I. From democratic praxis to totalitarian political philosophy

It is my thesis that political philosophy has its historical origin in democratic praxis and government in the democratic city-state Athens and that it is taken over by sceptics and anti-democratic critics like Plato. The consequence is a break between democratic praxis and antidemocratic political philosophy that has lasted until our day where the global dominance of democracy is taken to force a reconsideration of the inner relation between democracy and political philosophy (Roberts 1994: 6 ff.; Castoriadis 1997: 227).

In the following I want to consider this thesis. I will first consider Plato's political philosophy as it has been formulated in his *Republic* from around 380 and second I will consider Pericles' funeral oration from 430 as an example of the existence of a democratic political philosophical alternative that was grounded in the democratic praxis of Athens.

II. The origin of political philosophy in the democratic city-state Athens

Democracy is a form of government that was invented and developed in the Greek city states, first and foremost in Athens. Democracy is first named around 472 in Aeschylus' *The Suppliants* (Aeschylus 1970: 102, line 604). The word 'democracy' consists etymologically of the word *demos*, which means the broad population or the people, and *kratos*, which means power (Aeschylus 1980: 490 – 492; Ehrenberg 1965: 266, 270 – 272). The two words together form the word *democracy*, which can be translated as the exercise of power in the *polis*, the city, by the people (Larsen 1990: 15 ff.).

It is significant from a historical perspective that democratic governments have many different forms from antiquity to our times and the historian therefore has a tendency to emphasize these differences instead of the similarities (Vidal-Naquet 1990: 121 ff.; Hansen 2005: 41 ff.; Hansen 2010: 15 ff.).

From another perspective, the different forms of democratic government all share a concern about what should be understood by democracy and whether the given form of government is a real democracy. This discussion raises the question of the *validity* or the *legitimacy* of the concrete instantiation of democratic government. This perspective or discussion was conceptualized as philosophy or more specific political philosophy. It is in the Greek democratic city-state that political philosophy has its origin and became determinant for how we discuss modern democracy as well.

From a historical perspective, political philosophy can at best be regarded as a form of ideology (Hansen 2005: 46 ff.; Hansen 2010: 39) because the historian does not accept a political philosophical concept of truth, whatever it might consist in. The historian thus has a tendency to bypass the fact that democracy can only persist by being permanently determined as valid or legitimate. Political philosophy has a definite practical significance in its function of raising the discussion about what ought to be regarded as the right, or, at least from a pragmatic perspective, the best, government and what could be the basis of such a government. This discussion was already raised in the democratic city-state Athens and it continues to our day.

III. Plato's political philosophy and the contempt for democracy in the political philosophical tradition

Plato is regarded as one of the founders of political philosophy and many will even say that he is the real founder in so far as Plato's work is so monumental and forms a beginning where even Aristotle is a scholar of Plato. It is not at least Plato's *Republic* that has had a definitive significance as one of the fundamental works in the political philosophical tradition.

Plato's *Republic* has been read in many ways but one common distinctive feature in the many readings is that Plato regards philosophy as a special way of thinking that is connected with a special insight that the political leader in the aristocratic republic should

have. It is only by this insight that the leader is able to lead in a way that is superior to the leadership that is dominated by desire, which was the case in timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny – the forms of government that Plato brings on concept, describes and criticizes in the *Republic* (Plato 1970: 545c ff.).

In this perspective, philosophy is elevated over the concrete political fight in the city-state. Philosophy has a special insight which can classify different forms of politics and government in a hierarchical organized history of decline where democracy is surpassed only by tyranny as the worst form of government (Plato 1970: 564a).

This understanding of democracy has not been seriously problematised in the later history of philosophy until recent time. Certainly, Aristotle has formulated a different schema where he poses a contrast between three good forms of government and three bad forms of government: kingdom versus tyranny, aristocracy versus oligarchy, republic (*politeia*) versus democracy (Aristotle 1977: 1279b 6 ff.). Aristotle regarded also democracy as a deviation or a form of decline.

When we are looking at the later history of philosophy, we find only very few who are emphasizing democratic government like Locke, Rousseau, Madison and Jefferson. But many others like Hobbes, Kant and Hegel did not prefer the democratic form of government. Here one might also mention Karl Marx; although he was one of the significant theorists and leaders in the socialist movement, he did not emphasize democracy. In so far as society was a class society, he could not believe that democracy had an essential role to play.

John Stuart Mill is one of the first who in *Considerations on Representative Government* from 1861 emphasizes representative democracy as the best form of government for big modern states, where it is not possible to meet in a popular assembly as in the ancient democratic city-states (Mill 1991: 55 – 80). For Mill, the difference between direct and representative democracy is a merely practical matter and has no principled significance (Mill 1991: 80).

It is first in the beginning of the 20th century that political philosophers and sociologist more generally begin to emphasize a form of government with certain advantages (Durkheim, Weber, Schumpeter) or even as a good form of government (Dewey), and it is first after the Second World War that we find serious discussions dominated by the perspective of democracy as the best form of government (Popper, Rawls, Habermas and many others). This corresponds to Mogens Herman Hansen's periodisation when he emphasizes that democracy first became a positive concept after 1850 and finally became the dominant positive concept of government in the 20th century (Hansen 2005: 47).

IV. Democracy as the new hermeneutical perspective

Just after the Second World War, Karl Popper was one of the first who pointed at this in *The Open Society and its Enemies* where he claims that the fundamental problem in western political philosophy is that the totalitarian way of thinking has had primacy over the idea of the open democratic society (Popper 1962 a; 1962 b). From this perspective, Plato derailed the political philosophical discussion that was taking place in the democratic city-state of Athens, an event of great significance for the development of the main topics in the political philosophical tradition.

This derailment raises the question what we in modern democratic society should understand by political philosophy and especially how we should understand Plato's *Republic*, which is where political philosophy, first off all, is grounded.

One possibility could be in a banal way to pass over Plato and maybe even a large part of the political philosophical tradition. This is also what is partly done in political science, where political philosophy does not play any significant role for empirical research in so far as facts are taken to be more relevant than broader hermeneutical justifications. However, there can be good reasons to hold on to political philosophy because political life in a democratic society constantly raises value-oriented political-philosophical problems that

ought to be taken up as a challenge for empirical political science. Here it becomes evident that political philosophy has its origin in the democratic city-state and especially Athens and that we in a conceptual, theoretical and substantial sense are totally dependent on the formation and discussion of political-philosophical concepts in the schools of ancient Athens (Ober 1994: 154 ff.). From a democratic perspective, there are so many similarities that it is possible to speak about a unity between the ancient Greek and the modern political-philosophical discussion (Kagan 1990: 5 ff.; Ober 1994: 171; Ober & Hedrick 1996: 3 ff.; Wallace 1996: 105 ff.).

The consequence is that we have to find a strategy that gives us the possibility of maintaining democracy as our hermeneutical perspective which can be applied in the interpretation of Plato's *Republic* as well.

This should not be understood to say that Plato's critique of democracy should not be essential. On the contrary, Plato's critique of democracy suggests fundamental and unavoidable political-philosophical problems in the democratic form of governance, and these should be discussed. The problem in Plato's critique is that democracy as mentioned is situated in a totalitarian perspective of declining forms of government, where aristocracy, timocracy and oligarchy are regarded as better forms of government than democracy. We must not forget that timocracy translated to modern language is a form of totalitarian military dictatorship and oligarchy a government of the few wealthy people. From a democratic perspective, such forms of government were as unacceptable in Plato's time as they are today.

The problem is that Plato's political-philosophical hermeneutic perspective is grounded in an ideal of a city-state, *politeia*. As a counterpoint, it is necessary to create another hermeneutical perspective while Plato's *Republic* is at the same time acknowledged as an essential work for the discussion of the political-philosophical problems in the antique democratic city-state and the modern democracy as well.

In other words, it is not possible to follow Plato in all his construction of the political-philosophical architecture such as it is to be found in the *Republic*, where he moves from the primitive city-state to the constitution of the ideal city-state, aristocracy, which forms the point of departure for the critique of the other forms of government in decline. There is an inner logic in this construction, one that cannot simply be reconstructed as an opening to a political philosophical dialogue about democracy. Plato's *Republic* stands as a political philosophical monument; it is a fort that can only be hermeneutically conquered through a new reading strategy where we do not follow Plato's construction but on the contrary try to deconstruct Plato's *politeia*. There is with other words a need for a *deconstruction* of all Plato's enormous construction of *politeia* with the aim to get in contact with the fundamental problematic in Plato's philosophy that is relevant for the discussion of antique and modern democracy.

V. Plato's way from democratic politics to political philosophy

As an introduction to this deconstruction, it is essential to remark on the dialogical form of the *Republic*. The dialogical form is the political form of democracy and therefore the reader gets the immediate impression that the *Republic* must be related to democracy. This impression becomes strengthened because Plato lets Socrates be the proper narrator in the *Republic*. We know very little about the historical Socrates, but the few sources we have tell us that Socrates was one of the many that walked around at the Athenian agora and discussed the political problems in the city state (Larsen 1990: 35 ff.). Socrates is described as the person who poses questions rather than giving answers. In this way Socrates took part in the public political discussion in the democratic city-state. It is this political discussion that Plato gives a philosophical form. This can be seen as a formative transformation of Socrates's lively critical outspoken questioning in the political discussion in the agora in Athens to a positive written formulation of a political philosophy in dialogical form in the *Republic* (Larsen 1990: 53 ff.).

When we start to read the *Republic*, we immediately become uncertain about what we are

dealing with. The reader is presented with a discussing and lecturing Socrates in dialogue with Adeimantus, Glaucon, Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus and several other persons. But who is the discussant Socrates and where is Plato in the dialogue? Is it the historical Socrates who speaks in the dialogues or is Socrates a marionette or spokesman for Plato? Plato does not give any explanation in the *Republic* or in his other dialogues (Roberts 1994: 72 ff.).

However, in Plato's letters we can get an impression of the historical content of the formative transformation of Socrates' living political discussion in the agora to the positive philosophical written discourse in Plato's dialogues. It is here, especially in Plato's *Seventh Letter* to Dion's relatives and friends that is of interest (Platon 1991c: 323d – 352b). Dion (409 – 354) belonged to the dominant old family in Syracuse on Sicily who Plato visited in 389 – 388, 366 – 365 and 361 – 360. Dion was father-in-law and brother-in-law to Dionysius the Younger who governed in Syracuse 367 – 355 and 346 – 344 and who Plato tried without success to educate to be the philosopher king he had described in the *Republic*.

The authenticity of the letter has been discussed but it is a widely held among classical philologist that nothing speaks against the authenticity of the source and that it can therefore be used as a historical source (Raven 1965: 25 f.; Gadamer 1985: 249; Larsen 1990: 54; Castoriadis 2002: 121).

At the beginning of the *Seventh Letter*, Plato presents his understanding of the transformation from politics to philosophy (Platon 1991c: 324b – 326b; Gadamer 1985: 249 ff.). It is essential to make this transformation clear because the key to Plato's political philosophy should be found here (Ober 1998: 162 ff.). According to the letter, as young man Plato defined the aim of his life as a participation in the public affairs of the city-state, fulfilling the ideal of the son of a citizen with high status. This life perspective collapsed for Plato because of the political events in Athens which he interpreted through the life and death of Socrates.

What characterizes Socrates according to Plato is his righteousness. It is this righteousness that first brought Socrates into conflict with the thirty oligarch's tyranny in the year 404 – 403 and, later on, with the democrats who ultimately charged him by the people's court and finally executed him in 399. Plato interprets these events to mean that those at the head of affairs were no longer guided by traditional morals and that the written laws and traditions had lost their significance. In this way, the *Seventh Letter* expresses a deep political existential crisis in Plato's life where Plato's fundamental understanding of life in the city-state collapses.

This is the reason Plato decides to reconstruct the city state in an ideal philosophical form, which he calls 'the right philosophy'. Plato will with the right philosophy give an account of what is just, both in the city-state and for the single citizen. What follows is that it must be the people who have this insight in the right that should govern the city-state or eventually that it should be the people that govern the city-state who should acquire this insight.

The interesting thing here is that there is no positive mediation between the collapse of Plato's existential understanding of the city-state and the formulation of the positive political philosophy. Plato identifies all this political-existential collapse figuratively with the judgment and the execution of Socrates who becomes the *form* through which the new political philosophy can be formulated in the written dialogue. Herewith Plato gets the possibility to formulate his political philosophy in the *dialogical form* of the democratic city-state at the same time as the content of this philosophy is a trenchant critique of democracy as a form of governance. Plato's anti-democratic political philosophy is veiled as democratic through the formal form of dialogue that only could and only can take place in a democratic state. Plato's political philosophy thus gets its place in the democratic city-state just as its content is turned against the democratic city-state's inherent philosophical problems and institutional arrangements (Monoson 1994: 185 ff.).

In the dialogue *Gorgias*, Socrates discusses with Gorgias, Polus and Callicles. Socrates starts with a critique of Athen's great politicians, first of all Pericles (Platon 1991a: 515b ff.). Socrates's main question is whether the great politicians have had the good as ground

for their politics and whether they on this ground have had as the only aim to make the Athenians as good as possible: Have the Athenians really been ameliorated by Pericles? Have the Athenians not, on the contrary, been brought into depravation such as it has been told that Pericles made the Athenians lazy, cowardly, chatty, and money-grubbing, because he instituted payment for holding a public office? (Platon 1991a: 515e).

These critical questions go to the root of the Athenian democracy because payment for public offices was a necessary precondition to ensure that all citizens, not at least citizens with limited means, could participate in the political institutions of the city-state (Euben 1994: 202 ff.). The oligarchs regarded this arrangement as the final decline of the city-state that the citizens should be paid for participating in the political life (Dodds 1959: 357).

In contradiction to this arrangement, Socrates poses himself – as Plato's spokesman – as the only Athenian who tries to preserve true statesmanship (*t? a?th?s politik? tekhn?*), and the only one who transforms it in practical politics by always taking the best (*to beltiston*) into consideration and never merely pleasantness (*to h?diston*) (Platon 1991a: 521d).

Herewith, the contradiction is brought to its extreme between on the one hand the leading Athenian democrats with Pericles in front and on the other hand Plato with Socrates as spokesman. Socrates is according to Plato the only representative for the true statesmanship which is a profession (*tekhn?*), namely, political philosophy as a *tekhn?* building on insight into the good (Platon 1991a: 521d). In this way, Socrates becomes the only one who puts political philosophical *tekhn?* into practical politics, the philosophy Plato in the *Seventh Letter* named 'the right philosophy'. This is the fundamental contradiction that is developed in the entire *Republic*.

VI. *Republic* – From totalitarian political philosophy to antidemocratic political ideology

At first it is not useful to go into details to determine whether Plato is right in his critique of democracy. The problem lies in the general construction of political philosophy. Under cover of democratically formed dialogue, Plato, with Socrates as his spokesman, constructs the ideal city-state in a long monologue. It is hierarchically constructed with three classes, namely, the leaders with insight, the soldiers with courage and the artisans with sober-mindedness where the right order between classes is determined as justice (Platon 1991b: 432b – 435d). The leaders of the city-state should keep desire under control. This should be done by living promiscuously instead of having a wife and children in one family, by not having any property and by being maintained by the third class or estate (Platon 1991b: 450b – 461d). The coming leaders, finally, should be educated through a long philosophical education which should give them an insight in justice (*dikaiosyn?*) and virtue or the ability to exercise the good government (Platon 1991b: 444d). The ideal city-state is called a kingdom when it has a single leader, and an aristocracy, which means the government of the best, when it is governed by the few (Platon 1991b: 445d).

This ideal, however, appears to be a perverted ideal model of a city-state which in modern language is governed by something like a combination of consistent rationalized technocracy and a military dictatorship. Plato uses the so-called aristocratic form of government as a platform for criticizing the four known forms of government: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. It stated in advance that aristocracy is not only a good but also the only and incomparable best form of government, which stands in contradiction to all the other forms of government. If the aristocracy is the right form of government, all the other forms of government must be wrong.

Unfortunately, it is not so easy to reject Plato’s critique of the different forms of government. Plato presents a sharp and precise critique of the four mentioned forms of government, not at least of democracy where the problem of freedom is discussed. Since all forms of government are exposed to a sharp critique, it becomes difficult for the democratic-minded reader to reject the critique as irrelevant. The reader can even come to the conclusion that the *Republic* is a magnificent philosophical work, which is of course the dominant opinion in the history of philosophy.

However, the problem in Plato's critique is that, if we accept the critique, it follows that we should also accept the premise of the critique. We must then abandon dialogue because the selected leaders have raised themselves, through their insight, above the dialogue with the many who, according to Plato's allegory of the cave, have not understood anything (Platon 1991b: 514 ff.).

If the reader does not accept the ideal aristocratic state at the outset, he can assume the political realistic perspective and move further on in the historically well known forms for government. Here we meet, first, timocracy, which is signified as the second best form of government after the kingdom or aristocracy. In modern English usage, this could be determined as a form of military dictatorship while it in the ancient context is most similar to the form of government in the city-state Sparta, what Plato also explicit mentions (Platon 1991b: 544c).

For the democratic minded reader this form of government is not acceptable. He can therefore choose to go on in Plato's hierarchy of governments to the oligarchy where the few have government by means of their fortune. This model is neither acceptable.

This brings us to democracy where the problem, according to Plato, is that all on equal footing are obsessed with unrestrained freedom and no one has the necessary philosophical qualifications to relate to it. What Plato does not mention is that it is only in the democratic city-state that there is developed a genuine political philosophy through the open and public discussion in the city-state and that all this political-philosophical discussion focuses on the concept of freedom and what follows of it (Hansen 1996: 91 ff.). Plato's political philosophy is in itself a testimony to open discussion in the democratic city-state. It is not developed in the city-state Sparta he praises but in Athens whose democracy he criticizes (Popper 1962a: 198 – 201).

Plato has a point in his critique of the handling of freedom in the democratic city state. It was a problem how freedom should be handled in the same way as it is a problem in a

modern democracy. The excessive desire for freedom leads according to Plato to the dissolution of any authority (Jones 1957: 44 ff.). The examples Plato emphasizes are so ironic and living that they could have been examples taken out of our own time such as the dissolution of the authority in the relation between children and their parents, between teacher and pupil, etc. (Platon 1991b: 562e – 563e). In this connection Plato has also some grotesque and humorous descriptions when he makes ironic remarks about freedom that gains ground overall, even among domestic animals where horses and donkeys have been so conscious of freedom and self-confident that they push against everyone who is standing in their way (Platon 1991b: 563c). In the middle of the irony and the grotesque, Plato asserts that freedom in the democratic city-state only deserves critique.

VII. Popper: How can we organize the political institutions so that bad or incompetent leaders can be prevented from doing too much damage?

On this background, it could be a temptation to recognize Plato's critique but in that case there is only the possibility in Plato's universe to move upwards in the hierarchy of forms of government to an oligarchy, a timocracy or an aristocracy. But neither of these forms of government is acceptable and we therefore lack a passage from Plato's critique to an open discussion of how the problems Plato has pointed at should be understood in a democratic philosophical perspective and how they eventually could be handled in praxis. The reader is enclosed in Plato's hierarchy where there is no way up the ladder because the one form of government is worse than the other and where there is also no way down, where one man's tyranny is the only possibility. In short, there is from a democratic perspective no possibility to maneuver in the political philosophical universe of hierarchical forms of government. The reader is enclosed in this philosophical construct which thereafter, as mentioned, is presented as an open philosophical universe which is supported by the Socratic and the democratic deliberation, two sides of the same coin.

On this background, it will be right to characterize Plato's political philosophy such as it has been presented in the *Republic* as a totalitarian political philosophy which from a

democratic perspective is pointing toward some political philosophical choices where neither of them is acceptable because neither of them satisfy the fundamental democratic oriented demand to every form of government that it as a reflexive relation should be open for discussion.

That is not all that can be said, however. Plato is not only a political philosopher in Athens. He is also exactly what he characterize Socrates as, namely, a statesman or a politician, and he may have considered himself to be that outstanding statesman who had the insight everybody else lacked. This is Popper's opinion: "Plato speaks here of himself" (Popper 1962a: 154). If this is the case, either Plato becomes at best a philosopher king in his political-philosophical hierarchy or, at worst, a philosophically seductive tyrant.

Popper's fundamental critique of Plato in *The Open Society and its Enemies* is that Plato presents a closed universe where the essential thing is who with more or less insight should govern such as it is represented in Plato's hierarchy of forms of government (Popper 1962a: 121). In contrast Popper claims with a reference to Stuart Mill's mentioned *Considerations on Representative Government* that the essential question is not "who should govern" but that political leaders in all forms of political regimes, included democracy, potentially are dangerous and that the right question on that background is: "How can we so organize political institutions that bad or incompetent rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage" (Popper 1962a: 121). It is in extension of this question that Popper points at democracy, not because democracy in its positive determined sense should be the good form of government but on the contrary because democracy does not have this positive determination and therefore permanently has to be determined or legitimized and therefore contains the potential for a permanent critique of any political leader or any form of government.

It is therefore not that case that Popper rejects Plato's critique of democracy's tendency to let freedom become unrestrained. However, this was not Popper's urgent problem when he during the Second World War was sitting as political refugee in New Zealand writing against the totalitarian Nazis and fascist regimes that dominated Europe and the rest of the

world. Plato's political philosophy is from Popper's perspective totalitarian because it is, like in the allegory of the cave (Platon 1991b: 514a ff.), grounded on the idea that a single or some few persons should be able to reach an insight that all others are excluded from and that this insight thereupon should be able to legitimize the power that these few persons – kings, aristocrats and philosophers – without contradiction should rule over all others in the city-state.

In Popper's perspective, Plato's political philosophy can only be characterized as totalitarian whose significance in all its greatness is being worthy of critique because it is inevitable and therefore only can be bypassed with critique. In that sense Plato's *Republic* can open an interesting discussion about the democratic city-state and of our modern democracy and in that sense can Plato's political philosophy still have an inestimable significance for its critiques. Plato's philosophy is unavoidable; it stimulates political-philosophical discussion to this day. In this connection it is, as a hermeneutical opening to Plato's political philosophy, worth remembering that Plato not only was a philosopher, he was also a politician and political ideologue – a strong antidemocratic political ideologue in the democratic city-state Athens.

VIII. Sophism and tragedy – The sophist's political philosophy and the tragedy at the theatre as critical reflexive institutions in the antique democracy in Athens

Herewith has the question been raised: what is the alternative to Plato? From a hermeneutical perspective, it is not enough to exercise critique of the antecedent philosophers. The philosophers must first of all be seen in their own time and in their own social and cultural context. Here it is interesting that there is an alternative to Plato, namely the democratic city-state itself with its many cultural and philosophical expressions. In the *Republic*, Plato turned against all that which we in the light of history see as the great and sublime in the golden age of Athens which is connected to democracy. It lasted with short interruptions from its introduction with Cleisthenes in 507 until 322 where it was turned

down by the Macedonians. It is in this relatively short period that democracy becomes developed as a form of government and that there is created the political, military, artistic, architectonic and philosophical institutions that in their unity form the democratic city-state. The summary of this form of government is that it is open. Herewith is meant that the last determinations of the city-state concerning government and social life always is standing to discussion.

It is in this context that philosophy arises as a big living discussion of the fundamental problems in Athens. It is here first of all the sophists that start the philosophical discussions in their teaching of the sons and young men in the Athenian upper class. Some of the sophists are known such as Protagoras (490 – 420), Gorgias (485 – 380), Prodicus (470 – 400) and Hippias (480 – 410), also because they are mentioned in Plato's dialogues, but there has been ´many others. The sophist have through Plato got a bad reputation as seducers, deniers of truth and strategic rhetoricians and this reputation has been passed on through all the history of philosophy because there as mentioned was no understanding of the fundamental background of philosophy in democracy. From a cultural sociological perspective, Socrates and Plato belong to the same typology as the sophist. They are, from a sociological perspective, only different forms of philosophical schools responding in different ways on the open democratic form of government. When Plato claims that philosophy is something totally different compared to sophism, this can only be understood as a part of his anti-democratic rhetoric where he will repress that it is precisely in the democratic city-state that a living philosophical discussion is taking place.

The other big institution is the theatre, which challenges and emphasizes the reflexivity of life and politics in the democratic city-state. Here we have the three great dramatist Aeschylus (525 – 456), Sophocles (495 – 406) and Euripides (485 – 406) who created the Greek tragedy. It is first of all through the tragedy that substantial individual and common conflicts and dilemmas have been brought to reflection in the broad population in the democratic city-state. But in the *Republic*, Euripides and the other tragedians are related to tyranny and democracy and they should be forbidden to enter city-states with higher-ranking constitutions such as oligarchy, timocracy and aristocracy. In the *Republic* it is even said that the poets pass from town to town, letting eminent actors with winning and

euphonious voices present their plays for the mob and that they in this way mislead the city-states step by step toward tyranny and democracy (Platon 1991b: 568a-d).

IX. Pericles' funeral oration – the democratic alternative to the totalitarian political philosophy

Plato's main adversary is Pericles (495 – 429), who is the great leader of democracy in Athens and who Plato see as the person before all others who has contributed to the decline of Athens such as Plato had experienced it (Rhodes 2010: 59 ff.).

Pericles's speech in the popular assembly has never been published but Thucydides has a reproduction of the famous funeral oration for the fallen in the first year of The Peloponnesian War 431 – 404 (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXIV, 1 – XLVII, 1). In Pericles funeral oration, we find a positive and idealized reproduction of democracy in Athens which in any sense constitute a counterpoint not only in relation to Plato's critique of democracy but also in relation to all Plato's political philosophy such as it is presented in the *Republic* (Loraux 1981: 183 ff.). It is the dominating opinion among philologists that Thucydides's reception of the funeral oration in all essentiality can be led back to Pericles and therefore can be used as a historical source (Sicking 1995: 404 – 425; Bosworth 2000: 1-16).

In Pericles's edition of democracy, it is freedom which is presented before all other things as the foundation of the democratic city-state – just as Plato also is pointing at and criticizes in the *Republic*. Pericles makes a clear distinction between private and public life (Thunderbird 1967: Livre II, XXXVII, 1). The individual citizen should as a private person follow the city-states laws, but apart from that, the city-state should be governed by tolerance and every person should have the right to live in a way which he finds appropriate for himself. In contrast, public life is about doing the good for the benefit of the city-state (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXVII, 2).

In the democratic city-state, pleasure and joy is according to Pericles high evaluated. There are festive competitions in the city, beauty and pleasure has significance in the public and the private life, and there is a rich business with other states that gives access to all the worlds' commodities (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXVIII).

In military practice, the democratic city-state is according to Pericles an open city where all can see what happens and where nothing is hidden for enemies because military strength not only builds on preparation and strategies but also on individual strength and the ability to exercise judgment in the situation (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXIX, 1). This personal ability is according to Pericles related to the education with a free training where the personality is educated to easily act on his own judgment in the concrete situation, contrary to the Spartan who is only able to make war with military discipline and who has no personal courage (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXIX, 2).

The citizen who does not take part in the public life of the city-state is according to Pericles useless. The public discussion takes place in the city-state in which all problems can be deliberated in common before action (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXX, 3). In this way the Athenians are, according to Pericles, able with greater boldness to make a plan, because the largest inner strength is to be found by those who recognize both the horrifying and the pleasant and on that background does not fall back before the danger. In this context the Athenians should not according to Pericles be afraid of helping others instead of awaiting help from others (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXX, 4).

Pericles presentation of the democratic city-state has a philosophical ground. Pericles says that "we are cultivating the beautiful in simplicity without resorting to the bombastic" (*philokaloum?n te gar met'euteleias*) (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXX, 1). Herewith is meant that the beautiful is subordinated an aesthetic judgment which the Athenians are able to pronounce (Kakridis 1961: 47 ff.; Castoriadis 1997: 287 f.; Castoriadis 2008: 163 ff.). In the same way Pericles presents also a moral criteria for practice which is expressed as follows: "we take the philosophical deliberation serious without losing the determination (*philosophoumen aneu malakias*)" (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXX, 1). This means that the

Athenians are able to integrate the philosophical perspective, deliberation, and to let this deliberation be the ground for a decision and the following action (Kakridis 1961: 47 ff.; Castoriadis 1997: 287 f.; Castoriadis 2008: 163 ff.). This aesthetic, moral and practical deliberation gives the Athenians the possibility to take care of both their private affairs in the house (*oikos*) and the public affairs in the city-state (*polis*) with insight (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXX, 2).

Pericles's conclusion is, that "Athens is a mentor for the rest of Hellas" and Athens is the city where each single citizen autonomously in one person can unite the most forms of practice with a versatile happiness in life's beauty (Thucydides 1967: Livre II, XXXXI, 1).

It should be clear that Pericles's funeral oration expresses many essential features of the democratic city-state. It applies both to the private freedom to live and act as desired and to the public freedom to deliberate together with citizens about the common affairs, commonly to establish the laws for the city and participate in the united warfare. This should all be done by developing the practical, the aesthetic and the moral sense, that is the philosophy which according to Pericles is included in every life situation.

Pericles's funeral oration should have been kept around 430 and Plato's *Republic* should have been written around 380. Historically, Pericles' funeral speech is prior to Plato's *Republic*, but it is also in a philosophical sense prior in the way that it is Pericles and in a broader sense the democratic city-state Athens that poses the agenda that Plato criticize fifty years later. According to Karl Popper, Plato's critique of democracy is both an expression of a totalitarian political program and a totalitarian political philosophy (Popper 1962a: 86 ff.). Today, it should no longer be possible to maintain Plato's hermeneutical political-philosophical perspective on democracy in Athens. The hermeneutic perspective should be turned around. It is Pericles and the democracy in Athens that are prior to the totalitarian critique of democracy. However, this is not the end of the reading of Plato. In fact, it has only just begun – and it should continue as a further deconstruction of Plato's totalitarian political philosophy and practice – and in a further perspective it should continue in a deconstructive reading of all forms of totalitarian political philosophy.

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