servants receive a living wage. Public controls, then, were strongest during periods of peace and prosperity. When wars, inflation, and famine depleted the surplus so that the state could not pay its officials, or when the voluntary administrators’ personal wealth was threatened by confiscatory liturgies and extortionate taxes, as happened during the Hellenistic and late Roman empires, the public-interest idea, so briefly seen in classical Athens and in early imperial Rome, disappeared. Cf. Webber and Wildavsky; *A History of Taxation and Expenditure in the Western World*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 143.
government office. Kinship was equivalent to aristocracy; when precedence ensued according to kinship, the wealthiest families, in their guise as the centuries-old collective leadership of the four tribes and 360 clans, constituted the aristocracy. Cleisthenes subverted the power of kinship, and thus of aristocracy, by replacing kinship divisions with ten territorial divisions, while retaining the same kinship names for these new divisions. The original four tribes were really tribes; they were genetically unified groups. The new ten tribes were not genetic, but territorial. The alteration was subtle, in that members of the same genetic strain tended to live in the same geographical locations, and the change of the denotations of the words *deme*, *phyle*, etc. was sufficiently confused to elude civil insurrection. The geographical denotations of phyle and deme meant that those who were not of the original genetic strain, but had settled in the same deme, were qualified by geographical criterion for the same citizenship as those who had been genetically grouped; the voting citizenship doubled from this alone. It was a complete break from the kinship structure of society, but Cleisthenes concealed this by assigning a “patron saint” for each new deme, ostensibly retaining the religious references of the kinship society.33

The power of envy (*phthonos*) to force the individual to value honor is conspicuous in one of the after-effects of democracy: ostracism. One might venture to articulate ostracism as a device Cleisthenes introduced to refurbish the idea of honor. The *Ekklesia*, with a quorum of 6000 members, could banish any individual it pleased for a period of ten years. Previously, in the time of Themistocles, the land of an aristocrat in exile was confiscated and given into possession of another; ostracism was more gentle in that it preserved the property of one who had been ostracized. The new protection of property served to emphasize that ostracism was non-punitive, uncoupling the power

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32 What sort of social relationships would generate a sense of public obligation? Which political cultures would motivate their adherents to respect the distinction between public and private, and give voluntary support to the public domain? Cf. Webber and Wildavsky; *A History of Taxation and Expenditure in the Western World*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 143.
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to ostracize a person from a requirement to prove his criminality. Ostracism efficiently eliminated demagogues; the person to be ostracized did not need to be convicted of a crime. No charges needed to be brought against the victim; the decision superseded the powers of court. An unconditional yes/no vote was conducted and, if the vote was positive, the individual was expelled from the polis for ten years. The Ekklesia of 6,000 voted; in consequence any demagogue who tapped into a reservoir of popular envy was vulnerable to expulsion. If an individual seemed to undermine the democratic state, the polity did not need to wait until exposure of a conspiracy or crime; the majority vote of a 6,000 member quorum sufficed. Legislation of ostracism advantaged the polity by forcing the political leaders to embody the public good within their selfish ambitions.34

Ostracism was flawlessly democratic; was it just? Because ostracism expelled so many of the leading political figures, often on the ground of conspicuous superiority, it damaged the political quality of the polis. Quite possibly Athens might have won the Peloponnesian War if the Athenians had not harassed Alcibiades in a manner cognate to Cleisthenes’ first reform struck at the very framework of an aristocracy—those four tribes and 360 clans whose leadership, by centuries of tradition, was in the hands of the oldest and richest families. Cleisthenes abolished this kinship classification, and replaced it with a territorial division into 10 tribes, each composed of a varying number of demes. To prevent the formation of geographical or occupational blocks, such as the old parties of Mountain, Shore, and Plain, each tribe was to be composed of an equal number of demes, or districts, from the city, from the coast, and from the interior. To offset the sanctity that religion had given to the old division, religious ceremonies were instituted for each new tribe or deme, and a famous ancient hero of the locality was made its deity or patron saint. Freemen of foreign origin, who had already been admitted to the franchise under the aristocratic determination of citizenship by descent, now automatically became citizens of the demes in which they lived. At one stroke the roll of voters was almost doubled, and democracy secured a new support and a broader base. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 124.

34 The powers of the Assembly were enlarged by the institution of ostracism, which Cleisthenes seems to have added as a protection for the young democracy. At any time, by a majority of votes written secretly upon potsherds (ostraka), the Assembly, in a quorum of 6000 members, might send into exile for 10 years any man who in its judgment had become a danger to the state. In this way ambitious leaders would be stimulated to conduct themselves with circumspection and moderation, and men suspected of conspiracy could be disposed of without the law’s delay. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 125.
to ostracism. In the same reasoning as engendered ostracism, Athens preempted corruption through patronage and conspiracy by rejecting an electoral process for government posts; selection for office ensued from lot or rotation. Cleisthenes introduced an extreme democratic measure; the Boule of 500. The great number of the council prevented oligarchy. The members of the Boule, the Council, were chosen by lot, not election, and served a term of only one year. The one-year term foreshortened the time necessary for conspiracy, and selection by lot entirely eliminated birth and wealth as criteria of government office. The Boulé determined what issues should be presented to the Ekklesia. Since only the Boule could introduce the topics for the Ekklesia, neither the aristocracy nor any other interest-group could control its judicial and legislative direction. The Boule also supervised all higher government offices, and in quotidian affairs headed all judicial and administrative functions.35 The idea of “democracy” was negatively formed from strenuous effort to preclude social control by special interest groups. Such an unequivocal ideal of democracy originated in a society which had never been theocratic. Its suppression of favoritism, sycophancy, oligarchy, etc. was admirably democratic, although it reduced political ability to mediocrity.36

35 The Councilors of the Council of 501 were chosen for a year’s term, not by election but by lot, from the list of all citizens who had reached the age of 30 and had not already served two terms. In this strange inauguration of representative government both the aristocratic principle of birth and the plutocratic principle of wealth were overridden by the new device of the lot, which gave every citizen an equal chance not only to vote, but to hold office in the most influential branch of the government. For the Council, so elected, determined all matters and proposals to be submitted for approval or rejection to the Assembly, reserved to itself various judicial powers, exercised wide administrative functions, and supervised all officials of the state. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 125.

36 The irresponsibility of an Assembly that made, without check of precedent or revision vote, its momentary passion on one day, and on the next day its passionate regret, punishing not itself but those who have misled it; the limitation of legislative authority to those who can attend the ekklesia; the encouragement of demagogues and the wasteful ostracism of able men; the filling of offices by lot and rotation, changing the personnel yearly and creating a chaos of government; the disorderliness of faction perpetually disturbing the guidance and administration of the state—these are vital defects, for which Athens will pay the full penalty to Sparta, Philip, Alexander, and Rome. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 266.
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Heliaea

The courts had been able to maintain aristocratic power despite the Boule. Prior to Pericles the aristocracy controlled the courts, in that ordinary people could not afford to occupy office unpaid. Previously the highest judicial power was the Areopagus, which had been composed exclusively of aristocrats, specifically those who had been archons, and their tenure was lifelong. Ephialtes and Pericles dismantled aristocratic ascendancy by establishing the Heliaea to take over the judiciary powers of the archons. In 487 B.C. the election of archons was converted to selection by lot; this had been devised to forestall the previous election procedure, which was controlled by bribery. Large numbers were again used to expunge any possibility that aristocrats might control the new institution; the Heliaea was composed of 6,000 dicastrs (jurors), divided into 10 dicastries (panels) each of 500 members; each dicast was permitted only one year of service, so that every citizen served on average once every three years. No plutocrat could afford to bribe an entire population.

The dicast was not compelled to serve actively in a panel, and the problem remained that the ordinary citizen could not afford to interrupt his living for the office; consequently the active members of the dicastries remained the aristoi. Pericles instituted a jury payment of two to three obols per day to facilitate the commoner’s participation in a jury.37 This obviated liability that courts might nevertheless come

37 Democracy reaches the judiciary last of all; and the greatest reform accomplished by Ephialtes and Pericles is the transfer of judicial powers from the archons to the heliaea. The establishment of these secular courts gives to Athens what trial by jury will win for modern Europe. The heliaea is composed of 6000 dicastrs, or jurors, annually drawn by lot from the register of the citizens; these 6000 are distributed into 10 dicastries, or panels, of approximately 500 each, leaving a surplus for vacancies and emergencies. Minor and local cases are settled by 30 judges who periodically visit the demes or counties of Asia. Since no juror may serve more than a year at a time, and eligibility is determined by rotation, every citizen, in the average chance, becomes a juror every third year. He does not have to serve, but the payment of two –or three– obols per day obtains an attendance of 200 or 300 jurors for each panel. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 260.
under the domination of wealth. The archonship had been reserved to aristocrats until 457 B.C., when Pericles made it accessible even to the *zeugitai*, a middle class. Even the *thetes*, the lowest class of citizen, entered the archonship by lying about their income; the success of this deception consisted in the indispensable importance of the thetes in military defense. Since selection by lot was haphazard, the nominee underwent intense examination (*dokimasia*) by the Boule on any aspects of his existence that might bear on his performance.

38 The reforms of Pericles substantially extended the authority of the people. Though the power of the heliaea had grown under Solon, Cleisthenes, and Ephialtes, the lack of payment for jury services had given the well to do a predominating influence in these courts. Pericles introduced (451) a fee of two obols, later raised to three, for a day’s duty, an amount equivalent in each case to half a day’s earnings of an average Athenian of the time. Cf. Glotz, G.: *The Greek City*, London, 1929, P.241.

39 In 457 eligibility to the archonship, which had been confined to the wealthier classes, was extended to the third class, or *zeugitai*; soon thereafter, without any legal form, the lowest citizen class, the thetes, made themselves eligible to the office by romancing about their income; the importance of the thetes in the defense of Athens persuaded the other classes to wink at the fraud. Moving for a moment in the opposite direction, Pericles (451) carried through the Assembly a restriction of the franchise to the legitimate offspring of an Athenian father and an Athenian mother. No legal marriage was to be permitted between a citizen and a noncitizen. It was a measure aimed to discourage intermarriage with foreigners, to reduce illegitimate births, and perhaps to reserve to the jealous burghers of Athens the material rewards of citizenship and empire. Cf. Durant, Will; *The Life of Greece*, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 250.

40 As early as 487, the method of election in the choice of archons is replaced by lot; some way must be found to keep the rich from buying, or the knaves from smiling, their way into office. To render the selection less than wholly accidental, all those upon whom the lot falls are subjected, before taking up their duties, to a rigorous *dokimasia*, or character examination, conducted by the Council or the courts. The candidate must show Athenian parentage on both sides, freedom from physical defect and scandal, the pious honoring his successors, the performance of his military assignments, and the full payment of his taxes; his whole life is on this occasion exposed to challenge by any citizen, and the prospect of such a scrutiny presumably frightens the most worthless from the sortition. Cf. Durant, Will; *The Life of Greece*, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 263.
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DEMOKRATIA PHTHONIKE

Athens passed through a political metamorphosis common to all the poleis; first a submission to kings, whom war necessitated; then there was oligarchy organized by land-holding nobility. Tyranny advanced the consolidation of the polis, and finally a tenuous democracy developed, but a successful amalgamation of poleis into a nation-state never materialized. Communism also quite failed to develop from the kinship background. It had been plausible, since Sparta had in fact developed a partial communism. A sophisticated communism might be thought to evolve from a primitive communism, but there was an extra moment that diverted this easy evolution. As polis society developed, kinship subsided. Kinship was the basis of primitive communism, but it was genetically organized. The elders of each kinship clan became, by genetic rule, the leaders, and hence the kings and aristocrats at the dawn of civic society; the aristocracy was the residue of the superseded kinship organization. Civic society and kinship were conflicting principles, but they existed, and conflicted, in compromise; primitive communism gave birth to aristocracy.

As attested by Aristotle, in all poleis, differences of individual wealth solidified into classes and class struggle. Sparta had also developed individual difference of wealth, but its apparently communistic efforts to submerge those differences also prevented the growth of wealth. The enforcement of commensalism, full-time military training, and above all its prohibition of commerce eluded several problems of class division that Athens would face, but in consequence Sparta never had sufficient funds to conduct its wars. Although Athenian allowance for individual initiative generated gradations of wealth, Athens was careful to contain contrasts of personal wealth to avert stasis. Sparta and Athens had equally developed strong communistic strains in government,

41 Like most of the Ionian cities, Athenians submitted at first to kings who led them in war, then to aristocrats who owned the land, then to tyrants representing the middle-class. Cf. Durant, Will; The Life of Greece, MJF Books, New York, 1966, p. 134.
in order to suppress insurrection; the negative force behind the Greek development of aristocracy was phthonos. Athenian legislation principally concentrated on suppressing those moments in marriage, inheritance, land possession, etc. that would cultivate envy. Both Greece and Rome had stasis, but in remarkable contrast, class war never assumed such a dramatic role in social evolution as it had in Rome. The democratic upsurge in Greece succeeded, but the same surge in Rome was abortive; this probably accounts for subsequent contrasts.

Greek society valued *fame*; the individual found self-esteem primarily in the esteem that others paid to him. The polis did not pose an inconsistency between individualism and conformity because it was primarily the polis that extricated the individual from kinship mentality; the individual understood his dependence on the polis in inverse proportion to his dependence on clan membership. The restrictions attaching to the individual from kinship subsided before the invigoration of the polis. Cleisthenes had instituted heroes and deities for the identities of the new demes and phyla, although they were artificial. The authentic identities were those deities deriving from the old tribes, which had been abolished. By providing new deities, Cleisthenes had eliminated the trauma that citizens would have felt if they had been deprived of identity with a deity. Previously to Cleisthenes, the army had been organized according to clan, and the generals were heads of the clans; Cleisthenes abolished the clan organization of the army and instituted election of generals according to ability. Solon’s reform entitled the individual to donate wealth arbitrarily, and to a greater degree than in the kinship mentality, bequeath wealth according to will.⁴³

Sparta had socialized much of its land and all of its slavery, in an effort presumably to obviate class stress within the citizen class. Athens might have socialized property,

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but did not.44 A large part of the Athenian psyche was exaltation of the polis, an exaggerated devotion of the individual self to the good of the polis, as if the citizen bore as much blind adulation towards his polis as the oriental denizen felt towards God. This seems inconsistent; Athens was emerging from the primitive communism of the kinship society; the development of the polis, artisanship, and commerce was undermining primitive communism in that the division of social roles created the individualism of the classical period. Especially a propos of the Persian Wars, the Greeks had divinized individual freedom as an element of propaganda against Persian aggression; perhaps this idea of “freedom” made socialism abhorrent. However, it ought not to have appeared to the Athenians that a partial socialism would be equivalent to bondage; the entire process of detachment from kinship aristocracy to the democratic polis was one of amalgamation. It is plausible that socialized property would seem to them to deprive them of independence, just as they had supposed that dependent labor deprived them of independence. But the Athenians sensed no contradiction between individual freedom and subordination of their individual desires to those of the polis. The ideology of

43 Just as the Greek citizen gained in individuality and personal freedom in proportion as his ties to the city were more closely knit, so the Greek property-owner grew in zeal and enterprise as he became increasingly conscious of the larger society in which he was working, and of the purposes for which the city required his wealth. It was the policy of the city to place no new restrictions on his freedom, and gradually, as we saw in the legislation of Solon, to withdraw all traditional fetters that interfered with the free exercise of effort. But every increase in freedom meant an enlargement of patriotism: the duties that used to be paid to the family or the clan were now paid to the city, which united all these lesser loyalties: and if he was now free to give away his riches as he liked, and even, within limits, to bequeath them, he was willing, nay eager, that the city should ever be the first to profit by his generosity. Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; The Greek Commonwealth; The Modern Library, New York, p.294.

44 If the State played so large a part, not only politically but economically, not only by the public work which it commanded but by the wealth which it possessed, in the life of its citizens, why did it not extend a fuller control over their working activities? Why did it not secure for itself and directly administer, as in a democratic state it must surely have been tempted to do, all the private wealth within its borders? Why did not Athens, like her rival Venice in later days, set the world an example of municipal socialism? Cf. Horatio Brown, Cambridge Modern History, Volume 1, p.277.
individualism grew in union with personal dedication to the common good, and did not construct a plausible contrariety between individualism and conformity. Since on the contrary they supposed that individual freedom was a product that resulted solely from the polis, it is quizzical that they would find contradiction between freedom and socialized property.\textsuperscript{45}

A reference to classical Greek commerce might help to reconcile this inconsistency. Previously the aristocracy monopolized the wealth of the polis, and in large part the wealth of the aristocracy, based as it was exclusively in landed property, persisted. The aristocratic grip on society loosened only because of the growth of commercial wealth. It was possible for the demos to detach itself from aristocratic subjugation solely because wealth had materialized from a source other than agriculture. It may have seemed that only private property, i.e. the possibility for demotic people to achieve wealth, accounted for their freedom from aristocratic control; there may have been a virulent memory of the bad days of debt bondage.

The Greek aristocracy and the demos of the classical age were not conspicuously different. Land holding was contained and regulated, higher public office ceased to be reserved to the aristocrat, and the liturgy had suffocated the arrogance of the wealthy Greek. Greeks of whatever social class wore the same clothing. The Greeks did not rigidify a status barrier between aristocracy and demos, such as the Egyptian system of redistribution incessantly reinforced. One simple difference was the function of wealth. Egyptian wealth was used to entrench higher and lower classes in stationary positions;

\textsuperscript{45} Athens never felt less like adapting a socialistic system than she did in the fifth century, for she was moving steadily away from communism and State regulation towards unfettered freedom of individual action and enterprise. But this is at bottom not a satisfactory explanation, for if the Athenian had earned his living as a municipal official he would have felt not less but more free than as a private wage-earner. In Athens, at any rate, socialism would not, as the modern assertion glibly runs, paralyze effort and enterprise, for the Athenian never worked so well or put so much hard individual thinking into his business as when he was working for the city. Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; \textit{The Greek Commonwealth}; The Modern Library, New York, p.299.
it was social rank that took precedence, and determined a posteriori wealth distribution for the purpose of maintaining status relations. Greece on the other hand had mutated from a fixed status society to become primarily a commercial society; both wealth and office were able to take precedence over birth, and determined social status, rather than vice versa.  

The Greeks emphasized their liberty, equality, and democracy, yet Greece was fundamentally a slave society. There is no contradiction here, yet for us, it appears contradictory. What explains the inconsistency between their view and ours? The Greek concept of democracy was not predicated on a concept of humanity, for otherwise slavery would have appeared contradictory to the Greeks. Aristotle approaches a resolution by his distinction of inferior and superior ability, but does not deny slaves social existence on the ground that slaves are not human. The idea that it was unjust for a person, qua human, to be a slave, was not a Greek idea. What was the basis on which freedom and democracy were considered rights, and what concept of slavery made it possible to regard slavery as consistent within the same reasoning?

Perhaps no idea ever appears except as a response to a problem, and perhaps an idea’s content is defined by the possibilities for resolving its problem. The demos, both smallholders and metics, relied on private property to liberate themselves from kinship aristocracy. Socialization of property would have removed the condition that had liberated them from debt-slavery. In this context the liberation or non-liberation of slaves had no relevance or effect on the primary option to prevent resurgence of the aristocracy; in this liability slavery was irrelevant, but private property was not. The Greek idea of democracy was an idea that happened by default. The idea did not appear

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46 The second variable was the degree of status rigidity between aristocracy and freeborn people. In Greece this was low. Although descent was significant, and was reinforced by aristocratic norms, it never amounted to caste or estate consciousness. From the earliest times we can perceive a tension between birth and wealth. Wealth easily upset distinctions established by birth. Cf. Mann, Michael, *The Sources of Social Power*, Volume I, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.197.
in a glorious halo at inception, such that anyone but a troglodyte could not resist the sheer beauty of its idealistic humanism. It was an alternative, an escape-solution from the realities of aristocracy and tyranny, which had themselves been implemented from the imperfections of monarchy.

The fact that slavery had existed from the earliest beginnings would suggest the evolution of agricultural slavery; since slaves were installed in all artisanal and domestic service, it ought to have been natural for slaves eventually to predominate in agricultural labor. The impediment to this natural trend seems to have been that slave labor would have entailed latifundia. As latifundia would have displaced independent labor, and agriculture was the primary instance of independent labor, the smallholders needed to enforce adherence to small property against latifundia, in order to sustain their cultural commitment to independence. Land shortage together with the belief that only agricultural work was honorable probably built strong popular opposition to latifundia. The Greeks did not practice tenant farming. The Romans did. Tenant farming would very quickly harden a class society, which the Greek passion for citizen equality abhorred. The Greeks typically avoided contract relations between citizens, because contracts, of which tenancy is an example, tended to aggravate stasis.

In the poleis of the classical period, great landowners existed, but anomalously. The Greeks did not accumulate land in the classical period; if an individual possessed a larger amount, the public would demand redivision of the land. This was an effect of the democratic vigilance to maintain equality. Tradesmen, i.e. metics, might be wealthy, but their wealth was not conspicuous and, as metics, their wealth did not

47 To whom did the land belong and by what tenure was it held? Nearly all of it in the normal Greek State was in the hands of small proprietors, who worked the soil themselves. Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; The Greek Commonwealth; The Modern Library, New York, p.237.

48 Tenancy, in our sense of the word, was therefore practically unknown in Greece. Out of the numerous inscriptions preserved which deal, in one way or another, with land, there are only “a very small number of contracts made between individuals.” Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; The Greek Commonwealth; The Modern Library, New York, p.238.
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matter because they were deprived of any political influence. This custom of reducing anyone with noticeably more land to equality discouraged efforts at land accumulation, which alone had the potentiality to be a stable form of wealth.\textsuperscript{49}

Land was prevalently divided into small holdings in which owners did the cultivation. Although the subdivision of land was the desire of the smallholders, it was an arrangement that had to be strenuously held against the natural trend to land accumulation under the aristocratic landholders. What though Solon had made debt bondage illegal, the forces that motivated debt bondage persisted. The practice of partible inheritance afterwards averted debt bondage, but in the long run led to the result it was intended to prevent. Without primogeniture, a family fortune did not consolidate and persist across generations. However, partible inheritance quickly subdivided land into parts too small for subsistence, and hence induced reversion to the debt and dependency it sought to avoid. The new land shortage in combination with the newly instituted prohibition of securing loans secured with one’s person guaranteed that nonviable smallholdings would be sacrificed.\textsuperscript{50} Reversion did not come to full

\textsuperscript{49} If a Greek citizen owned what seemed a disproportionately large amount of the land of the community, the public opinion of the marketplace clamored that it should be taken away from him and “redivided.” If a trader or a craftsman was over-wealthy nobody complained, and perhaps nobody knew. At any rate his being rich did not appear to make others poorer. But in a small City State, where land was visibly limited in amount, every additional acre to the large proprietor seemed clearly to mean an acre less for the small men. Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; The Greek Commonwealth; The Modern Library, New York, p.234.

\textsuperscript{50} The task of restoring the farms of Attica from the destruction of war, replanting of olive groves and vineyards was a slow and very expensive one, which gave ample scope to the moneylender to drive extortionate bargains with poor borrowers. As in the time of the Solon the land became overburdened with debts, as the number of mortgage stones of the fourth century testify. The small farmer began to be forced off the land; he had no capital to repair the losses he had sustained nor even to carry on. Evidently a lot of land went right out of cultivation altogether owing to its owners having been evicted for debt. A paying business was done by capitalists buying such impoverished lands up and reconditioning them for resale. The father of Ischomachus, the model farmer (and husband), had made a good thing out of such transactions. More and more agriculture became capitalistic in form. Cf. Michell, H.; The Economics of
maturity until the Hellenistic Age, but natural forces were already set in the direction of aristocracy.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{Ancient Greece}, Cambridge University Press, 1940, p.86.
\textsuperscript{51} The overwhelming majority of the Greek States, like Athens from Solon’s day onwards, were cultivated by freeholders. They worked the land with their households, dividing up the estate at death among their sons. This acted, as it does in France, as a check on the population, at any rate until new outlets were provided for a livelihood. Nearly every citizen in an ordinary Greek State was a landowner, whether the piece he owned was large or small, enough to live on or only to starve on. Cf. Zimmern, Alfred Eckard; \textit{The Greek Commonwealth}; The Modern Library, New York, p.237.