DIONYSIUS I OF SYRACUSE AND THE VALIDITY OF THE HOSTILE TRADITION

I

Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse from 405 to 367 B.C., though arguably the most significant personage of Greek history from Pericles to Philip of Macedon, has not received favourable notices from modern historians. This situation largely derives from the fact that in classical antiquity, a hostile anecdotal tradition sprang up, already in the fourth century and during the tyrant's own lifetime, which essentially took two forms, emphasizing either the tyrant's cruelty to his friends and family or his oppression of the Syracusans and Siceliots of his Empire. In the 3rd century BC, much of this material was incorporated into the hostile testimony of Timaeus of Tauromenium and hence found its way into a host of extant scattered later material such as Athenaeus, Plutarch and Cicero, to name the most conspicuous examples, from whose accounts modern historians have culled their data. (Diodorus, our chief source for Dionysius' reign, I should emphasize in parentheses, in my opinion was relatively immune to influence from this genre of information).

II

To evaluate the validity of this data, we must explore its origins, and, to do so, we must consider Dionysius' cultural aims. The tyrant was certainly a man of no mean intellectual accomplishment. Well educated from youth, he was by profession a scribe (Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.22.63; Dem. 20.161; Diod. 13.96.4; 45.66.5; Polyaen. 5.22) and his début into politics reveals that he was possessed of considerable rhetorical powers (Diod. 13.91–92). Musical and medical interests are attributed to Dionysius (Cic. *Tusc.* 5.22.63; Aelian, *V.H.* 40.11). Among his acquaintances are to be included the philosopher historian Aristippus of Cyrene (Diog. Laert. 2. 73; 83), the historian Philistus (Jacoby, *Fr. Gr. Hist.* III, No. 556, T1A,

17B, 3A, 4, 5C), Plato (Plut. *Dion.* 4.4; Diod. 15.7.1; Nep. *Dion.* 2.2), Isocrates (*Ep.* 1), possibly Xenophon,[1] the tragedian Antiphon (Philost. *Vitae Soph.* 1.15), possibly the tragedian Carcinus (Suda s.v. Καρκίνος; cf. Diod. 5.5.1), the mime composer Xenarchus, the son of Sophron (Photius and Suda s.v. Ρηγίνους), the dithyrambic poet, Philoxenus of Cythera (Diod. 15.6.2 ff.; Athen. 1.6e; Suda s.v. φιλόξενος) and possibly the orator Andocides (Pseudo Lysias 6.6).

But far from being content to simply befriend men of learning, Dionysius himself undertook the composition of tragedy and perhaps even comedy and history as well. We know that he wrote an *Adonis, Alcmene, Leda, Limos,* possibly a *Medea,* a *Ransom of Hector,* and we have one reference to a play in which Dionysius attacked Plato (Tzetzes, *Chil.* 5.182–185)[2].

For our purposes, we must emphasize that Dionysius kept fully abreast of all contemporary political theorizing about one man rule and sought to depict his rule as one of justice and moderation, of *nomos* as opposed to *physis,* so that it might be rendered compatible with the political ideas of contemporary theorists. Hence he named his daughters *Dikaiosyne, Sophrosyne* and *Arete* (Plut. *De Alex. Fort.* 5, 338c) and in his tragedies stated that "tyranny is naturally the mother of injustice" (F. 4) and referred to the "shining eye of justice" (F. 5). The recognition of the impermanence of despotic power is further suggested by two fragments from the *Alcmene* and *Leda* where we read that "anxiety is for every man", "that only the gods are completely happy" (F. 2) and

[1] He cites Epicharmus (*Memorab.* 2.1, 20) and the *Hieron* has a Sicilian context, a possible aim being to "angle" for an invitation to Sicily (thus J.K. Anderson, *Xenophon* (London 1974) 193). The chief evidence for Xenophon's possible visit to Sicily is: a) Athenaeus 10. 427F–428F, who mentions Xenophon, the son of Gryllos, seated at Dionysius' table, delivering a Socratic style discourse on eating when hungry and drinking when thirsty; b) *Hell.* 3.1, 2 refers to the *Anabasis* of Themistogenes of Syracuse. This, according to Ed. Delebecqe, *Essai sur la vie de Xenophon* (Paris 1957) 83, is Xenophon the historian whom Plutarch (*De Gloria Atheniensium* I, 345e) mentions feared the publication of his *Anabasis* under his own name; c) A. Croiset, *Xenophon* (Paris 1873) 18–19, argued that *Hieron* 11.5, 6, where Simonides is quoted on the subject of generosity to the state rather than to the tyrant, is to be associated with Lysias' attack upon Dionysius at the Olympics of 388 BC.

[2] Th. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*[2] (Leipzig 1889); C.O. Zuretti, "L'attività letteraria dei due Dionisii di Siracusa", *RFIC* 25 (1898) 529–537; 26 (1899) 1–23.

that "no mortals can ever judge themselves happy until they have seen their happy end" and that "the dead man alone is secure and happy" (F. 3) — sentiments certainly not unique to Greek tragedy but significant within the context of Dionysius' theoretical aims. Finally, when Dionysius writes that "tyranny is naturally the mother of injustice" and we read that he told his mother that he could harm the city's laws but not those of nature (Plut. *Solon* 20.4; *Reg. Apophth. Dionys. Mai.* 6, p. 175) we are aware that we are dealing with a man well versed in contemporary political vocabulary regarding the respective claims of *nomos* and *physis,* and it is clear that Dionysius' aim was to depict his rule as one of law and morality as opposed to one based on *physis.* Poetry accordingly served as an instrument of propaganda for the tyrant. This is further suggested by the fact that Dionysius is said to have written a play in which he attacked Plato. Moreover, other literati were employed as instruments of propaganda: Xenarchus who attacked the tyrant's Rhegine opponents; and the historian Philistus who justified Dionysius' rule — though admittedly after his exile in 384 BC — as far as we can tell, in a thoroughly Thucydidean and Machiavellian manner (Jacoby, *Fr. Gr. Hist* III. b, No. 556, T. 17a, b, 21, 24, 16b, 15c).

The question which we must ask is, for whom was this propaganda intended? Obviously, in the first instance, for Sicilians. But it is clear that an element among the Athenians was also courted by Dionysius. Lysias, at the Olympics of (probably) 388 BC, attacked Dionysius with such vigour that it is obvious that he was combatting a pro-Dionysius party of considerable proportions (Lys. 33; Diod. 14.109.1; 15.7.2). The aims of this faction are clearly revealed in its attempt in 393 BC, at the height of Dionysius' entente with Sparta, two years after Dionysius' settlement of the Messenians at Tyndaris to win over the despot with an honorary decree (*Syllog.* 1^3, 128). The purpose, according to Lysias (19.20), was to isolate Sparta by the creation of an alliance between Athens, Cyprus and Syracuse, and Dionysius agreed not to send warships which he had prepared to dispatch to the Lacedaemonians.

Of what kind of men was the pro-Dionysius faction composed? Obviously, they were men with distinct leanings toward despotism. One such figure was Isocrates who sent a letter to Dionysius after Leuctra, calling upon the tyrant to save Greece. To Isocrates, Athens and democracy clearly took second place to Panhellenic union and

hegemony. Hence in the *Panegyricus* of 380, when he appears interested in the growth of the 2nd Athenian Sea League, as Momigliano observed long ago, his love of Athens is connected with his admiration for Timotheus whom he eulogized in the later *Antidosis* of 353 (101–141).[3] With the dissolution of his dream for Athenian power, Isocrates turned toward monarchic individuals: Thebe and Tisiphonus, the children of Jason of Pherae, Dionysius of Syracuse and Archidamus of Sparta. Isocrates' aim of educating monarchs was most perfectly realized in the Cypriot tracts, *Evagoras*, *Nicocles*, and *To Nicocles*. In the *Nicocles* (14, 17–18) and *To Nicocles* (14), Isocrates declares it folly for the foolish to rule the wise and attacks openly the lot system. In the *Areopagiticus*, he carried these ideas to their logical conclusion by openly advocating the extension of the powers of the Areopagus and the replacement of election for the procedure of lot. Ultimately, Isocrates turned to Philip of Macedon whom he invited to lead Greece as a new Agamemnon,[4] and to his old hero Timotheus whose great quality was his refusal to bend to the multitude. Thus it is clear that in Isocrates, Dionysius possessed a convinced monarchist.

The same applies to Plato who visited Dionysius in 389. Though the various accounts of the visit are confusing and, indeed, contradictory, Dionysius' interest in contemporary monarchic theorizing leads one to agree with Diodorus and Nepos that a direct invitation from the tyrant brought the philosopher to Dionysius' court. Plato, for his part, as the seventh *Letter* reveals, was drawn to Syracuse as a result of his dissatisfaction with developments at Athens: the oligarchic revolution, the restored democracy, the execution of Socrates. Plato could now effect his philosophical ideals in a philosophical environment, working perhaps with Dionysius himself or more likely with Dion, a younger person more prone to accepting the philosophic influence.

But what did philosophy entail in concrete political terms? Obviously anti-democratic sentiments of an oligarchic or aristocratic type. Hence, in the *Republic*, the kings ruled the majority because the *demos* was

[3] A.D. Momigliano, *Filippo il Macedone* (Florence 1934) 183ff.

[4] Already in the speech *On the Peace* of 355 BC, he had turned to Philip and invited him to return Amphipolis. In the *To Philip* (13) of 346 BC, he openly invited him to lead Greece.

incapable of grasping at the truth. A young philosophic tyrant was required. To Plato, it was contradictory to speak of φιλόσοφον πλῆθος. The man who flattered the crowd was against philosophy. Lot was to be despised because it did not result in true equality. In the *Laws*, Plato's attitude was essentially the same.

On a practical level, Plato was led to attempt to influence at a later stage Dionysius II and Hermias of Atarneus. Plato's primary concern was to work through a monarch. His final projects in the eighth *Letter* concern the creation of a triumvirate from Dionysius' own family. One might argue that Plato's attraction to Dion arose from Dion's sympathy for Plato's philosophic ideals. Yet we must never forget that Dion had achieved fortune and renown in the service of Dionysius I and throughout the so-called "liberation" was opposed by the democrats under Heracleides. Finally, it must be stressed that Plato was very much attracted towards the thirty tyrants and that it was their failure and not their initial coup that disillusioned Plato.[5]

Finally, Xenophon whom we have seen, might have been in touch with Dionysius. Certainly in the *Hieron* Xenophon not only centred his political ideology around monarchy but also placed this within a Sicilian context. Like Isocrates and Plato he did not consider democracy as true equality. In the *Agesilaus* and *Cyropaedia*, the historian appears as a reactionary looking back to tribal kingship. After his old admiration for Sparta, as manifested in the *Agesilaus*, was shattered by Sparta's collapse, his realization that Spartan rule had been tyrannical led him to hope for the tyrant's conversion to monarchy. Thus the *Hieron*, probably dating from 360–53, marked the final step in Xenophon's acceptance of monarchy.[6]

But not only do we perceive that Dionysius appealed to elements at Athens who were distinctly anti-democratic. The monarchical position of this faction corresponded closely to that of Dionysius. To Isocrates,

[5] Plato, *Republic* 494a, 502a, 6, 557a; *Laws* 709e–710d; *Epistles* VII and VIII. Diogenes Laertius 10.8 records that Epicurus called the Platonists Διονυσοκόλακες. Cf. on the Academy's attraction towards monarchy G.R. Morrow, *Studies in the Platonic Epistles* (New York 1962) 143–144.

[6] G.D. Aalders, "The Date and Intention of Xenophon's Hieron", *Mnemosyne*, Ser. 6. 4 (1953) 208–215.

Philip must show good will to the Greeks like Heracles (*To Philip* 109–116). In the *Helen* (18.21), the Athens of Theseus is eulogized and Theseus is considered a wise ruler of the progeny of Poseidon. In the *To Nicocles* (5–6, 17), Isocrates stresses the importance of justice for a ruler. Emphasis is thus laid upon higher moral standards and practical politics are combined with ethical-philosophical concepts and the ideal of justice.

Plato's ideal ruler must also possess *dikaiosyne* and *sophrosyne* (*Rep.* 494a; 557a). For this reason in the *Gorgias* (471), Plato condemns Archelaus of Macedon for murdering his uncle Alcetas and for not seeing to the education of his brother and for throwing the latter into a well.

Xenophon's political idealism is similarly based upon ethical considerations. He felt that because not all men were virtuous and disciplined, the only hope lay with the ideal ruler. Agesilaus possesses zeal and courage and Cyrus has virtue is of noble ancestry and is descended from the gods. He is contrasted with Artaxerxes II who does not possess Persian *Arete* and Philhellenism (*Ages.* 7.1; *Cyrop.* 7.5, 84; 7.2, 14; 8.1, 37; 4.1, 24; 7.2, 24; 1.6, 1; 2.1, 1; 4.1, 24; 8.8, 12, 15).

Dionysius seems to have deliberately attempted to pose as peer of the Great King and in doing so, he indicated the extent to which he understood the character of contemporary political theorizing. The cumulative evidence of Baton of Sinope (268 F. 4), Theopompus (115F. 187), Duris (76F. 14) and Diodorus (14.44.8) indicates that Dionysius had a four horse grey chariot, diadem and purple or dappled or tragic actor's cloaks in Eastern fashion. It is possible that Dionysius anticipated the Hellenistic ruler cult. According to Pseudo Aristotle (*Oecon.* 2.11, 205, 1349d) Demeter on one occasion appeared to the tyrant, and Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 37.21), admittedly a late source, speaks of statues of the tyrant which depicted him with god-like attributes.

Dionysius' emulation of Persian monarchy can be explained by a consideration of the importance with which Persia was viewed by Isocrates, Plato and Xenophon. Whereas to Isocrates and Xenophon, the splendour of Persian monarchy was stressed, to Plato the ethical standards were the decisive factors. Thus in the *To Nicocles* (32) Isocrates recommends sumptuous dress and in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (VIII.1.40), we are told that Cyrus considered it necessary to cast a spell

over his subjects since Median dress could conceal defects. To Plato, in the *Laws*, Cyrus and Darius illustrate Persian nobility. Their gift of freedom results in Persian progress. Luxury and effeminacy, on the contrary, ruin Cambyses and Xerxes (*Laws* 3, 694c 4–6). In the seventh *Letter* (332a–b), we read that the laws and character of Darius I have been responsible for the subsequent preservation of the Empire. Finally, in the *Gorgias* (470e), Plato discusses the happiness of the kingdom of Persia and its dependence upon justice.

Accordingly it is evident that Persian monarchy appeared prominently in political theorizing of the early fourth century. Dionysius' emulation of Persia revealed again the tyrant's awareness of the precise nature of contemporary political thinking, and his assumption of Persian type dress was perhaps based upon the recommendation of Isocrates and Xenophon. It is significant that both Lysias and the historian Ephorus (70F. 211) identified Dionysius with the Great King, although it must be admitted that these references are based largely upon the political identification of Syracuse and Persia.

III

Dionysius' propaganda policies failed and it is this failure which, I believe, explains the development and character of the hostile tradition regarding Dionysius. But why did they fail? To a certain extent, the fact that Dionysius was associated with Persia in an ideological and political sense and that his supporters were characterized by a distinctly monarchic viewpoint, rendered inevitable the hostility of the extreme democratic elements. But the question then emerges, what gave the extreme democrats their opportunity to discredit the pro-Dionysius clique? To answer this question, we must consider the realities of the political situation, in particular the attempt and failure of Dionysius and Athens to reach a political accord in the late 390's and early 380's.

Three factors threatened the designs of the pro-Dionysius faction at Athens for the establishment of an entente between Athens and Dionysius. First, there was the obvious fact — adequately documented — that traditionally Syracuse was an ally of Sparta — a policy dating back to the period of Athenian involvement in Sicily in the mid-fifth century. Second, the hostility of Syracuse and Carthage proved a barrier

to peace between Syracuse and Athens since Athens and Carthage were *de facto* allies due to mutual opposition to the Dorian–Siceliot bloc under Syracuse. In 407 BC, in fact, an alliance between Athens and Carthage had been cemented.[7] Finally, Dionysius' political association with Persia, Sparta's traditional supporter, further threatened the establishment of an entente between Syracuse and Athens.

Thus, peace between Syracuse and Athens depended upon two factors. First, the maintenance of an amicable relationship with Carthage alone rendered possible a solid entente between Dionysius and Athens, Carthage's ally. Second — and this was the most important factor — a change in the balance of power in Greece, involving the collapse of Sparta, the growth of unity between Sparta and Athens and the consequent possibility of Persian–Athenian cooperation, was necessary. Such developments actually took place in the 370's, when Dionysius was at peace with Carthage, and Sparta's collapse at Leuctra led to a rapprochement between Athens and Sparta and consequently between Athens and Dionysius.[8]

An earlier attempt to create an alliance between Dionysius and Athens had failed and it is from the frustrations which developed from this failure that the hostile tradition emerged. The revival of Athenian power, following the defeat of Sparta at Cnidus in 394 BC, and the uneasy peace between Syracuse and Carthage following the Punic defeat of 396 BC, had created circumstances which favoured a rapprochement between Athens and Syracuse. Hence we find the Philo-Syracusan party at Athens in 393 BC honouring Dionysius together with his brothers Leptines and Thearidas and his brother-in-law Polyxenus with a decree, the aim of which seems to have been the creation of a triple alliance involving Athens, Syracuse and Cyprus. (Tod. *op. cit.* II.108/*Syllog.* I^2.128).

[7] Diod. 13.85, 3; 87, 4–5; 88, 7; 93, 1; 96, 1, 4; 14.10; Xen. *Hell.* 3.4, 1; Diod. 14.62,1; 63.4; 78.5. See on the treaty between Athens and Carthage B. Meritt, "Athens and Carthage", *HSCPh.*, Supplementary Volume 1 (1940) 247–253; cf. K.F. Stroheker, "Athen und Karthago", *Historia* 3 (1954/5) 163–171; R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford 1969) No. 92; R. Vattuone, L'alleanza fra Atene e Cartagine alla fine del V sec. a. C. IG^2, 47 — SEG X, 136), *Epigraphica* 39 (1977) 41–50.

[8] *Syllog.* I^3, 154; 159; Isocrat. *Ep.* 1; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1, 20; Diod. 15.70, 2; Tzetz. *Chil.* 5.180; Diod. 15.74; Nauck, *op. cit.* (n. 2 supra) 794; M.N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, II (Oxford 1948) Nos. 133, 136.

It is not without significance that it is precisely to this period that the bulk of our evidence concerning Dionysius' literary interests is confined. Plato's visit is dated to 389 (Plut. *Dion* 5.5), Philoxenus' *Cyclops* to 389 (Aristoph. *Plut.* 290), the details in Diodorus regarding Dionysius' relations with his literati to 386 (15.7.2). This suggests that the possibility of peace with Athens encouraged Dionysius to invite the Athenian literati to his court.

These negotiations were frustrated as a result of two developments. First in 392 BC, Carthage and Dionysius renewed hostilities. In view of Carthage's close political ties with Athens, this development clearly threatened the creation of an effective entente. More serious was the appearance at Syracuse of the Spartan Pollis, attempting to gain an alliance between Syracuse, Sparta and Persia. These moves were to culminate in the peace of Antalcidas of 387 BC. The inevitable consequence of these projects which drew Syracuse close to Sparta and indeed to Persia was the disruption of the peace moves which had begun in 393 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.6).

It is significant that the first evidence which we possess of Athenian hostility of a literary nature, dates to these very years which witnessed the failure of the attempted peace initiative. Thus in the second *Plutus* (550) of Aristophanes of 388 BC, *Penia* laments the fact that the Athenians are so stupid that they cannot distinguish between Thrasybulus and Dionysius. Lysias' attack upon Dionysius at the Olympic games of the same year is significant because the orator considers Dionysius an associate of the Great King. Placed within the context of the peace moves leading to the *King's Peace*, Lysias' reference has special significance. The seriousness of Lysias' attack is particularly revealed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus' comment that Lysias aim was to drive Dionysius from his kingdom and free Sicily (*Lysias* 29 ff.).

The poet Kinesias whose poetry had already been parodied by Aristophanes in the *Birds* (1372f) was attacked by the poet Strattis in a play entitled *Kinesias*. Since a Kinesias proposed the decree honouring Dionysius in 393 BC, we may agree with Webster, amongst others, that political dissatisfaction with the pro-Dionysius faction at Athens which almost certainly included Isocrates, underlies the attack upon Kinesias.[9]

[9] T.B.L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy* (Manchester 1950) 28.

The attack upon Plato, which tradition ultimately associated with the slave story, seems to have occurred in this period. Thus Plutarch (*Dion* 5.5) associates Plato with the Spartan Pollis who came to arrange the triple alliance between Syracuse, Persia and Sparta.

The most interesting evidence which we possess concerning the crisis with the literati is the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus of Cythera, and the considerable impact created by this poem is seen in the testimonia, particularly the reference to the Cyclops dance in the *Plutus* of Aristophanes — a play which, we have seen, openly criticized the peace moves of the late 390's and early 380's and was performed a year after the production of the *Cyclops* in 389 BC (i.e. in 388).

In Philoxenus' *Cyclops*, Polyphemus is in love with the Nereid Galatea who is employed by Odysseus to deceive the Cyclops. It seems that Philoxenus' aim was to equate Dionysius with Polyphemus, the cave of the Cyclops with the prison into which Philoxenus was thrown by Dionysius and Philoxenus himself with Odysseus. In the late 4th century, Phaenias of Eresus certainly accepted the poem as an allegory of Dionysius' relations with Philoxenus. Various traditions are given concerning Philoxenus' breach with Dionysius, and it is clear that the *Cyclops* was a bone of contention. While one tradition saw the incorporation of Galatea into the myth as an attack upon the tyrant whose mistress, Galatea, Polyxenus was supposed to have seduced (Phaenias, ap. Athen. 1.6e; schol. Aristoph. *Plut.* 290); the other account saw Philoxenus' disgrace as due to criticism of the tyrant's verses (Diod. 16.6).

Clearly the attack upon the tyrant's literary accomplishments was at root political. In the first place, the *Cyclops* was produced at the time of Dionysius' break with the literati, a period which witnessed the worsening of Syracusan-Athenian relations. Moreover full appreciation of Dionysius' literary achievements came only at the end of his life with the victory of the *Ransom of Hector* — an event to be placed within the context of the peace moves of the years after Leuctra. Clearly, Dionysius' victory was as much political as literary. Finally, Diodorus states emphatically that the opposition of Lysias to the tyrant at the Olympics of 388 BC stemmed from political considerations (Diod. 14.109, 1; 15.7, 2).

The precise nature of the literary attack of Philoxenus' *Cyclops* is apparent when considered within the context of Euripides' satyr play of

the same name. In Euripides' *Cyclops,* the theme of which is Odysseus' freeing of the satyrs, including their father Silenus from the Cyclops, the Cyclops is portrayed as the epitome of *physis* who has contempt for *nomos* and has only faith in his own brute strength. Lesky indeed compares him to Callicles and Thrasymachus who in Plato's *Gorgias* and *Republic* defend the equation of right and might.[10] Now we have seen that Dionysius seems to have been deeply interested in the nomos-physis question and that the evidence suggests that he tried to turn his tyranny into a "good" or "just" monarchy. The testimony of the nomenclature of Dionysius' daughters, the fragments from the tyrant's tragedies and Plutarch's consternation at the contradiction between the evidence of the tragedies and the facts which he received certainly indicate this. It is accordingly logical to assume that the attack upon the tyrant's poetry possessed strong political overtones, for utilization by Philoxenus of the Cyclops motif led to the depiction of Dionysius, who, according to Phaenias was the Cyclops, as an epitome of brute strength and directly contradicted the sentiments expressed in the tyrant's dramas.

A second novel feature of the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus was the introduction into the myth of the person of Galatea who was loved and sought after in an uncouth way by Polyphemus (i.e. Dionysius). One result of the introduction of this motif was to underline the brutality of the tyrant. More significant is the fact that one tradition claimed that Galatea was the name of the tyrant's mistress and that for seducing her Philoxenus was sent to the quarries.[11] One point of significance about this is that Philoxenus was certainly likely to encourage, both by his

[10] A. Lesky, *Greek Tragedy*[2] (London/New York 1965) 142.

[11] Doubted by M.P. Loicq-Berger, *Syracuse: Histoire Culturelle d'une cité Grecque* (Bruxelles 1967) 231. While it is true that Athenaeus 1.6e is confused between the royal court and the prison, this does not prove that Galatea, the tyrant's mistress, was not attacked. More important is the problem whether Dionysius' temperate nature renders unlikely the view that Dionysius had extramarital relationships. Though the evidence stresses Dionysius' temperate nature, its association is political and there is no evidence to suggest that Dionysius was excessively puritanical in circumstances which did not threaten the security of the Empire. See Nepos *De Reg.* 2.2; Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 5.57; Plu. *Reg. Apophth. Dionys. Mai.* 175e, 176a; *Ad Princ. Iner.* 782c; *An Seni Resp. Ger. Sit* 782c; *Tim.* 15.4; Athenaeus 7, 279e and 12, 546d. cf. A.P. McKinley, "The Indulgent Dionysius", *T A PhA,* 70 (1939) 51–61. The only evidence to the contrary is Diod. 15.74 on the tyrant's death through drinking.

actions vis à vis Galatea and by his drawing attention to them in the poem, gossip about the tyrant not unlike that concerning Pericles and Aspasia or Pericles and Elpinice, Cimon's sister. More significant, Dionysius' empire was governed by Dionysius and members of his family who were united to the tyrant by marriage.[12] We know that the historian Philistus had been exiled according to Plutarch for unwisely allying himself in marriage with Leptines' daughter (Plut. *Dion* 11.4). This obviously was because the dynastic basis of the Empire, based as it was on this delicate network of family alliances, was endangered. Philoxenus' liaison with the tyrant's mistress must have posed a similar threat and the tyrant's alarm, placed within the context of the action against Philistus, becomes most comprehensible.

Accordingly, it is clear that the poem represented far more than an attack upon the tyrant's literary attempts or his relations with a mistress. The *Cyclops* attack possessed many different aspects. On the one hand, Dionysius' cultural policies and the attempt to effect the creation of a just monarchy in the eyes of the Siceliots was attacked and Dionysius was equated with the short-sighted Cyclops who had contempt for *nomos*. On the other hand, the dynastic basis of the Empire was endangered. A final fact is relevant. Taken in conjunction with the break with Plato, the attack on Kinesias, the onslaught of Lysias upon the tyrant at the Olympics of 388 BC and the production of the second *Plutus* of Aristophanes of the same year, it is apparent that the *Cyclops* effectively negated the aspirations of the philo-Syracusan elements at Athens.

The seriousness of the situation is revealed by the fact that Dionysius, whose major aim had been the creation of a "just" monarchy, felt obliged to undertake drastic action against the literati at his court. Philoxenus was incarcerated (Diod. 15.6). A rift with Plato certainly took place, though what actually happened is a mystery. Certainly the

[12] See F. Sartori, "Sulla Δυναστεία di Dionisio il vecchio nell'opera Diodorea", *C.S.*, I (1966) 3–66; L. Gernet, "Mariages de Tyrans" in *Hommage a Lucien Febvré, Evental de l'histoire Vivante* (Paris 1953), 41–53; M.I. Finley, *Ancient Sicily to the Arab Conquest* (London 1968) 77–78; K.F. Stroheker, *Dionysios I Gestalt und Geschichte des Tyrannen von Syrakus* (Wiesbaden 1958) 157–159; H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen* (Munich 1967) 249–251.

narrative concerning Plato's enslavement at the hands of Dionysius, reflects a hostile confrontation between tyrant and philosopher. Philistus was banished. Finally, Antiphon might have suffered in the purge. According to one tradition, he was put to death (Arist. *Rhet.* 2.6, 1385a; Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 1.15). Since he seems to have recommended tyrannicide, the harsh treatment accorded him is comprehensible.

The result of the crisis of the 380's was the onslaught of the Athenian dramatic poets and comic writers who developed the motifs found in the *Cyclops* and concentrated either upon the literary failure of Dionysius or upon the tyrannical nature of his government. Antiphon seems to have followed Philoxenus in attacking Dionysius' literary accomplishments (Plut. *Vit. X. Orat.* 833; Philostr *Vit. Soph.* 1.15.3; Arist. *Rhet.* 2.6, 1385a) and Eubulus wrote a comedy, the *Dionysius,* mocking the tyrant's poetical endeavours.[13] Finally, in the *Homoioi* of Ephippus, an individual expresses the hope that his worst enemy will be forced to learn the dramas of Dionysius. As a result, the general tradition about Dionysius' poetry is unfavourable, with emphasis being placed upon his tendency to write far-fetched tragedies and employ unusual expressions (Diod. 14.109; 15.74; Tzetzes. *Chil.* 5.178–85; Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 5.22; Lucian, *Adv. Indoctum* 15).

We have seen that the *Cyclops* also assaulted the political ideology espoused by Dionysius and portrayed the tyrant as an epitome of unrestrained brutality and *physis.* This tradition was also developed and elaborated upon. We even find Isocrates (*Paneg.* 126; 169) turning temporarily against Dionysius and speaking about the ravaged Italy and enslaved Sicily. Antiphon seems to have criticized Dionysius' tyrannical position and recommended tyrannicide by asserting that the best bronze in the world was that from which the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton had been made (Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 1.15). In Eubulus' *Dionysius* of the 370's, Dionysius emerges as the typical tyrant who does not listen to criticism and accords freedom only to jesters and flatterers. In Strattis' *Atalanta,* the word "Dionysius-beard-conflagration" is coined. This phrase probably derives from Spintharos' *Herakles*

[13] J.M. Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy* (Leiden 1959) No. 25.

Perikaiomenos and from it derive the later anecdotes about Dionysius having his daughters singe his beard.[14]

Platonic disenchantment with Dionysius' regime is certainly reflected by the growth of the story concerning Plato's enslavement by the tyrant — although we must admit that the authenticity of the narrative itself is strongly suspect, in view of the character of the genre of information to which the story belongs, the variant details offered in the different sources and its omission from the seventh Platonic *Epistle*. More important evidence for Platonic disenchantment with Dionysius' regime is furnished by *Epistle* VII, where certain criticisms of Dionysius' regime are voiced which justify its reform. It constitutes a despotism, involves the enslavement of the Western Greeks, is based on mistrust, military might and the support of lackeys and needs to be replaced by the rule of Law (334c, 327d, 332c, 331e). The latter picture is essentially reproduced and amplified in Plato's portrait of tyranny in the eighth book of the *Republic* (565ff) where tyranny is characterized as a "bitter servile servitude" and "fire of enslavement" (569B). Clearly, this estimation of tyranny derives from Plato's experiences with the elder Dionysius — a fact gleaned from the importance of the Dionysii within the context of Plato's political experiences and from a comparison between Plato's description of the establishment of tyranny with Diodorus' account of Dionysius' seizure of power (Diod. 13.91, 3).[15] The historical inexactitude of this depiction of Dionysius' regime, which must be associated with the crisis of 386 BC and is probably based upon the hostile Athenian tradition, based on Philoxenus' *Cyclops* and popularized by Aristophanes in the *Plutus* is indicated clearly by the impossibility of reconciling Plato's references to despotism and enslavement with the philosopher's own bent for despotism and despotic individuals. Certainly Plato's notorious despotic inclinations render such references highly suspect.

That Plato did not consider Dionysius' regime originally in such an unfavourable light is suggested by his criticism in the seventh *Letter* of

[14] Webster, *Studies* (n. 9 supra) 23–28.

[15] Thus G.C. Field, *Plato and his Contemporaries*[2] (London 1948) 128; E. Barker, *Greek Political theory: Plato and his Predecessors* (London 1918) 300; Berve, *op. cit.* (n. 12 supra) 355; K.F. Stroheker, "Platon und Dionysios", *HZ* 179 (1952) 225.

the Syracusan regime for the fact that men overindulge themselves in drink and sex (326B–327B). Now a contradiction does seem to exist (unless one appeals to the Neronian experience), for one cannot have it both ways. Either the Syracusans were subject to a "bitter servile servitude" or they lived hedonistic lives. I should also point out that the state of perpetual *stasis* which Plato sees as a result of this hedonism is highly suspect, since by 388 BC, Dionysius' hegemony had been well established. Such conflict only re-emerges with the accession to the throne of the Younger Dionysius.

But we must ask then, whence derives this portrait of Western hedonism and what was its significance to Plato? I believe that Fragment 134 of Theopompus' *Philippica* provides a hint. This fragment, which derives from Theopompus' important excursus on Sicilian history, condemns Dionysius for promoting luxury and debauchery — precisely the vices delineated in *Epistle* VII. Now, if we remember, as von Fritz has shown,[16] that Theopompus like Plato was clearly anti-democratic (F. 88–89; 288; 22; 20; 333; 295; 259); that his opposition to democracy took on a strong moralistic colouring (hence his disapproval of the Byzantines for frequenting taverns after the introduction of democracy F. 62); and that Theopompus does not criticize Dionysius for his despotism but on moral grounds — it is obvious that Plato's view of Dionysius' subjects as leading hedonistic lives represents Plato's inherent distaste for democracy, which his initial encounter with Dionysius aroused. In other words, we claim that initially Plato felt that the weakness of Dionysius' regime lay in its being too democratic or liberal and that the view of the despotic Dionysius stems from the period of crisis with the literati and the onslaught of Philoxenus and the comic poets.

Plato's original anti-democratic bias also left its mark upon the description of tyranny in the *Republic* (8.565ff.) which we have seen clearly reflected Plato's views on the rise of Dionysius I. In many respects certainly, Plato's and Diodorus' accounts correspond: the ruse to obtain the bodyguard, the enrolment of foreign mercenaries, the deliberate attack upon the rich, the ignorance of the masses, war as a

[16] K. von Fritz, "The Historian Theompus: His Political Convictions and his Conception of Historiography", *AHR* 46 (1941) 765–788. (Reprinted as "Die Politische Tendenz in Theopompus Geschichtsschreibung" *Antike und Abendland,* 4 (1954) 45–64).

security for the tyrant's position. However, in two respects, it differs considerably and it is clear that Plato took what suited him from Philistus or oral tradition, and by his very selectivity considerably distorted the realities of the situation. First, it is clear that the view of the patriotic Dionysius and the popular basis of the tyrant's rule as found in Diodorus (14.45, 2; 61, 3; 96, 2; 7, 5; 9, 5; 65, 2–3) is ignored. Second, no hint is provided regarding the facts that Dionysius' hegemony was based upon the support of a new aristocracy and that men of wealth like Philistus aided in the establishment of the despotate. Both omissions can be explained within the context of Plato's anti-democratic bias. His contempt for the *demos* would have led him to depict the Syracusan *demos* as sheep who, oblivious to Dionysius' scheming, were to find that their champion's rule was, in fact, based upon the support of mercenaries and slaves. This picture which significantly accords closely with that provided by the oligarchic proponent, the knight Theodorus (Diod. 14. 65–69) clashes clearly with that of the evidence of Diodorus concerning the popular basis to Dionysius' rule, and obviously stems from Plato's inherent distaste for the *demos.*

Plato's omission of reference to the tyranny's oligarchic character can be similarly explained. As a man of convinced oligarchic sympathies, who despised popular government, he would be loathe to concede any oligarchic association with the *demos* at the time of the establishment of Dionysius' despotate. Moreover, in order to emphasize the demagogic nature of Dionysius' hegemony, any mention of the despot's oligarchic support had to be totally curtailed.

The result was the creation of the classic portrait of the demagogic tyrant, found originally in the testimony of Plato and Aristotle. This viewpoint stemmed ultimately from Plato's contempt for democratic government which led the philosopher to omit mention of the real popular basis to Dionysius' hegemony and to ignore the clear fact that Dionysius' hegemony depended upon aristocratic support.

The degree to which Plato was prepared to falsify historical data is clearly seen in the eighth *Letter* which refers to the appointment of two *strategoi autokratores* during the crisis of 405 BC which culminated in Dionysius' seizure of power. These were Dionysius and Hipparinus, the father of Dion (*Epistle* 8, 353ff). Now Diodorus claims that only one *strategos autokrator* was chosen — Dionysius. Diodorus is obviously

accurate since we know that Dionysius' relationship with Hipparinus only began in 398 BC, when the tyrant married Aristomache, Hipparinus' daughter (Diod. 14.44, 4).

The reason for Plato's falsification of evidence is easy to determine.[17] In 367 BC, upon the death of the Elder Dionysius, Dion in vain championed the claims of his sister's sons, Hipparinus the younger and Nisaeus, the elder Hipparinus' grandsons, against those of Dionysius II, the son of Doris, Dionysius' Locrian wife (Plut. *Dion* 6.2; Nepos. *Dion* 2.4). Plato proposed a similar plan in the eighth *Letter* (357) upon Dion's death, whereby Syracuse should be ruled by three priest kings — the sons of the elder Dionysius, on one hand, and the grandson of Hipparinus and the son of Dion, on the other. In both cases, Dion and Plato were pressing the claims of the family of the elder Hipparinus, and to add validity to these projects probably, Plato falsely claimed that Hipparinus was appointed *strategos autokrator* together with Dionysius in 405 BC.

The hostile legacy therefore originated at Athens, as a result of the failure of the attempted alliance with Dionysius. The presence of Philoxenus, Plato and the other literati at Syracuse is to be viewed within the context of the attempted rapprochement between the two states. The dismissal and imprisonment of Plato and Philoxenus respectively is to be viewed in the light of the failure of these peace negotiations and to be considered together with the breach with Philistus and Antiphon. Renewed warfare with Carthage and developments in Greece which culminated in the *King's Peace* dashed the hopes of peace which were entertained by the conservatives at Athens. Fear of Sparta and Persia discredited the latter party and the hostile reaction of the democrats is reflected in Lysias' attack of 388 BC, Philoxenus' *Cyclops* of 389 BC, which was popularized the following year by the parody of the Cyclops dance in the second *Plutus* of Aristophanes and by Plato's clash with the dynast. The *Cyclops* posed a particularly dangerous threat for not only did it undermine Dionysius' endeavours to emphasize the "just" nature of his rule and equate it with the ideal monarchy of Plato, Isocrates and Xenophon, but it also seems to have threatened the

[17] Niese s.v. "Dionysios", *RE* VA., Col. 883, Ed. Meyer, *G.d.A.* V. 77 and Morrow, *op. cit.* (n. 5 supra) 86, accept the evidence of the letter. Doubted by Beloch, *GG*^{2}., IIa, 410.

dynastic basis of the Empire on which Dionysius' rule depended, and the international relations of Syracuse and Athens. Dionysius' reaction was firm and decisive. Plato and Philistus were banished, Philoxenus was sent to the quarries and Antiphon appears to have been executed.

Plato, as well as being considerably influenced by the hostile Athenian tradition, was, as the evidence of *Epistle VIII* regarding Hipparinus' elevation as *strategos autokrator* suggests, not above falsifying the facts of the narrative. Most important, from Plato stems the view, which was adopted by Aristotle, that Dionysius was a demagogic tyrant. This picture, which originally reflected Plato's contempt for the *demos*, ignored the oligarchic basis of Dionysius' hegemony and its democratic and popular foundation. The degree to which Aristotle accepted the Platonic assessment is further seen by Aristotle's association of Hipparinus and Dionysius during the crisis which led to Dionysius' elevation (*Polit.* 1306a).

The stereotyped hostile viewpoint had become well established by the middle of the 4th century. Speusippus denounced Dionysius as godless and wicked (*Ad Phil.* 10 in polemic against Isocrates). Demosthenes, attacking Aeschines, likened his opponent to Dionysius and Aeschines took offence at this comparison (*On the Embassy* 10). Finally, as we have seen, to Aristotle Dionysius had become *the* demagogic tyrant (*Polit.* 1305a, 21).

By the beginning of the third century, a considerable amount of material hostile to Dionysius had accumulated, particularly associated with Athenian comedy and the philosophic opposition. The anecdotes which concentrated upon Dionysius' suspicion and hostility towards his family and friends are clearly derived from the comic theatre. Among these, we may include the narrative of the sword of Damocles, Damon and Phintias, the variations on the theme of Dionysius and his barber, and the story of Dionysius' murder of his mother.[18] The demagogic viewpoint of the tyrant dealing with the suppression of liberty at

[18] The narrative of the sword of Damocles appears in *Tusc. Disp.*, 5.21, 61; Horace, *Odes*, 3.1, 17; Ammianus Marcellinus 29.2, 4; Sidonius 2.13, 6; Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 8.14, 29, p. 391; Boethius, *Consol. Philos.*, 3.5.15. Damocles is associated by Timaeus 566 F 32 with the younger Dionysius. See Niese s.v. "Damokles" in *RE* IV.2 (1901), Col. 2068. The story of Damon and Phintias is found in Diod. 10.F.4; Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.*, 33;

Syracuse, though based to a considerable extent upon evidence which Philistus is even likely to have acknowledged as authentic, ignored the oligarchic or popular basis of Dionysius' hegemony and was thus based upon the philosophic viewpoint of Plato. Emphasis was laid upon such subjects as the oppression, heavy taxation, the quarries where political prisoners languished and the tyrant's secret police.[19] On the whole, it seems that the former picture attracted greater popularity and it is this which is likely to have found its way into the writings of the peripatetic writers. Unfortunately, we know little about the manner in which these writers treated the Sicilian tyrants. We do know, however, that they discussed them, for Phaenias wrote a work on the Sicilian tyrants and Satyrus wrote on the younger Dionysius. We also know that Phaenias accepted the tradition which saw political motives behind Philoxenus' *Cyclops.* He, therefore, seems to have accepted the hostile legacy concerning Dionysius' relations with the dithyrambic poet. That the Peripatetics utilized this hostile material is suggested by two further facts. First, they were gossipy writers, for gossips like Athenaeus preserved their traditions. Second, the fashion of the time was to typify lives of luxury and the excesses of absolutism of the tyrants. Phaenias' work on the Sicilian tyrants may thus have anticipated Suetonius' *Caesars.*

To these facts, we must add the general tendency of writers to theorize in a hostile manner with neutral data. For example, Stroheker has shown, by comparing the accounts of the death of Leptines,

Cicero, *De Officiis* 3.10, 45 and *Tusc. Disp.* 5.22; Valerius Maximus 4.7, 1. See E. Wellman s.v. "Damon" in *RE.* IV.2 (1901), col. 2074.

The barber theme is found in Diod. 20.63, 3; Plut. *Dion.* 9.3; Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 5.20, 58; Plut. *De Garrul.* 12, 508f. Two variants of the anecdote regarding Dionysius' mother occur: in Plutarch, *De Alex. Magn. Fort.* 2.5, 338B, the means employed is strangulation in Aelian, *V.H.* 13.45, poison is employed. Finally, in Plutarch, *Dion.* 9.1, we read how Dionysius' father and son stripped before appearing before the tyrant.

[19] Thus Dionysius' murder of ten thousand citizens in Plut. *De. Alex. Magn. Fort* 2.5, 338B. Dionysius' regime as a police state is noted in Plutarch, *De Curios.* 12, 523A; *De Garrul.* 13, p. 508; *Reg. Apophth. Dionys. Mai* 10.176A. Polyaenus 12.2, 13; Quarries in Cicero, *In Verr.* 5.55 and Aelian, *V.H.* 12.44. Evidence for the financial rapacity of the tyrant in Ps. Arist., *Oecon* 2.2.20A (1349A, 14ff.) and 41 (1353B, 20ff.); Arist., *Polit.* 5.9, 5 (1313B, 26ff.); Valerius Maximus 1.1, 3 and 6.2, 2; Plut. *Reg. Apophth. Dionys. Mai.* 5. 175E; Polyaenus 5.2, 11; 19; 21; Aelian, *V.H.* 1.20; Athenaeus 5.693E; Cic. *De Nat. Deor.* 3.34, 83ff.; Lactantius, *Div. Instit.* 2.4.16ff.; Diod. 15.13, 1.

Dionysius' brother, as found in Diodorus (15.17, 1), Aelian (*V.H.* 13.45) and Plutarch (*De Alex. Magn. Fort.* 2.5, 338A) how from the simple fact that at the battle of Cronium Leptines had a weaker force, a tradition about Dionysius' deliberate planning of his brother's death because of jealousy arose. The story of Plato's enslavement by the tyrant, which significantly does not occur in the seventh Platonic *Epistle*, and the variants of the barber theme arose in a similar way.

IV

We are now in a position to assess the validity of the hostile tradition regarding Dionysius I. Clearly it is highly questionable in view of the nature of its origins and subsequent development. We must be aware of the fact that it arose from Syracuse's political failure to cement an alliance with Athens in 388 BC and consequently that the material which derives from the dithyrambic poem, the *Cyclops*, and the comic theatre is essentially Athenian in content and that it does not represent the Sicilian tradition. Dionysius' harsh treatment of the literati, moreover, was a response to a danger which negated the successes of Dionysius' propaganda policies, both in Sicily and on the Greek mainland, especially Athens, attacked Dionysius' supporters in Athens and even threatened the dynastic basis of his Empire. The seriousness of the threat is the only explanation for the harsh and decisive measures taken by the tyrant whose major aim had always been to depict his hegemony as just. It is this which largely explains Plutarch's surprise at the contrast between the sentiments expressed by Dionysius in his dramas and the tyrant's actions (*De Alex. Magn. Fort.* 2.5, 338C) — though it also stems from the fact that Plutarch had access to the vast hostile tradition, including Timaeus' account.

Thus consideration of the origin of this tradition leads us to conclude that essentially Dionysius did desire to maintain a "just" hegemony; that the sentiments expressed in the dramas and in the nomenclature of his daughters were not mere verbiage of a hypocritical dynast; and that the purge of 388–86 was a necessary response to the growth of a serious threat to the stability of his regime and its policies.

Both pictures of Dionysius as poor composer of poetry and as the suspicious despot are consequently to be regarded with caution. In the

first place, we have seen that the attack upon the tyrant's literary accomplishments which originated with Philoxenus' *Cyclops* was clearly political in origin. As for the account of the suspicious and despotic Dionysius, we must be aware that in origin it is Athenian, reflecting developments of the years 388–86, when the very hegemony of Dionysius was being seriously threatened. Plato's own testimony, moreover, suggests that Dionysius' hegemony was, in fact, not the harsh rule depicted by Plato and the Athenian hostile tradition since *Epistle VII* provides contradictory information which is supported by the evidence of Fragment 134 of Theopompus, and in the case of the picture of the rise of the demagogic tyrant in the eighth book of the *Republic*, Plato's inherent oligarchic bias led the philosopher to ignore both the popular and oligarchic basis of Dionysius' rule.

And what of the subsequent evolution of the hostile tradition? Obviously, since its basis is suspect, its subsequent development is open to the same degree of suspicion. We must stress that the later tradition is also Athenian and not Sicilian, and is based upon comic distortion and the equally untrustworthy philosophic testimony. Finally, we have seen that the tendency to theorize with neutral data and the Peripatetic biography of the Hellenistic age seem to have increased the distortion and the scene was prepared for the vitriolic onslaught upon Dionysius launched by Timaeus of Tauromenium.

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