

SUVI KUOKKANEN

## ATHENIAN *OSTRAKISMOS* AND THE *HYBRIS* OF A WOULD-BE TYRANT

**Summary:** Analysing Greek literary sources together with a selection of preserved *ostraka*, this article discusses the interrelationships between the prevention of *hybris*, the perceptions of tyranny, and the purposes of practising ostracism in fifth-century Athens. It will be proposed that the political decisions to organize *ostrakophoriai* were reactions to the threat posed by hybriistic disposition of an individual – hence, ostracism played a role in detecting and punishing one’s motives and intentions. It will also be proposed that luxurious life-style was perceived by the Athenians both as a sign of Medism and of a hybriistic disposition characteristic of a would-be-tyrant. Thus, profligate life-styles of political figures might have urged the Athenians to organise *ostrakophoriai*.

**Key words:** ostracism, *hybris*, tyranny, luxury

This article discusses the interrelationship between the perceptions of tyranny, the prevention of *hybris*, and the purposes of ostracism in fifth-century Athens.<sup>1</sup> The

\* Manuscript received: December 15, 2017, accepted: September 13, 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Scholarly literature on ostracism is vast. The most recent monograph on the subject is S. FORDYKE’s *Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy. The Politics of Expulsion in Ancient Greece*. Princeton–Oxford 2005. Basic reading on the origins and original purposes of ostracism include J. CARCOPINO’s *L’Ostracisme Athénien*. Paris 1935 [1909] and R. THOMSEN’s *The Origin of Ostracism. A Synthesis*, Copenhagen 1972. Additional useful studies on the purposes and procedure of ostracism include, for instance, PHILLIPS, D. J.: Athenian Ostracism. In HORSLEY, G. H. R. (ed.): *Hellenika. Essays on Greek Politics and History*. North Ryde, NSW 1982, 21–43. On the symbolic nature and the ritual connotations of ostracizing, see also HALL, L. G. H.: Remarks on the Law of Ostracism. *Tyche* 4 (1989) 91–100; MIRHADY, D. C.: The Ritual Background to Athenian Ostracism. *AHB* 11.1 (1997) 13–19; ROSENBLOOM, D.: *Ponêroi vs. Chrêstoi*: The Ostracism of Hyperbolos and the Struggle for Hegemony in Athens after the Death of Pericles, Part I. *TAPhA* 134 (2004) 55–105; see now also KOSMIN, P. J.: A Phenomenology of Democracy: Ostracism as Political Ritual: *CLAnt* 34 (2015) 121–162. While several scholars have noted that ostracism was a punishment for rising above others, the role of the idea of *hybris* has not been sufficiently expounded. For example, A. E. RAUBITSCHKE (Theophrastus on Ostracism. *C&M* 19 [1958] 90, 109) has concluded that the original purpose of ostracism was to “punish those who rose above others”, but that one of the original causes of ostracism was “the envy of reputation/virtue”. He has also argued that ostracism

issue is studied by combining ancient Greek literary source material with a selection of preserved *ostraka*. The *ostraka* are used as evidence of the shared imagery of the ostracizing Athenians.<sup>2</sup> While no ancient author explicitly names *hybris* as an explanatory cause of introducing and using ostracism, I shall demonstrate that ostracizing was related to reacting to *hybris*. I shall claim, firstly, that *hybris* was manifested and exposed by the individual life-style and characteristics, which resembled those of (fictitious rather than factual) tyrants and, secondly, that the ostracizing Athenians reacted to *hybris* and sought to prevent its consequences.

As is well known, *ostrakismos* was a voting procedure, established probably by Cleisthenes along with his reforms implemented in 508/7 BCE,<sup>3</sup> which enabled fifth-century Athenians to exile any citizen for a period of ten years. When the ten years had passed, the subject's public status was restored. The process of ostracism proceeded as follows: once a year, the Athenians voted on whether there was a need to ostracize anyone that year. If the majority voted in favour of ostracism, a particular voting event called *ostrakophoria* was organized approximately two months later. In the *ostrakophoria*, the citizen was to inscribe the name of the man he wished to exile

---

was designed to keep in check those "who were outstanding in their arrogance". E. VANDERPOOL (*Ostracism at Athens*, Cincinnati 1970, 3) too, has stated that the idea of ostracism "was rather to clip the wings of the too ambitious man than to ruin him permanently". V. J. ROSIVACH (Some Fifth and Fourth Century Views on the Purpose of Ostracism. *Tyche* 2 [1987] 166) has noted explicitly that ostracizing "dovetails nicely" with the idea of gods punishing *hybris*.

<sup>2</sup> When studying the *ostraka*, I have utilized BRENNE, ST.: *Die Ostraka* (487–ca. 416 v. Chr.) als Testimonien (T 1). In SIEWERT, P. (ed.): *Ostrakismos-Testimonien. I. Die Zeugnisse antiker Autoren, der Inschriften und Ostraka über das athenische Scherbengericht aus vorhellenistischer Zeit (487–322 v. Chr.)*. Stuttgart 2002. When referring to *ostraka*, I have followed Brenne's numbering. I have benefited also from Brenne's numerous publications on the procedure of ostracism and on the excavated *ostraka* such as BRENNE, ST.: *Ostrakismos und Prominenz in Athen. Attische Bürger des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. auf den Ostraka*. Wien 2001; and BRENNE, ST.: 'Portraits' auf Ostraka. *MDAIA* 107 (1992) 161–185. For a recent discussion on the significance of the *ostraka* as manifestations of shared mental associations, see KOSMIN (n. 1) 134.

<sup>3</sup> There was a hiatus of around 20 years between the introduction of ostracism and its first use in 488/7. The old statement of K. J. BELOCH (*Griechische Geschichte*. Bd. 1, T. 2. Strassburg 1913, 332) is frequently repeated that a "weapon" such as ostracism is not first developed and then left unused for 20 years. The hiatus has provoked much discussion, and scholars have presented several reasons for it. For example, D. KAGAN considers in his article (The Origin and Purposes of Ostracism. *Hesperia* 30.4 [1961] 398) that Cleisthenes' intention was to threaten Hipparchus but, as Hipparchus consented to cooperate with him, there was no need to use ostracism immediately after introducing it. In a similar vein, G. R. STANTON has argued in his article (The Introduction of Ostracism and Alcmeonid Propaganda. *JHS* 110 [1970] 181) that Cleisthenes enacted ostracism to get rid of his rival, Isagoras; however, as Isagoras left the political stage, invoking ostracism became unnecessary. Another explanation of Cleisthenes' intentions has been offered by A. R. HANDS (Ostraka and the Law of Ostracism – Some Possibilities and Assumptions. *JHS* 79 [1959] 71, 76), who has suggested that by introducing ostracism, Cleisthenes showed the people that he was willing to take the risk of becoming ostracized himself. Whatever Cleisthenes' motives might have been, I find it likely that ostracism was among his reforms. This is the opinion of several other scholars, too, such as FORSDYKE (n. 1) 282. Against this view, some scholars (such as SCHREINER, J. H.: The Origin of Ostracism Again. *C&M* 31 [1970] 84–97; HIGNETT, C.: *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford 1952, 185, 189; RAUBITSCHKE, A. E.: The Origin of Ostracism. *AJA* 55 [1951] 221) have argued for the introduction of ostracism in 488/7 either by Themistocles, Aristides or Cleisthenes. Additional traditions exist which attribute the introduction of ostracism to the mythical king Theseus, a man named Achilleus, son of Lyson, and Hippias, the last tyrant of Athens. On these unconvincing traditions see THOMSEN (n. 1) 15 in detail and with references.

on an *ostrakon* (a potsherd used as a voting ballot – hence the name of the procedure). A minimum of 6000 votes had to be cast, otherwise the vote was void and no one was ostracized that year.<sup>4</sup> During the process, no charges were pressed, nor any candidates nominated, but the citizens were allowed to vote for the removal of whom-ever they wished, without giving any reasons.<sup>5</sup> Nine to fifteen ostracisms took place between 488/7 and ca. 415 BCE, and the subjects were usually prominent politicians.<sup>6</sup>

What purposes did ostracism serve? Scholars have frequently explained ostracism in political terms. For example, it has been viewed as a “negative election” and as an “inverted popularity contest”.<sup>7</sup> It has also been recurrently repeated that whatever its original purpose was, the Athenians started to use ostracism as an instrument through which they chose between rival political leaders. Moreover, Sara Forsdyke has argued that ostracism was the key factor in securing the stability of classical Athenian democracy. She claims that ostracism was both designed by Cleisthenes and employed by the Athenians to intervene in intra-elite struggles for political power. Forsdyke’s main argument is that ostracism was devised to control intra-elite competition before its turning into violence. According to this view, the Athenians prevented *stasis* by ostracizing.<sup>8</sup>

While political explanations of ostracism have been common in various studies, this article contrariwise focuses on the interrelationship between ostracizing and the desire of the Athenians to prevent *hybris*. *Hybris* was a multifaceted ethical concept which occurred in Greek literature and law and which was applied to humans, animals, and plants. The definition of *hybris* has been much discussed.<sup>9</sup> In general,

<sup>4</sup> The amount of votes required is disputed. According to Philochorus (*FGrH* 328 F 30), 6000 votes were required against one man; according to Plutarch (*Arist.* 7. 5), 6000 votes were to be cast in total. According to the latter view, the man who had received the majority of the votes was declared ostracized.

<sup>5</sup> A. MISSIOU (*Literacy and Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens*. Cambridge 2011, 50) has challenged the traditional assumption that there were no fixed lists of candidates.

<sup>6</sup> The exact number of ostracisms is disputed, but the list of the subjects of ostracism includes at least Hipparchus, son of Charmus, in 488/7; Megacles, son of Hippocrates, in 487/6 (and perhaps again in ca. 470); a third one whose name [Pseudo-]Aristotle leaves unmentioned, in 486/5; Xanthippus, son of Ariphron, in 485/4; Aristides, son of Lysimachus, in 483/2; Themistocles, son of Neocles, in ca. 471; Cimon, son of Miltiades, in 461; Thucydides, son of Melesias, most likely in 444/3; and Hyperbolus, son of Antiphanes, either in 417 or 415. Additionally, there are some disputable ostracisms: Alcibiades the Elder might have been ostracized in the 460s or 440s, Menon, son of Meneclides in 471 or 457, Damon, son of Damonides, in the 440s or 430s, and Callias, son of Didymus in the 440s. Ostracism was never officially abolished but it fell out of use after Hyperbolus’ ostracism.

<sup>7</sup> “Negative election”: DREHER, M.: *Verbannung ohne Vergehen. Der Ostrakismos (das Scherbengericht)*. In BURCKHARDT, L. – UNGERN-STERNBERG, J. VON (eds): *Große Prozesse im antiken Athen*. München 2000, 77; “inverted popularity contest”: CONNOR, R. W.: *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*. Princeton, NJ 1971, 73.

<sup>8</sup> FORSDYKE (n. 1) 151, 165 and *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> The most important studies on *hybris* include FISHER, N. R. E.: *HYBRIS. A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece*. Warminster 1992; FISHER, N. R. E.: *Hybris and Dishonour*. I. *G&R* 23 (1976) 177–193; MACDOWELL, D.: *Hybris in Athens*. *G&R* 23 (1976) 14–31; CAIRNS, D. L.: *Hybris, Dishonour, and Thinking Big*. *JHS* 116 (1996) 1–32. Further studies on *hybris* from various angles include, e.g., DICKIE, M. W.: *Hêsychia and Hybris in Pindar*. In GERBER, D. E. (ed.): *Greek Poetry and Philosophy. Studies in Honour of Leonard Woodbury*. Chico, CA 1984, 83–109; HOOKER, J. T.: The Original Meaning of “ΥΒΡΙΣ”. *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 19.2 (1975) 125–137; MICHELINI, A.: “ΥΒΡΙΣ and Plants”. *HSPH* 82 (1978) 35–44.

*hybris* referred to actions beyond due measure, and the basic meaning of the term was associated with excess in, for example, ambition. In this respect, *hybris* was related to lack of moderation and self-control. However, ever since N. R. E. Fisher's momentous study, *hybris* has been understood primarily in the context of honour and shame.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, *hybris* referred to the sense of superiority and to the pleasure gained from showing one's supremacy over one's equals. As I see it, *hybris* covered the ground of one's actions, on the one hand, and one's state of mind, on the other.<sup>11</sup> That *hybris* involved a psychological state is illustrated, for example, by Conon's behaviour described by Demosthenes in *Against Conon*. Demosthenes relates how Conon, together with his son, assaulted a man named Ariston. Demosthenes continues that Conon committed *hybris* against Ariston because after the assault, he "began to crow, mimicking fighting cocks that have won a battle and his fellows bade him flap his elbows against his sides like wings".<sup>12</sup> In Demosthenes' view, Ariston could have prosecuted Conon for *hybris*; Ariston, however, chose to prosecute Conon by *dikē aikeias* (a private action of assault).

Indeed, *hybris* was illegal in Classical Athens. A law against *hybris* (most likely enacted by Solon in the 590s) prohibited anyone from acting hybristically toward other men, women, or slaves. Interestingly, the law text does not specify what a hybristic act exactly involves. Another peculiarity in the law text is that together with hybristic actions, it also prohibits "lawless" (*paranomon*) deeds.<sup>13</sup> In this connection, I would point out that similarities existed between ostracism and *graphê hybreos*

<sup>10</sup> FISHER 1992 (n. 9) *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. MACDOWELL (n. 9) 18, 27, who has defined *hybris* as "having energy or power and misusing it self-indulgently" and as "the spirit which makes men climb Mount Everest because it is there." In a similar vein, HOOKER (n. 9) has argued that *hybris* was originally a morally neutral conception and that it could be used in the morally neutral meaning of "high spirits". CAIRNS (n. 9) has argued that *hybris* referred to "thinking big" (μέγα φρονεῖν) and that it thus involved not only one's actions but also one's thoughts and intentions. See now also CAIRNS, D. L.: Aristotle on Hybris and Injustice. In VEILLARD, C. – RENAUT, O. – EL MURR, D. (eds): *Les philosophes face au vice, de Socrate à Augustin*. Leiden 2020, 147–74; CANEVARO, M.: The Public Charge for Hybris against Slaves: The Honour of the Victim and the Honour of the Hubristês. *JHS* 138 (2018) 100–126.

<sup>12</sup> D. 54.9. Trans. Norman W. DeWitt.

<sup>13</sup> D. 21.47: εἰάν τις ὑβρίζῃ εἰς τινα, ἢ παῖδα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ ἄνδρα, τῶν ἐλευθέρων ἢ τῶν δούλων, ἢ παράνομόν τι ποιήσῃ εἰς τούτων τινά, γραφέσθω πρὸς τοὺς θεσμοθέτας ὁ βουλούμενος Ἀθηναίων οἷς ἔξεστιν, οἱ δὲ θεσμοθέται εἰσαγόντων εἰς τὴν ἡλιαίαν τριάκοντα ἡμερῶν ἀφ' ἧς ἂν γραφῇ, εἰάν μὴ τι δημόσιον κωλύῃ, εἰ δὲ μή, ὅταν ᾗ πρῶτον οἶόν τε. "If anyone assaults any child or woman or man, whether free or slave, or commits any unlawful act against anyone of these, any Athenian citizen who desires so to do, being qualified, may indict him before the Judges." Trans. A. T. Murray. The authenticity of the law in Demosthenes is accepted by RUSCHENBUSCH, E.: ὕβρεως γραφή. Ein Fremdkörper im attischen Recht des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Romanistische Abteilung* 95 (1965) 302–309; GAGARIN, M.: The Athenian Law against Hybris. In BOWERSOCK, G. W. – BURKERT, W. – PUTNAM, M. C. J. (eds): *Arktouros. Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M. W. Knox on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*. Berlin – New York 1979, 229–236; FISHER, N.: The Law of Hybris in Athens. In CARTLEDGE, P. A. – MILLETT, P. C. – TODD, S. C. (eds): *Nomos. Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society*. Cambridge 1990, 123–138; WEES, H. VAN: The Law of Hybris and Solon's Reform of Justice. In LAMBERT, S. D. (ed.): *Sociable Man. Essays on Ancient Greek Social Behaviour. In Honour of Nick Fisher*. Swansea 2011. Contrariwise, E. M. HARRIS (The *Against Meidias* [Dem. 21]. In CANEVARO, M.: *The Documents in the Attic Orators. Laws and Decrees in the Public Speeches of the Demosthenic Corpus*. Oxford 2013, 230–231) considers that the law is a forgery.

although ostracism was not a judicial procedure. Firstly, illegal *hybris* was dealt with as a *graphê* which indicates that it was regarded as a crime against the whole community.<sup>14</sup> Like a *graphê*, ostracism was also targeted against an individual on behalf of the community as a whole. Secondly, the Athenians used both ostracism and *graphê hybreos* very rarely: there is no evidence that anyone was ever convicted of *hybris*.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, it seems to have been commonplace that *dikê aikeias* was employed instead of *graphê hybreos*. Why? Douglas M. MacDowell has pointed out that Demosthenes used the word *paranomia* (the meaning of which was not only “against the law” but also “against custom” or “against unwritten rules”) and suggested that *graphê hybreos* was designed as a response to wrongdoings that had not been prohibited by a written law, but by unwritten rules. According to this view, *graphê hybreos* was infrequently employed because individual deeds could be sanctioned by law, but motive and state of mind were much harder to prove.<sup>16</sup>

The rarity of employing *graphê hybreos*, on the one hand, and invoking ostracism, on the other, might perhaps also be explained by the symbolic role that both *graphê hybreos* and ostracism may have had in the minds of fifth-century Athenians. According to Nick Fisher, the existence of the law against *hybris* reinforced the egalitarian and cohesive democratic ideology of Athens and served to persuade and compel the rich and powerful to treat their fellow-citizens with decency.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, as has been demonstrated by Sara Forsdyke, ostracism served the purpose of deterring leading politicians from doing wrong. Recognizing the symbolic nature of ostracism, Forsdyke argued that ostracism was a limited and legal form of exile which symbolized people’s power; in her view, the rarity of employing ostracism resulted from the moderate nature of Athenian democracy.<sup>18</sup>

### OSTRACISM, ANTI-TYRANNY, AND THE *HYBRIS* OF A (WOULD-BE) TYRANT

Various ancient authors associate the purpose of introducing and using ostracism with the desire of the Athenians to maintain democracy and prevent the recurrence of tyranny. The sources which maintain or imply that ostracism was targeted against those aspiring to tyranny include [Pseudo-]Aristotle’s *Athênion Politeia*, the works of

<sup>14</sup> So, e.g., VAN WEES (n. 13) 119.

<sup>15</sup> For the cases of *graphê hybreos*, see FISHER: The Law (n. 13) 123–133 with further references.

<sup>16</sup> MACDOWELL (n. 9) 26, 28. On the other hand, FISHER 1992 (n. 9) 54 and, more recently, VAN WEES (n. 13) 120 have suggested that the purpose of the term *paranomia* in this connection is to stress the anti-social nature of a hybriatic act. He suggests that the *graphê* procedure invented by Solon in 594/3 was in a sense an extension of the law against *hybris*. In van Wees’ view, the law against *hybris* was an unspecified and general procedural law and *hybris* was singled out only because it was the gravest offence of all (apart from homicides). He argues that women, children and slaves were distinguished in the text because the law was meant to establish that all citizens regardless of their age, gender, or status were entitled to bring a written indictment on behalf of anyone else.

<sup>17</sup> FISHER: The Law (n. 13) 137.

<sup>18</sup> FORSDYKE (n. 1).

the later historian Diodorus of Sicily, the atthidographers Philochorus and Androtion, as well as the much later lexicographers Hesychius (fourth century CE) and Photius (ninth century CE).<sup>19</sup> For example, Diodorus of Sicily reports that during the *ostrakophoria*, “each citizen wrote on a piece of pottery the name of the man who in his opinion had the greatest power to destroy the democracy”,<sup>20</sup> and in another passage, Diodorus reports that the voters were required to inscribe the name of the man who “seemed most capable of tyrannizing over his fellow citizens”.<sup>21</sup> As regards the intentions of the lawgiver of ostracism, the author of *Athēnaion Politeia* maintains that ostracism had been aimed at “friends of tyrants”.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Philochorus states that the law on ostracism “started when Cleisthenes enacted the law, after having overthrown the tyrants, to cast out the friends of tyrants, too”,<sup>23</sup> and according to Androtion, “the law about ostracism then first of all (*tote prōton*) having been instituted on account of suspicion of the supporters of Peisistratos, because he, being a leader of the people and general, became tyrant”.<sup>24</sup>

Numerous scholars have disagreed with the anti-tyranny explanations of ostracism with good reason. For example, L. G. H. Hall has pointed out that eliminating one politician would have made no difference in a “factional milieu” because a politician always acted together with his supporters, friends and relatives. She states that the fourth-century sources which maintain that the replacement of the friends of the tyrants was the intention of ostracism are “certainly incorrect”.<sup>25</sup> Scholars have also pointed out that there were much harsher penalties than ostracism for those who had attempted to seize tyrannical power.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, it is undeniable that tyranny and the tyrant had significant roles as the opposites of the Athenian democratic ideals of

<sup>19</sup> [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22. 6; D. S. 11. 55. 87; Photius *ostrakismos*, *Etym. Mag.* 349. 15; Hsch. *Keramikē mastix*; Androtion 324 F 6; Philoch. 328 F 30.

<sup>20</sup> D. S. 11. 55. 2: ἕκαστος τῶν πολιτῶν εἰς ὄστρακον ἔγραφε τοῦνομα τοῦ δοκοῦντος μάλιστα δύνασθαι καταλῦσαι τὴν δημοκρατίαν. Trans. C. H. Oldfather.

<sup>21</sup> D. S. 11. 87. 1: τοῦνομα τοῦ δοκοῦντος μάλιστα δύνασθαι τυραννεῖν τῶν πολιτῶν. Trans. SK.

<sup>22</sup> [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22. 6: ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν ἔτι γ’ τοὺς τῶν τυράννων φίλους ὡστράκιζον, ὃν χάριν ὁ νόμος ἐτέθη [...]

<sup>23</sup> Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 30: ἀρξάμενον νομοθετήσαντος Κλεισθένους, ὅτε τοὺς τυράννους κατέλυσεν, ὅπως συνεβάλαι καὶ τοὺς φίλους αὐτῶν. Trans. SK.

<sup>24</sup> Androtion *FGrH* 324 F 6: [...] τοῦ περὶ τὸν ὄστρακισμόν νόμου τότε πρῶτον τεθέντος διὰ τὴν ὑποψίαν τῶν περὶ Πεισίστρατον, ὅτι δημαγωγός ὢν καὶ στρατηγός ἐτυράννησεν. Trans. PHILLIPS (n. 1) 29. There has been philological debate on Androtion’s choice of the words τότε πρῶτον. Since τότε signifies “then” or “at that time” and πρῶτον “for the first time”, the problem is whether *tote* refers to something that has happened recently or twenty years ago. From a philological point of view τότε πρῶτον refers to something that has happened recently, and numerous scholars have argued that Androtion meant the year 488/7. See, e.g., THOMSEN (n. 1) 22, 23, 24; HIGNETT (n. 3) 159–160. *Contra*: CARCOPINO (n. 1) 24–28, who claims that Androtion’s account actually supports the idea of Cleisthenes as the lawgiver of ostracism. For further discussion on the possible contradiction in the ancient sources, see also KAGAN (n. 3) 394–396; BELOCH (n. 3) 332; STANTON (n. 3) 180. On the lawgiver of ostracism, see also n. 3 above.

<sup>25</sup> HALL (n. 1) 93, 99.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., FORSDYKE (n. 1) 154. The anti-tyrannical explanation of ostracism is criticized also by, for example, RHODES, P. J.: *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*. Oxford 1981, 270.

freedom and political equality between the citizens (*isonomia*), on the one hand, and as the makers of Athenian democratic civic identity, on the other.<sup>27</sup>

Anti-tyrannical ideology indisputably prevailed in fifth-century Athens.<sup>28</sup> One remarkable example of anti-tyrannical ideology was the “tyrannicide myth”<sup>29</sup> according to which Harmodius and Aristogiton had murdered the tyrant Hipparchus in 514 and brought *isonomia* to the Athenians. Statues were built in honour of the tyrannicides, and their descendants were provided with substantial privileges. The Tyrannicides group was, significantly, situated at the Agora, and the area surrounding the group of statues was left empty and isolated. It is noteworthy that the *ostrakophoriai* were performed in the immediate vicinity of the Tyrannicides and that the *ostraka* were cast in near proximity to the statues of Harmodius and Aristogiton. As has been observed recently by Paul J. Kosmin, the fact that the *ostrakophoriai* were organized next to an idealized visualization of tyrant-killing was probably no coincidence.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Vincent J. Rosivach has argued that ostracism in fact served to keep alive the figure of the tyrant.<sup>31</sup>

I find it plausible that the association between tyranny and ostracism had more to do with the role of the tyrant in Athenian imagination than with fear of actual tyranny.<sup>32</sup> The imaginary and metaphorical tyrant was viewed in an ambivalent way by fifth-century Athenians. By the last third of the fifth century, the tyrant had become a symbol. The imaginary tyrant was perceived as a civic “ogre”, and the tyrant was frequently represented as hybriatic and immoral by Greek authors: he raped and killed even his own relatives; he was perceived as paranoid, insolent, abusive, rich,

<sup>27</sup> On the role of the tyrant in democratic Athens, see ROSIVACH, V. J.: *The Tyrant in Athenian Democracy*. *QUCC* 30 (1988) 43–57; HALL, J.: *Autochthonous Autocrats: The Tyranny of the Athenian Democracy*. In VERVAET, FR. – CHONG-GOSSARD, K. O. – TURNER, A. J. (eds): *Private and Public Lies. The Discourse of Despotism and Deceit in the Graeco-Roman World*. Leiden–Boston 2010; RAAFLAUB, K. A.: *Stick and Glue: The Function of Tyranny in Fifth-Century Athens*. In MORGAN, K. A. (ed.): *Popular Tyranny. Sovereignty and Its Discontents in Ancient Greece*. Austin 2003, 59–93.

<sup>28</sup> There were various examples of the rejection of tyranny on the institutional level. These included an oath against potential tyrants and subverters of democracy (And. 1. 97–98), curses against potential tyrants, and the archaic anti-tyranny law ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 16. 10). On laws and institutions against tyranny, see OSTWALD, M.: *The Athenian Legislation against Tyranny and Subversion*. *TAPhA* 86 (1955) 107, 109, 120–123. For a more recent overview on tyrant-killing legislation, see now also TEEGARDEN, D. A.: *Death to the Tyrants! Ancient Greek Democracy and the Struggle against Tyranny*. Princeton–Oxford 2013.

<sup>29</sup> As called by J. HALL (n. 27) 16–17. On the story of Harmodius and Aristogiton: Th. 6. 54. 1 – 59. 1.

<sup>30</sup> KOSMIN (n. 1) 146, 147.

<sup>31</sup> According to ROSIVACH: *The Tyrant* (n. 27) 45, all the anti-tyrannical institutions testify that “[...] the figure of the tyrant was woven into the institutional fabric of Athenian democracy” and that the figure of the tyrant had “an effect on the consciousness of the citizen body as a whole”. On ostracism as an expulsion of an imaginary and symbolic tyrant, see also ROSENBLUM (n. 1).

<sup>32</sup> Tyrannical government was no longer a factual option in Athens after the overthrow of Hippias’ tyranny. The “real” threat was posed by political clubs and the threat was oligarchic rather than tyrannical. However, to say that there was no actual threat of a tyrannical coup is to regard the events of the fifth century in hindsight: the people living in the fifth century were not aware that there was not going to be any tyrannical takeover. Cf. ROSIVACH: *The Tyrant* (n. 27) 43, according to whom tyranny was “a familiar topic in political discussions” and “a very real threat to democracy in the eyes of many Athenians”.

immoral, and self-indulgent.<sup>33</sup> The tyrant was insensitive and treated others as if they were his slaves. The tyrant had destroyed the freedom of the citizens and made them equal with each other (but not with himself). While the prevailing way of conceiving the tyrant was probably negative, the figure of the tyrant was at the same time also endowed with positive elements because paradoxically the tyrant represented a crystallization of “competitive values”.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, the tyrant contained all the traditional competitive virtues pursued by men: he was independent, free, and a slave to no-one. Indeed, several passages from Greek literature indicate that tyranny and the tyrant did not have exclusively negative connotations in the imagery of fifth-century Athenians and that tyranny was felt as worth pursuing. For example, Eteocles names tyranny as “the greatest of the gods” (τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην) in Euripides’ *Phoenissae*, and Hecuba laments in Euripides’ *Trojan Women* that the dead Astyanax will never know “godlike tyranny” (τῆς ἰσοθέου τυραννίδος) due to his premature death.<sup>35</sup>

What were the perceived differences between legitimate and illegitimate rule? It seems that the Athenians drew a distinction between *tyrannis* and *basileia*, that is, between good and bad one-man-rule.<sup>36</sup> Apparently, *tyrannos* was used as a derogatory term by Solon and Theognis and in general, apart from when depicting the gods, *tyrannos* was always endowed with pejorative connotations.<sup>37</sup> According to Aristotle’s definition, tyranny was rule by one man without limitations, while *basileia*, in contrast, was rule “subject to certain regulations”.<sup>38</sup> In Aristotle’s political philosophy, a difference existed between the king and the tyrant (i.e., tyranny was the corrupt form of kingship), since the tyrant used law according to his own interests, while the

<sup>33</sup> ROSIVACH: The Tyrant (n. 27) 53: “The tyrant is in fact an ogre: he is arrogant, he is avaricious, he is violent, etc. etc.” See also ROSIVACH: The Tyrant (n. 27) 44; ROSIVACH (n. 1) 164.

<sup>34</sup> On the ambivalence of tyranny (as well as on the competitive and co-operative values), see ADKINS, A. W. H.: *Merit and Responsibility. A Study in Greek Values*. Oxford 1960, 164–165, 234–235; for a contradicting opinion, see RAAFLAUB (n. 27) 72.

<sup>35</sup> E. *Phoen.* 499–505; E. *Tro.* 1169.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. B. M. LAVELLE (*Fame, Money, and Power: The Rise of Peisistratos and “Democratic” Tyranny at Athens*. Ann Arbor 2005) 162, who has suggested that the difference between legitimate rule and tyranny is “[...] sometimes little more than that between pride and more pride, ambition and further ambition, between the discharge of power cloaked with a conventional sense of propriety and restraint and the unconventional or perhaps simply less proper discharge of power.” See also HEGYI, D.: Notes on the Origin of Greek Tyrannis. *AAntHung* 13 (1965) 307. On the semantics of tyrant, see PARKER, V.: Τύραννος: The Semantics of a Political Concept from Archilochus to Aristotle. *Hermes* 126 (1998) 145–172. On the Greek perceptions on sole rule in general and for an argument that sole rule was not perceived as an unanimously negative option, see MITCHELL, L.: *The Heroic Rulers of Archaic and Classical Greece*. London and New York 2013.

<sup>37</sup> However, the words *tyrannos* (“tyrant”) and *basileus* (“king”) could be used synonymously in the fifth century. Before Thucydides (1. 13. 1), who differentiates between tyranny and hereditary monarchy, both *tyrannos* and *basileus* referred to sole rule in general. J. HALL (n. 27) 27–28 has argued that the word *tyrannos* is regularly neutral or positive in connotation when it reflects the viewpoint of the ruler; conversely, from the perspective of the subjects of the tyrant, the word *tyrannos* is hostile in tone. In this view, it seems that tyranny was conceived as good for the tyrant, but bad for his subjects.

<sup>38</sup> Arist. *Rhet.* 1365b37–1366a2: μοναρχία δ’ ἐστὶν κατὰ τοῦνομα ἐν ᾗ εἰς ἀπάντων κύριός ἐστιν: τούτων δὲ ἡ μὲν κατὰ τάξιν τινὰ βασιλεία, ἡ δ’ ἄοριστος τυραννίς. “In a monarchy, as its name indicates, one man alone is supreme over all; if it is subject to certain regulations, it is called a kingdom; if it is unlimited, a tyranny.” Trans. J. H. Freese.



king used it according to the common interest.<sup>39</sup> It seems that *hybris* was among the factors which made tyranny different from legitimate one-man-rule. Ancient sources constantly associate *hybris* with tyranny. Firstly, a tyrant-like man was conceived as lacking self-control and respect for others.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, he represented an antithesis of the ideal of moderation and self-control. In democratic Athens, the moral language praised a good man as able to control his appetites and as “stronger than himself”; contrariwise, the bad man was perceived as “weaker than himself”, that is, incapable of controlling his lusts and resisting temptations like food, drink, sex, and sleep.<sup>41</sup> Man was perceived as either the master of or as slavishly and womanishly mastered by his pleasures – in the shared imagery, there was nothing between the master and the slave. If man was perceived as incapable of resisting temptations in private life, he was perceived as incapable of controlling himself in stately matters, too. A person who had sold himself on a private level was perceived as likely to sell out the common good of the city as well.<sup>42</sup>

Another connection between tyranny and *hybris* was wealth. For instance, Otanes, defending democratic rule in the Constitutional Debate of Herodotus, recognizes *hybris*, on the one hand, and envy on the other, as the causes of a monarch’s crimes. He represents *hybris* as being engendered by prosperity and as depending upon external circumstances (i.e. excessive wealth and power).<sup>43</sup> In Otanes’ view, tyranny brings material advantages to the tyrant and these advantages, in turn, create *hybris*.<sup>44</sup> In addition to Herodotus’ Otanes, numerous ancient Greek authors, too, conceived *hybris* as concerning the rich rather than the poor.<sup>45</sup> According to the general cultural pattern already prevalent in archaic Greece, *hybris* was considered as being inflicted by prosperity and well-being (*olbos*) which caused *koros* (“satience”, or, as M. W. Dickie has aptly translated it, “feeling well-filled and pleased with oneself”<sup>46</sup>). According to this traditional view, satiety and excess in wealth (*koros*) caused *hybris*. In this respect, *hybris* referred both to the state of having eaten or drunk too much

<sup>39</sup> Arist. *EN* 1160a–b.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Plato’s “tyrannical man” presented in the *Republic* (571b–573c) is shameless and has no control over his lusts. According to Plato, all the darkest depths of the soul are shared by all but expressed in action only by the tyrannical man. The tyrannical man expects to rule over men and gods, and he has no control over the forces that have taken him.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. WINKLER, J. J.: *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York 1990, 49, 50. For a discussion on the ideal of male self-control, see also WEES, H. VAN: A Brief History of Tears. In FOXHALL, L. – SALMON, J. (eds): *When Men Were Men. Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*. London – New York 1998, 10–53.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. WINKLER (n. 41) 50, 57.

<sup>43</sup> Hdt. 3. 80. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. S. *OT* 873: “*hybris* breeds the tyrant” (ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον). For a discussion on the wording (whether the text states that *hybris* breeds the tyrant or tyranny begets *hybris*), see WINNINGTON-INGRAM, R. P.: The Second Stasimon of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. *JHS* 91 (1971) 124–127; SCODEL, R.: *Hybris in the Second Stasimon of the Oedipus Rex*: *CPh* 77 (1982) 214–223.

<sup>45</sup> For example, Aristotle states in the *Rhetoric* (1390b32–1391a19) that a rich man is arrogant and full of *hybris*. Lysias (24.16–17), too, attributes *hybris* to the rich rather than to the poor as he states that the rich are more likely to commit *hybris* because they can pay themselves off, while the poor are forced to behave moderately as they do not have the means to buy themselves off.

<sup>46</sup> DICKIE (n. 9) 108.

and to one's naïve confidence in the continuation of his good luck and success. This sort of *hybris* was conceived as characteristic of the youth, the rich and the drunken.<sup>47</sup> In this view, material well-being was thought to engender great human villains. This was also true in the world of plants: overnurtured plants which failed to produce fruit or crops were depicted in Aristotle's botanical texts as hybriatic.<sup>48</sup>

## OSTRACISM AND ANTI-SUPERIORITY

According to [Pseudo-]Aristotle, after ostracizing friends of tyrants for three years, the Athenians started to ostracize also those who "seemed to be too great" (καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἴ τις δοκοίη μείζων εἶναι).<sup>49</sup> By stating εἴ ... δοκοίη μείζων εἶναι, the author appears to emphasize the subjective element and to imply that the impression that a man gave of himself mattered more than his actual status and position. Likewise, Pseudo-Andocides maintains that "men of sense should beware of those of their fellows who grow too great (τοὺς ὑπεραυξανομένους), remembering that it is such as they who set up tyrannies."<sup>50</sup> Pseudo-Andocides states also that ostracism was instituted against those members of the community who were "more powerful than the magistrates and the laws" (τοὺς κρείττους τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ τῶν νόμων).<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, according to Aristotle's *Politics*, the intention of ostracism was to replace those who had managed to acquire too much influence due to their wealth or friends or some other form of political power. In the Aristotelian view, ostracism served as a "remedy", which was to be employed whenever either one man or a body of men had gained excessive predominance.<sup>52</sup> According to Aristotle, ostracism could be approved as politically just, if there was general acknowledgement that someone was predominant (ὁμολογουμένης ὑπεροχῆς), but it turned unjust, if a man was ostracized because of his inner qualifications, that is, his virtue.<sup>53</sup>

According to Aristotle, democratic *poleis* utilized ostracism in order to pursue equality:

This is why democratically-governed states institute the system of ostracism – because of a reason of this nature; for these are the states considered

<sup>47</sup> Drunkenness: Ar. *Vesp.* 1300–1310; Antiph. 4. 1. 6–7; Ar. *Eccl.* 664. *Hybris* and youth: Arist. *Rhet.* 1378b28–9; Pl. *Euthyd.* 273a–b; Pl. *Leg.* 808d; Xen. *Lac. Pol.* 3.2; E. *Supp.* 229–245; Antiph. 4. 4. 2 (denying that *hybris* belongs to the youth); Ar. *Thesm.* 59–63. Richness causes complacency: Pl. *Ol.* 13. 1–10; Hdt. 8. 77. 1–2; E. *Supp.* 464; E. *Supp.* 741–743; Ar. *Plut.* 564; Th. 3. 45. 4; D. 21. 98; E. *El.* 947.

<sup>48</sup> Arist. *On the Generation of Animals* 725b35. See also FISHER 1992 (n. 9) 19: "In plants the undesirable element in the *hybris* consists in the plants' 'disobedient' failure to produce crops or fruit." On hybriatic plants, see also MICHELINI (n. 9) *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22. 6. Trans. H. Rackham.

<sup>50</sup> [And.] 4. 24: ἐστὶ δὲ σωφρόνων ἀνδρῶν φυλάττεσθαι τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς ὑπεραυξανομένους, ἐνθυμουμένους ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων τὰς τυραννίδας καθισταμένας. Trans. K. J. Maidment.

<sup>51</sup> [And.] 4.35. Trans. K. J. Maidment.

<sup>52</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1302b15–21.

<sup>53</sup> In the Aristotelian view, those who exceed others in virtue are like gods among men and should be appointed as kings whom others should obey: Arist. *Pol.* 1284b15–30, 1288a15–25.

to pursue equality most of all things, so that they used to ostracize men thought to be outstandingly powerful on account of wealth or popularity or some other form of political strength and used to banish them out of the city for fixed periods of time. And there is a mythical story that the Argonauts left Heracles behind for a similar reason; for the Argo refused to carry him with the other voyagers because he was so much heavier. Hence, also those who blame tyranny and Periander's advice to Thrasylbulus must not be thought to be absolutely right in their censure (the story is that Periander made no reply to the herald sent to ask his advice, but leveled the corn-field by plucking off the ears that stood out above the rest; and consequently, although the herald did not know the reason for what was going on, when he carried back news of what had occurred, Thrasylbulus understood that he was to destroy the outstanding citizens); for this policy is advantageous not only for tyrants, nor is it only tyrants that use it, but the same is the case with oligarchies and democracies as well; for ostracism has, in a way, the same effect as docking off the outstanding men by exile.<sup>54</sup>

In this passage, Aristotle describes ostracism as a way of ridding the city of outstanding citizens. He explicitly equals the mechanism of ostracism with Periander's plucking of the outstanding ears of crop and with Argo's refusal to carry Heracles. Therefore, he seems to view ostracism as a kind of "equalizer". Since Aristotle tells the story to provide an analogy with ostracism, the ostracizing body of people becomes equated with the tyrant Periander.<sup>55</sup> I agree with Thomas Harrison who sees the anecdote as reminiscent of a Herodotean passage where Artabanus depicts the behaviour of the god who is "prone to cut down (κολοῦειν) all things that stand out (τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα)".<sup>56</sup> In this view, the tyrant Periander of the Aristotelian anecdote (i.e. the ostracizing body of people) is arrogating the privileges of the gods.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1284a17–37: διὸ καὶ τίθενται τὸν ὀστρακισμόν αἱ δημοκρατούμεναι πόλεις, διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην αἰτίαν: αὐταὶ γὰρ δὴ δοκοῦσι διώκειν τὴν ἰσότητα μάλιστα πάντων, ὥστε τοὺς δοκοῦντας ὑπερέχειν δυνάμει διὰ πλοῦτον ἢ πολυφιλίαν ἢ τινα ἄλλην πολιτικὴν ἰσχὺν ὡστράκιζον καὶ μεθίστασαν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως χρόνους ὀρισμένους. μυθολογεῖται δὲ καὶ τοὺς Ἀργοναύτας τὸν Ἡρακλέα καταλιπεῖν διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν: οὐ γὰρ ἐθέλειν αὐτὸν ἄγειν τὴν Ἀργὴ μετὰ τῶν πλωτῆρων τῶν ἄλλων, ὥς ὑπερβάλλοντα πολὺ. διὸ καὶ τοὺς ψέγοντας τὴν τυραννίδα καὶ τὴν Περιάνδρου Θρασυβούλῳ συμβουλίαν οὐχ ἀπλῶς οἰητέον ὀρθῶς ἐπιτιμᾶν (φασὶ γὰρ τὸν Περιάνδρον εἰπεῖν μὲν οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν πεμφθέντα κήρυκα περὶ τῆς συμβουλίας, ἀφαιροῦντα δὲ τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας τῶν σταχῶν ὁμαλῶναι τὴν ἄρουραν: ὅθεν ἀγνοοῦντος μὲν τοῦ κήρυκος τοῦ γιγνομένου τὴν αἰτίαν, ἀπαγγέιλαντος δὲ τὸ συμπεσόν, συννοήσαι τὸν Θρασύβουλον ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας ἄνδρας ἀναιρεῖν). τοῦτο γὰρ οὐ μόνον συμφέρει τοῖς τυράννοις, οὐδὲ μόνον οἱ τύραννοι ποιοῦσιν, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως ἔχει καὶ περὶ τὰς ὀλιγαρχίας καὶ τὰς δημοκρατίας: ὁ γὰρ ὀστρακισμὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει δυνάμιν τρόπον τινὰ τῷ κολοῦειν τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας καὶ φυγαδεύειν. Trans. H. Rackham.

<sup>55</sup> The same story is told also by Herodotus (5.92F2–G1) with the roles of the tyrants reversed. According to Herodotus, too, the tyrant's advice was "to slay those of his townsmen who were outstanding in influence or ability (τοὺς ὑπερόχους τῶν ἀστών)." Trans. A. D. Godley.

<sup>56</sup> Hdt. 7.10E1.

<sup>57</sup> HARRISON, TH.: The Cause of Things: Envy and the Emotions in Herodotus' *Histories*. In KONSTAN, D. – RUTTER, N. K. (eds): *Envy, Spite and Jealousy. The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh 2003, 159.

Also later authors such as Diodorus of Sicily and Plutarch assume that the desire to bring down men in power motivated Athenian decisions to ostracize. According to Plutarch, ostracism was “a humbling and docking of oppressive prestige and power”, while Diodorus of Sicily relates that the law on ostracism was passed “not for the purpose of punishing wrongdoing, but in order to lower through exile the presumption of men who had risen too high”.<sup>58</sup> Plutarch also relates that the advisor of Pericles and a philosopher of music, Damon, son of Damonides was ostracized owing to his pride and reputation.<sup>59</sup> Along similar lines, Pericles is paralleled in the comic poet Cratinus’ undatable fragment with Zeus because he is “parading about like Zeus, glorying in his building projects” since he had managed to escape ostracism.<sup>60</sup> As has been noticed by Vincent J. Rosivach, Cratinus’ passage implies that ostracism was expected to restrain hybriistic behavior.<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, Plutarch states about Themistocles (who was ostracized in ca. 471) that

[...] they visited him with ostracism, curtailing his dignity (τὸ ἀξίωμα) and pre-eminence (τὴν ὑπεροχήν), as they were wont to do in the case of all whom they thought to have oppressive power, and to be incommensurate with true democratic equality (πρὸς ἰσότητα δημοκρατικὴν ἀσυμμέτρους εἶναι).<sup>62</sup>

According to contemporary sources, ostracism was targeted at men whose authority caused fear. For example, Thucydides implies that ostracism was employed to banish those who roused fear because of their power (δύναμις) and authority (ἀξίωμα). According to Thucydides, the demagogue Hyperbolus was ostracized (in ca. 415) “not from fear of his influence on position, but because he was a rascal and a disgrace to the city”.<sup>63</sup> The passage obviously indicates that in Thucydides’ view, ostracism

<sup>58</sup> Plu. *Arist.* 7. 2: μοχθηρίας γὰρ οὐκ ἦν κόλασις ὁ ἐξοστρακισμός, ἀλλ’ ἐκαλεῖτο μὲν δι’ εὐπρέπειαν ὄγκου καὶ δυνάμεως βαρυτέρας ταπεινώσις καὶ κόλουσις, ἦν δὲ φθόνου παραμυθία φιλάνθρωπος, εἰς ἀνήμεστον οὐδέν, ἀλλ’ εἰς μετὰστασιν ἐτῶν δέκα τὴν πρὸς τὸ λυποῦν ἀπεριειδομένου δυσμένειαν. Trans. B. Perrin. D. S. 11. 55. 3: νομοθετῆσαι δὲ ταῦτα δοκοῦσιν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, οὐχ ἵνα τὴν κακίαν κολάζωσιν, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τὰ φρονήματα τῶν ὑπερεχόντων ταπεινότερα γένηται διὰ τὴν φυγὴν. Trans. C. H. Oldfather.

<sup>59</sup> Plu. *Nic.* 6. 1. See also [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 27. 4 for a claim that Damon was ostracized due to his position as Pericles’ advisor. Elsewhere, Plutarch explains ostracism repeatedly in terms of envy: see, e.g., Plu. *Arist.* 7. 2; Plu. *Nic.* 11. 1; Plu. *Arist.* 1. 2–3; Plu. *Alc.* 13. 4.

<sup>60</sup> ὁ σχινοκέφαλος Ζεὺς ὅδε / προσέρχεται τῷδεῖον ἐπὶ τοῦ κρανίου / ἔχων, ἐπειδὴ τοῦστρακον παροίχεται.

<sup>61</sup> ROSIVACH (n. 1) 166.

<sup>62</sup> Plu. *Them.* 22. 3: τὸν μὲν οὖν ἐξοστρακισμὸν ἐποιήσαντο κατ’ αὐτοῦ κολοῦντες τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ τὴν ὑπεροχήν, ὥσπερ εἰώθεσαν ἐπὶ πάντων, οὓς ᾤοντο τῇ δυνάμει βαρεῖς καὶ πρὸς ἰσότητα δημοκρατικὴν ἀσυμμέτρους εἶναι. κόλασις γὰρ οὐκ ἦν ὁ ἐξοστρακισμός, ἀλλὰ παραμυθία φθόνου καὶ κουφισμός ἡδομένου τῷ ταπεινῶν τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας καὶ τὴν δυσμένειαν εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἀτιμίαν ἀποπνέοντος. Trans. B. Perrin.

<sup>63</sup> Th. 8. 73. 3: καὶ Ὑπέρβολόν τε τινα τῶν Ἀθηναίων, μοχθηρὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὡστρακισμένον οὐ διὰ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀξιωματος φόβον, ἀλλὰ διὰ πονηρίαν καὶ αἰσχύνην τῆς πόλεως, Trans. J. M. Dent and E. P. Dutton. Note that the fear (*phobos*) felt by the people was irrational and it was thus not based on the factual qualities of the “candidate” of ostracism. Cf. HEFTNER, H.: Die Aussagen der Testimonien über die ‘Zielgruppe’ des Ostrakismos. In SIEWERT (n. 2) 495.

was usually employed to banish persons of authority and power. Similarly, the comic poet Plato writes about Hyperbolus:

Although he got what he deserved,  
his fate was too good for him and his slave brands.  
For ostracism was not invented for men such as he.<sup>64</sup>

This poetic passage, too, states that Hyperbolus was not worthy of being subjected to ostracism. In the case of Hyperbolus' ostracism, it is plausible that the target the Athenians had in mind before the vote on organizing the *ostrakophoria*, had been Alcibiades. The "undemocratic lawlessness" (οὐ δημοτικὴν παρανομίαν) of Alcibiades' life-style had roused fear of a tyrannical takeover.<sup>65</sup> Also, the sacrilegious profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries and the mutilation of the Herms (of which Alcibiades was accused) were seen as indicators of a tyrannical coup. Indeed, Alcibiades was a likely victim of ostracism owing to his arrogance as well as to his anti-egalitarian and undemocratic way of life.<sup>66</sup> According to Thucydides, the Athenians feared Alcibiades as a potential tyrant due to his prestige and because his personal conduct made him a potential tyrant.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Pseudo-Andocides attacks Alcibiades due to his greed, *paranomia*, and unwillingness to be equal with others. Pseudo-Andocides maintains that Alcibiades deserves to be ostracized because he "shows the democracy to be nothing better than a sham, by talking like a champion of the people and acting like a tyrant".<sup>68</sup> He also compares Alcibiades with Callias, son of Didymus (who was perhaps ostracized earlier) and claims that Alcibiades the Elder (Alcibiades' paternal grandfather), as well as Megacles (his maternal grandfather), were ostracized twice.<sup>69</sup>

Alcibiades' refusal to respect the boundaries of democratic equality, his extravagant way of life as well as his pastime of breeding horses were seen as signs of his *paranomia*.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the Athenians associated hippotrophy with ostracism. As will be demonstrated below, Alcibiades' maternal grandfather, Megacles (ostracized in 486) was associated with horses on numerous *ostraka*. In this respect, it is interesting that a central event prompting suspicions of Alcibiades' tyrannical desires

<sup>64</sup> Plu. *Nic.* 11. 6: καίτοι πέπραχε τῶν προτέρων μὲν ἄξια, / αὐτοῦ δὲ καὶ τῶν σιγμάτων ἀνάξια: / οὐ γὰρ τοιούτων εἶνεκ' ὄστραχ' εὐρέθη. Trans. FORSDYKE (n. 1) 153.

<sup>65</sup> Th. 6. 28. 2.

<sup>66</sup> ROSIVACH (n. 1) 164.

<sup>67</sup> Th. 6. 15. 3–4.

<sup>68</sup> [...] οὐδενὸς ἄξιαν τὴν δημοκρατίαν ἀποφαίνει, τοὺς μὲν λόγους δημαγωγοῦ τὰ δ' ἔργα τυράννου παρέχον, καταμαθὼν ὑμᾶς τοῦ μὲν ὀνόματος φροντίζοντας, τοῦ δὲ πράγματος ἀμελοῦντας. [And.] 4. 27. Trans. K. J. Maidment.

<sup>69</sup> [And.] 4. 32; 4. 34. Similarly, also Lysias (14. 39) states that Ἀλκιβιάδην μὲν τὸν πρόπαππον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν πατὴρ πρὸς μητρὸς πάππον Μεγακλέα οἱ ὑμέτεροι πρόγονοι δις ἀμφοτέρους ἐξωστράκισαν. "[...] it was Alcibiades, his great-grand-father, and Megacles, his father's grandfather on the mother's side, whom your ancestors ostracized, both of them twice [...]" Trans. W. R. M. Lamb.

<sup>70</sup> OSTWALD, M.: *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law. Law, Society, and Politics in Fifth-Century Athens*. Berkeley 1986, 116. On Alcibiades, see also GRIBBLE, D.: *Alcibiades and Athens. A Study in Literary Presentation*. Oxford 1999.

may have been his victory of the chariot race at the Olympic Games of 416.<sup>71</sup> Various connections existed between tyranny and Olympic victory. Firstly, Panhellenic athletic victory was associated with tyranny because no democratic leader had won on the circuit before Alcibiades. Secondly, Alcibiades' victory might have reminded the Athenians of the Olympic victor Cylon's attempt to set himself up as a tyrant. Thirdly, the victory bestowed the victor with a precarious mystique; tyranny was regarded as a reward for victories which were so great that the society could not compensate them.<sup>72</sup> In this connection, too, tyrannical desires were associated with *hybris*, and ostracism might have been employed at least in this case to exile a symbolic tyrant.<sup>73</sup>

### OSTRACIZING A HYBRISTIC WOULD-BE TYRANT

It has been argued that none of the preserved *ostraka* support the anti-tyranny explanation of ostracism.<sup>74</sup> However, an image of a hybristic would-be-tyrant is evident on a variety of survived *ostraka*. While it is true that no *ostrakon* accuses the target straightforwardly of tyranny, numerous *ostraka* label their targets as Persians. In this connection, it should be noted that the notion of tyranny intermingled and overlapped with Persia, on the one hand, and with *hybris*, on the other. Soon after Marathon, the Athenians had begun to believe that victory over the Persians had signified the victory of democratic values and principles over tyrannical ones. After the Persian Wars, the Persian Great King became an example of a hybristic despot in the minds of the Athenians.<sup>75</sup> The victory over the Persians was recognized as not only a victory of democracy over tyranny but also as an Athenian victory over *hybris*.<sup>76</sup> By the time of

<sup>71</sup> Various ancient Greek sources associate the *ostrakophoria* of 415 with Alcibiades' Olympic victory in 416. See, e.g., Plu. *Alc.* 11–12; [And.] 4. 25–33; Th. 6. 16–17. 1. On Alcibiades' numerous transgressions, see also [And.] 4. 26–29, 4. 29–31; Isoc. 16. 1, 16. 34; D. S. 13. 74. 3–4; Plu. *Alc.* 13. 3; Ath. 1.3E, 12.534D. See also ROSENBLOOM (n. 1) 72–74 for further discussion and bibliography.

<sup>72</sup> So ROSENBLOOM (n. 1) 74.

<sup>73</sup> For example, Pseudo-Andocides (4.29) accuses Alcibiades of committing “*hybris* against the whole *polis*” (τὴν πόλιν ὅλην ὑβρίζων) and appearing “more powerful than the entire *polis*” (μεῖζον ἀπάσης τῆς πόλεως δυνάμενον). For the *ostrakophoria* of 415 as an expulsion of a symbolic tyrant, see also ROSENBLOOM (n. 1).

<sup>74</sup> SCHEIDEL, W.: Aussagen der Testimonien über die Institution des Ostrakismos. In SIEWERT (n. 2) 485.

<sup>75</sup> Herodotus (7.8B.2–7.8C.2) equates Xerxes' “thinking big” with *hybris* as he portrays Xerxes as wishing to yoke the Hellespont and dreaming that he encompasses “all the lands on which the sun shines” after conquering Greece. I agree with CAIRNS (n. 9) 14 who considers this “a perfectly standard case of *hybris* involving the pursuit of greater honour for oneself in a way that threatens the honour of others”. For a recent study on Xerxes in Greek imagination, see BRIDGES, E.: *Imagining Xerxes. Ancient Perspectives on a Persian King*. London 2015 [Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception].

<sup>76</sup> For example, in Aeschylus' *Persae*, the Athenians are represented as having been victorious in Salamis owing to the gods, on the one hand, and due to the *hybris* of the Persians, on the other. For a discussion, see, e.g., GOLDBILL, S.: Battle Narrative and Politics in Aeschylus' *Persae*. In HARRISON, TH. (ed.): *Greeks and Barbarians*. Edinburgh 2002, 51, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60; RAUHALA, M. – KUOKKANEN, S.: Orja taikka alamainen ei kellekään. Voittoisa Salamis ateena-laikansallisen identiteetin tekijänä Aiskhy-

Aeschylus' *Persians*, the Athenians had started to explain the Persian defeats in 490–479 by the luxury, softness, and *hybris* of the Persians. After the Persian Wars, a luxurious life-style started to be viewed as a sign of the moral decline and decadence of the Persians. Luxury was associated with the aristocratic elite and with the connections with the East and it was associated with *hybris* because it was perceived as collapsing the distance between the humans and the gods and bridging the gulf between immortals and mortals.<sup>77</sup>

Various *ostraka* connect their target with Persia. For example, 16 *ostraka* against Callias, son of Cratias associate him with Persia. Some comments inscribed on the *ostraka* against Callias state that Callias comes from Media (ἐκ Μῆδων), while other *ostraka* simply call him a Medizer (Μῆδοϛ).<sup>78</sup> Obviously, this kind of vocabulary and imagery is neither neutral nor is it to be taken literally. As has been observed by Stefan Brenne, reference is not made to Callias' political opinions on these *ostraka*, but rather to his personal contacts with the enemy and to the influence that the Persians had on him.<sup>79</sup> In addition, one fragmentary *ostrakon* against Callixenus presents a head in profile, which looks rightward and wears a crown-like object. Stefan Brenne considers that the thorny, crown-like thing covering the head represents a cock's wattle. He associates the graffito with aggrandizement and arrogance fitting for a man viewed as a suitable "candidate" for ostracism.<sup>80</sup> The cock was associated with Medism, too, and comedians had named the cock "Persian bird".<sup>81</sup> The cock's wattle and the king's crown were strongly associated with each other in, for example, Aristophanes' *Birds*.<sup>82</sup> Hence, an association with the cock could be connected with the accusation of Medism. I agree with Brenne that the graffito imitates the Great

---

loksen Persialaissa. *Faravid* 42 (2016) 5–30 (with a summary in English: Nobody's Slaves or Subjects: Triumph at Salamis as the Maker of Athenian National Identity in Aeschylus' *Persae*).

<sup>77</sup> On the connections between luxury, *hybris*, Persia, and aristocracy: MORRIS, I.: The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy. In OBER, J. – HEDRICK, CH. (eds): *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*. Princeton 1996, 32, 38; BRIANT, P.: History and Ideology: The Greeks and 'Persian decadence'. Translated by A. Nevill. In HARRISON: *Greeks* (n. 76) 202; KURKE, L.: The Politics of ἀβροσύνη in Archaic Greece: *CLAnt* 11.1 (1992) 96.

<sup>78</sup> BRENNE: *Die Ostraka* (n. 2) T 1 / 46–61.

<sup>79</sup> BRENNE: *Portraits* (n. 2) 177; BRENNE 2002 (n. 2) 90. See also HALL, J.: Ethnicity and Cultural Change. In RAAFLAUB, K. A. – WEES, H. VAN (eds): *A Companion to Archaic Greece*. Oxford 2009, 616–617 (on Eastern influences).

<sup>80</sup> BRENNE: *Die Ostraka* (n. 2) 142; on the Callixenus *ostrakon*, see also BRENNE: *Portraits* (n. 2) 177–184.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. Ar. *Av.* 275 ff. See also BRENNE: *Portraits* (n. 2) 180 n. 83.

<sup>82</sup> Ar. *Av.* 483–487: Πισθέταιρος: ὥς δ' οὐχὶ θεοὶ τοῖνυν ἦρχον τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ παλαιόν, ἀλλ' ὄρνιθες, κάβασιλευον, πόλλ' ἐστὶ τεκμήρια τούτων. ἀντίκα δ' ὑμῖν πρῶτ' ἐπιδείξω τὸν ἀλεκτρυόν', ὥς ἐτυράννει ἡρχέ τε Περσῶν πρῶτον πάντων Δαρείου καὶ Μεγαβάζου, ὥστε καλεῖται Περσικὸς ὄρνις ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐτ' ἐκείνης.

Ἐυελπίδης: διὰ ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἔχων καὶ νῦν ὥσπερ βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας διαβάσκει ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὴν κυρβασίαν τῶν ὄρνιθων μόνος ὀρθήν.

“(Pisthetaerus): It was not the gods, but the birds, who were formerly the masters and kings over men; of this I have a thousand proofs. First of all, I will point you to the cock, who governed the Persians before all other monarchs, before Darius and Megabazus. It's in memory of his reign that he is called the Persian bird. (Euelpides): For this reason, also, even to-day, he alone of all the birds wears his tiara straight on his head, like the Great King.” Trans. E. O'Neill.

King of Persia. In this respect, this *ostrakon* serves as evidence of the association between *hybris*, Persia, tyranny, and ostracism.

Various *ostraka* were addressed against Megacles, son of Hippocrates, too, and they indicate that at least some ostracizers saw him as a hybriatic would-be tyrant.<sup>83</sup> Megacles, a wealthy member of the Alcmaeonid family and one of the men labelled by [Pseudo-]Aristotle as a “friend of tyrants”, was ostracized in 486 and perhaps again approximately 15 years later. The *ostraka* attack Megacles’ luxurious life-style and his habit of horse-breeding in particular. The “epithets” given to Megacles on the *ostraka* include “adulterer” (ὁ μοιχός) and “silver-loving” (φιλάργ[υρος]). Also Megacles’ “new hairstyle”, his arrogant extravagance, and the hereditary Cylonian curse of the Alcmaeonid family have drawn the attention of the voters.<sup>84</sup>

The two *ostraka* referring to Megacles’ “new hairstyle” (νέα κόμη) may have referred to his desire for tyranny.<sup>85</sup> Long hair might have been perceived as a sign of aspiration for tyranny: for example, Herodotus reports that Cylon, who had attempted to seize tyranny in the seventh century, “groomed himself” or literally “grew his hair long” (ἐκόμησε).<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, as long hair was associated with luxury, I find it plausible that the ostracizers referring to Megacles’ new hairstyle may have based their voting decisions on the luxurious and aristocratic life-style of Megacles. On the other hand, these *ostraka* also indicate that the two ostracizers perhaps viewed themselves as cutters-down-to-size of Megacles’ hair and thus as judges determining Megacles’ social status. Another possibility is that the “new hairstyle” *ostraka* share the same idea with the *ostrakon* on which the ostracizer calls Megacles a μοιχός: according to Athenian custom, an adulterer’s hair was cut short.<sup>87</sup> In addition, several *ostraka* targeted at Megacles refer to horses. One *ostrakon* is addressed “to Megacles, son of Hippocrates, and to the horse, too”, and several *ostraka* call Megacles *hippotrophos* (“horsekeeper”).<sup>88</sup> Horse-breeding was related to one’s wealth and social status, and these *ostraka* can be interpreted as comments on Megacles’ rich, aristocratic, and luxurious life-style.

Significantly, Megacles is called ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ on one *ostrakon*.<sup>89</sup> Stefan Brenne has interpreted the word ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ as related to the word τρυφή (“luxury”) and he considers that this *ostrakon* refers to Megacles’ arrogance, overindulgence, and luxurious lifestyle. Another possibility is that ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ referred to Trophonios

<sup>83</sup> There is significantly more archaeological than literary evidence on the ostracism of Megacles, against whom, according to BRENNE (Die Ostraka [n. 2] 62) 4142 *ostraka* have been unearthed.

<sup>84</sup> “New hairstyle”: BRENNE: Die Ostraka 2002 (n. 2) T 1/107–108. Three *ostraka* call Megacles “cursed” or “Cylonean”. These might refer to Megacles’ support of Cylon: see BRENNE: Die Ostraka (n. 2) 104.

<sup>85</sup> In my view, KOSMIN (n. 1) 149 pushes it too far when he suggests that νέα κόμη referred to a “new village” represented by the enclosure which Kosmin understands symbolically as a *barathron*. I believe that a reference to Megacles’ “new hairstyle” is more likely.

<sup>86</sup> Hdt. 5. 71. 1; cf. Th. 1. 126; Plu. Sol. 12. For another reference to cutting long hair, although in a completely different context, see Anacr. fr. 347 PMG. See also HARRISON: The Cause (n. 57) 147.

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., ROSENBLOOM (n. 1).

<sup>88</sup> The *ostraka* which refer to horses: BRENNE: Die Ostraka (n. 2) T 1/101–105; T 1/158.

<sup>89</sup> BRENNE: Die Ostraka (n. 2) T 1/113.



(Τροφώνιος), the mythical builder of the first temple of Apollo in Delphi. Nonetheless, the literal meaning of ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ is “nurtured” (τροφέω = “to nurture”). Brenne rejects this translation because it “makes no sense”.<sup>90</sup> However, I would consider also this meaning of the word plausible in the context presented above. The word ἐξυβρίζειν (“to break out in *hybris*”) is used by Aristotle in his botanical texts to refer to vines which “goat” (τράγον) – that is, to a condition of not producing ripe fruit but creating a profusion of flowers and leaf instead. The vines break out in *hybris* due to excessive nurturing (διὰ τὴν τροφήν).<sup>91</sup>

Accepting Ann Michelini’s view that an analogy existed between hybriatic plants and hybriatic men,<sup>92</sup> I would propose that the ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ *ostrakon* is in accordance with other *ostraka* which indirectly label Megacles as a *hybristês*.<sup>93</sup> Megacles’ material well-being is repeatedly referred to on the *ostraka* which refer to his habit of horse-breeding as well as to his love of silver. As I see it, the word ΤΡΟΦΟΝΟΣ is here related to Megacles’ hybriatic condition which had resulted in, to speak metaphorically, producing only leaves instead of fruit. Megacles’ abundance of nurture (that is, his great wealth, his *koros*) was perhaps among the reasons of this citizen for voting for the ostracism of Megacles. The ostracizer perhaps thought that Megacles’ *koros* had made him break out in *hybris*; this, in turn, would perhaps later manifest itself in an attempt of tyrannical takeover. This view is in accordance with the *ostraka* which associate Megacles with a woman named Coisyrā.<sup>94</sup> Coisyrā is referred to in the *scholia* of Aristophanes’ comedies as an Eretrian, and her name became synonymous with arrogant extravagance, high-living, wealth, nobility, “thinking big” (μέγα φρονεῖν) and tyrannical temperament.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, I would agree with B. M. Lavelle who has argued that “extravagance and high living, tantamount to tyrannical disposition” contributed to Megacles’ ostracism.<sup>96</sup>

In conclusion, I would argue that ostracism played a role in detecting and punishing one’s motives and intentions. I would suggest that it was primarily the hybriatic disposition against which the institution of ostracism was an answer. This view is in accordance with the traditional cultural pattern *koros* → *hybris* (→ *atê*) found in early Greek literature.<sup>97</sup> One question remains, however, which still needs further

<sup>90</sup> BRENNÉ: Die Ostraka (n. 2) 119.

<sup>91</sup> ὅμοιον δὲ καὶ τὸ περὶ τὰς τραγώσας ἀμπέλους πάθος, αἱ διὰ τὴν τροφήν ἐξυβρίζουσιν [...]. Arist. *On the Generation of Animals* 725b35. See also FISHER 1992 (n. 9) 19.

<sup>92</sup> MICHELINI (n. 9).

<sup>93</sup> I have suggested this also in KUOKKANEN, S.: Ostracism, Inner Change and the Dynamics of Reintegration in Classical Athens. *Pallas* 112 (2020) (= LODDO, L. [ed.]: *Political Refugees in the Ancient Greek World: Literary, Historical and Philosophical Essays. Proceedings of the International Conference, Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l’homme, Aix-en-Provence, June 16–17, 2017*) 67–91.

<sup>94</sup> BRENNÉ: Die Ostraka (n. 2) 118, 119. On the identity of Coisyrā, see LAVELLE, B. M.: Coisyrā and Megacles, the Son of Hippokrates. *GRBS* 30 (1989) 505.

<sup>95</sup> LAVELLE (n. 94) 505–506; BRENNÉ: Die Ostraka (n. 2) 111.

<sup>96</sup> LAVELLE (n. 94) 506, 510.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. ROSIVACH (n. 1) 166: “In conventional Greek morality, the gods strike down those guilty of *hybris*, who think too highly of themselves and fail to recognize their proper place. This view of ostracism as *kolasis tōn hyperaüksanomenōn*, in effect, a levelling response to political *hybris*, dovetails nicely with this conventional morality and draws strength from it”.

clarification: why do the contemporary literary sources not explicitly attribute ostracism to the Athenian desire to curb *hybris*? I would propose that the anti-tyrannical and pro-democratic ideology had strongly influenced especially the fourth-century sources and that these ideologies might perhaps explain why they view ostracism in terms of anti-tyranny instead of in terms of preventing *hybris*.<sup>98</sup> A further explanation might be that the conceptions of *hybris*, tyranny and Persia were deeply intertwined in fifth-century Athenian thought. Both Persia and the tyrants were also associated with wealth and luxury. Ostentation was also associated with both tyrants and Persia. Hence, profligate and luxurious life-style might have been perceived by the Greeks as a sign of Medism, on the one hand, and of future tyranny, on the other. In sum, a hybristic disposition exposed by one's life-style was feared to lead to tyranny. This was evident in the case of Alcibiades whose hybristic display in the Olympic games of 416, together with his way of life, might have strongly contributed to the decision to organize the *ostrakophoria* in 415.

Suvi Kuokkanen, PhD  
History of Sciences and Ideas  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Oulu  
Finland  
suvi.kuokkanen@oulu.fi

<sup>98</sup> Cf. ROSIVACH (n. 1) *passim*, for a claim that the fourth-century sources view ostracism in terms of democratic ideology.