POLITICAL "PARTIES" IN ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY: A MODERNISING *TOPOS*[1]

V. I. ANASTASIADIS

To the memory of Leonidas Manolopoulos

Le développement de la science des partis politiques (ne pourrait-on l'appeler *stasiologie*?) . . .

Duverger 1976.551

Party-spirit still was the great mover of their politics." This remark of William Mitford's, in the lengthy historical work he started publishing in 1784, typifies the way he introduced the notion of the "party" in fifth-century political life, chiefly in the Athenian democracy, but also in the other Greek city-states (1822.vol. 2.102–03).[2] The birth of the concept of the "party" in relation to the political affairs of the ancient world coincided with the consolidation of the study of ancient history in Britain, and the notion of "party" rivalry, as encountered in Mitford and, around the middle

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1 The terms "party," *parti*, *Partei*, *partito*, come from the Latin *pars*, which acquired a political sense at the end of the Republican period (see Hellegouarc'h 1972.5–6 and particularly 110–15; cf. Sartori 1976.3–5 and Beyme 1978.677–80). Regarding the corresponding modern Greek term *komma* (< anc. κόπτω = "stamp, impression of a coin, coinage," see *GEL*, *s.v.* and later > κομμάτι(ον) = "frustum, scissio," see Du Cange *s.v.* κομάτη, κόμμαν; cf. also Herodian *Epim.* p. 70, 1–2 Boissonade: τὸ ἀπόκομμα; p. 137, 9: τρύφος; and Kriaras *s.v.*), as far as I know, no linguistic study exists.

2 Cf. 414–15: "The policy for maintaining sovereignty, common to all Grecian republics, rested on that division into parties [*sc.* aristocratical *v.* democratical party]."

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of the next century, George Grote,[3] became a commonplace with a strong and lasting influence. In recent decades, of course, it has been widely regarded as a misleading anachronism,[4] and the term has almost, though not entirely,[5] fallen out of use. This is certainly connected with the general deprecation of any attempt to "modernise" the past.[6] The aspiration to make the study of the "parties" of the ancient period a subject in its own right (as announced, at least, by such historians as Julius Beloch and Leonard Whibley),[7] independent of any description of specific facts of political history, is considered inappropriate nowadays.

The *topos* in question is a good starting point from which to trace, on the one hand, how and in what historical context a typical instance of modernisation of the past developed and, on the other, the stages of the development of its rebuttal. It is also a good basis from which to examine a specific instance of how the ancient Greek precedent operated in the formation of modern perceptions of democracy: the "transfer" of the

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3   Mitford ascribed great importance not only to the two-party division between the aristocrats and the democrats (or alternatively, 1822.323: "party of the lower people"), but also to the despotic dominion of the democratical "party" after Cimon's death (1822.414). For Grote, see nn. 8 and 10 below.

4   See the recent, fuller discussion of the subject in Hansen 1991.277ff. and 306; cf. more briefly Connor 1971.5ff.; Strauss 1986.15–66; Cook 1988.65–67. More generally, Ehrenberg 1935.115, 116 (cf. 1937.157, and particularly 1951.340, n. 4); Finley 1974.16, 21; Perlman 1963.350; Kinzl 1977.210–14, 221–22; Donlan 1978.101, n. 10; Funke 1980.1, n. 1; Gehrke 1984.530, 539; Gabbert 1986.29–30; Pope 1988.290 (for a response regarding a "radical" and a "conservative" wing within the "democratic party," for instance, see McGregor 1956.100); Schmitt-Pantel 1990.205. For the nature of political forces and their task, cf. Gehrke 1985.328–39. See also nn. 37–45 below.

5   See, e.g., Pozzi 1970.392–93; Christian 1975.63–73. Generally, the usual tripartite division of the political powers (oligarchs, democrats or radicals, and moderates) refers directly or indirectly to the existence of "parties," as in Hignett 1952.177 and 256, or Fuks 1953. The same implication also lies behind the use of such expressions as "propagandist slogan," "constitutional programme" (Fuks 1953.108), "party-political literature (propaganda)," "party interests," "leading party politicians" (David 1984.137). Finally, the notion of contemporary parties is also reflected, albeit infrequently, in accounts of not exclusively political groups that were formed in antiquity. See, for instance, Thomson 1973.197 on Pythagorean *thiasoi*. More generally, Connor 1971.8 sums up the strong presence of the concept in antiquarian literature with the words: "For the most part scholarship has avoided the word but retained the notion."

6   For the conventional modernising terminology, see, e.g., Rhodes 1978.207–11; cf. Strauss 1987.127–29. For the modernising tendency in the historiography of the inter-war period, see, most recently, Touloumakos 1992.415ff.

7   Beloch 1884.iii; Whibley 1889.v.

"party" phenomenon to antiquity not only presupposed that it was in some way appropriate to the direct democracy of the city-state—revealing its "distinctive" form—but this transfer also concealed a more general evaluation of the political environment of our own contemporary representative democracy. In some cases, indeed, as we shall see farther on, this latter aspect has eclipsed, or even supplanted, the former.

Two points need to be made here. The use of the term "party" in the study of the ancient world, and also its ideological content, in fact went hand in hand with the gradual establishment of the party system in the modern world, both in the United States after the Constitution of 1787 and in Europe after the French Revolution. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the historians studying the ancient world always used the *topos* in question in a way that was entirely clear. On the one hand, the very concept of the "party" was anyway a fluid one in Europe, at least until the beginning of the twentieth century when universal suffrage finally prevailed. On the other, since the need for clarity in historical narrative frequently necessitated the conventional use of familiar terms,[8] it is not always obvious in the political history of the ancient world whether "party" was being used as a *terminus technicus* or whether it conveyed the looser notion of a political "bloc," "group," or simply "force."[9]

The latter point does not apply to Britain, of course, where a powerful influence was exerted by the advanced party—or rather two-party—system of the Whigs and the Tories. This is tellingly reflected, around the mid-nineteenth century, in Grote's account of the confrontation

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8   As Cook notes (1988.66, n. 31), Grote himself acknowledged the unsuitability of modern terms ("minister," for instance, or "opposition"), but he did recognise their usefulness for conveying a clear picture of Athenian democracy (cf. Grote 1869–70.vol. 6.69).

9   In contrast to the Greek *komma*, the corresponding terms that come from the Latin *pars* do not always have a strictly technical significance (see Aurenche 1974.8, n. 3). Thus, even in modern studies, their precise meaning may be defined *ad hoc*, as, for instance, in French 1959.57 on *Diakrioi*. By and large, the term "party" is sometimes useful in rough accounts of political conflicts and, as Dover points out (1968.50): "it might be pedantic, and sometimes cumbrous, to dispense with the word "party" in all discussion on Athenian politics." Roberts agrees (1982.13), and defines the term as a "fleeting group whose political fortunes were tied for the moment to those of some influential man," though she does not rule out the possibility of a "longstanding group with profound ideological convictions"! Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the humanities' interest in ancient history was prompted above all by an interest in politics, and the correlations, parallels, and modernising terms constituted a *heuristisches und didaktisches Prinzip* on which to base relevant conclusions (see Gehrke 1984.530–31).

between the Athenian "democratical" and the "conservative [or "oligarchi-cal"] party," told from the standpoint of his own political career,[10] and also in Whibley's pioneering monograph on the "parties" of Athens. In this early use of the term "parties," one recognises the inevitable influence of the long-standing presence of the party phenomenon in Britain: in 1770, in the context of a theoretical discussion that had already been on-going for a century or so, it was Edmund Burke who first produced a positive assess-ment of the contribution of the parties both to cohesive governance and to effective critical opposition (Beyme 1978.691–92).

However, the manifest influence of the intellectual climate of liberalism is of much greater interest. One of the main aspects of this influence is worth mentioning inasmuch as it was a focus of intense controversy in subsequent research. Specifically, the notion of correlating the "parties" with "social classes" was far from alien to Grote and Whibley. The latter, indeed, discerned a "broad analogy" between them.[11] On the other hand, with the rebuttal of Mitford's views, the notion of democracy as a grim regime of "party" dominance, particularly of the poor over society as a whole, did not prevail. Thus, the confrontation between Athenian "parties" was accommodated to a quasi-parliamentary framework, accom-panied by the general impression of a more or less smooth vying for power.

By contrast, in the other centre of nineteenth-century classical studies, Germany, where the party system evolved later and more slowly (although the concept of the "party" was being used in the relevant literature as early as the mid-nineteenth century),[12] the general attitude was

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10 See, e.g., Grote 1869–70.vol. 5.211. For his parliamentary activity, his political views, and his time, see Momigliano 1966.56ff.; more recently, Morris 1994.29–31, including further bibliography. For the parallels drawn between Athenian democracy and the liberal ideas of the mid-nineteenth century, cf. Hansen 1989a.26–28.

11 In his monograph, which chiefly concerns the political sparring between the "hawks" and the "doves" during the Peloponnesian War, Whibley talks of a tripartite system of "parties"—democratic, oligarchical, and middle, the latter "composed of moderate or opportunist democrats, but including also some moderate oligarchs"—which he correlates with the rich, the poor, and the middle class. He also draws explicit parallels between these divisions and the right, the left, and the centre: Whibley 1889.36–39, 45 and chap. iii.3.

12 See, e.g., Vischer 1836 and Freese 1848. The former concerns the political strife from Cleisthenes to the Thirty: Vischer attributes the origin of the "party" conflicts to the overthrowing of the principles that governed the relationship between individual and state, whereupon the state became a tool (*Werkzeug*, *Mittel*) of individual self-interest, since "höher als der Staat, steht ihm [dem Hellenen] seine Macht im Staate" (154–55). The latter examines the phenomenon of poverty, acknowledges the difficulty of defining the

manifestly hostile[13] and the "party" phenomenon was described primarily as an expression of social (i.e., "class") conflict. Thus, Julius Beloch regarded the Athenian polity as a one-party state, i.e., the state of the democratic "party" of the poor, and expressed the view that democracy—despite its outward appearance of universal equality—led to the *Klassen-herrschaft*, or rather the *Tyrannei,* of the majority over the wealthy minority (1884.1–13).[14] Robert von Pöhlmann underlined the dominance of "class" interests and interpreted "party" rivalry as an attempt to seize and exploit power to the advantage either of the *kapitalistische Minderheit* or of the *Masse der Nichtbesitzenden* (1925.vol. 1.394–95). Lastly, Eduard Meyer also referred to the *konservative* and the *fortschrittliche* [or *demokratische*, or *radikale*] *Parteien* as "parties" for the defence of specific interests, and attributed their origin to the fact that rival social forces closed ranks against one another. This modernising tendency, of course, applied not only to the name and definition of the "parties," but also to the description of their political activity: just as the modern parties in modern Europe differ, Meyer wrote, supporting the authority of the monarch or the popular majority, and in England wrangle over whether the throne should be occupied by the lawful dynasty or by a king installed by parliament, so too in Athens the

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relationship (*Anknüpfung*) between the past and the modern period with regard to such a contentious subject, and attributes the outbreak of the conflict between rich and poor to the fact that "die [Verfassung] mit der gleichen politischen Berechtigung die Vertretung von jedem Interesse gestattet, und . . . die [bürgerlichen Gesellschaft] durch ihre Freiheit die stete Ungleichheit des Vermögens erhält" . . . "Faktion und Partei, stimmen jedoch darin überein, daß der Egoismus den Einzelnen zum handeln herausfordert" (ii and 5). Some two decades earlier, B. G. Niebuhr had drawn a distinction between *Partei* and *Faktion*, ascribing to the latter the characteristics of *Erbitterung*, *Gehässigkeit*, and *Feindseligkeit*. Very often, he observed, in both the ancient and the modern periods, the parties and the political conflicts *reduzieren sich* to factions (typical examples of this degeneration being the Whigs and the Tories!); thus, archaic tyranny, for instance, is seen to have placed a benevolent restraint on the warring parties until the state was able to stand by itself (Niebuhr 1847–51.vol. 2.415–16, and vol. 1.334–35). A fuller nineteenth-century bibliography is provided by Busolt 1897.241 and Miller Calhoun 1913.2–3; cf. Prestel 1939.5–6, n. 12 (*hetaireiai*).

13 Typical, though extreme, is the grim picture of "party" rivalry in J. Schvarcz's comparative constitutional study (Schvarcz 1901.588): "Doch durchzieht sowohl das Staats- als das Volks-leben von Athen der unverkennbare Zug einer wahrhaft thierischen Grausamkeit. . . . Auch hatte sich der Parteikampf zu Athen noch nicht jenes Sicherheitsventil zu verschaffen verstanden, welches im modernen Verfassungsleben eine friedlich glatte Ablösung der Majoritäten in der Regierung zu ermöglichen pflegt."

14 For the identity of the "classes," see particularly: "der Gegensatz zwischen reich und arm, zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat, wie wir es modern ausdrücken würden" (1884.1).

main bone of contention in the "party" struggle was the position of the Areopagus (1980.521ff.; cf. 451).

By and large, there was frank opposition both to the liberal tradition of Grote and to the polarising climate of the controversy in Germany at the turn of the century. Beloch had already summed up the *status quaestionis* in his preface, in the following sarcastic, though no less apologetic, tone (1884.iv):

> Der Cultus der radicalen Demokratie ist jetzt in der attischen Geschichte so an der Mode, dass wer ihn nicht mitmacht leicht den Anschein gewinnt als verfiele er in das entgegengesetzte Extrem. Wir vergessen zu oft, dass liberal und konservativ relative Begriffe sind, und dass derselbe Mann in einer absoluten Monarchie auf der äussersten Linken stehen kann, der in einer radicalen Republik vielleicht auf der äussersten Rechten zu finden sein würde.

It is by no means original to correlate the deprecation of "radical democracy" and any right/left distinction (i.e., division into "parties") with the age in which this deprecation arose. This was the early decades after the birth of the German Empire in 1871. The vision of national unity, and the power of the monarchy that inspired and guaranteed its realisation, were anyway contrary to the potentially subversive and divisive role of the—chiefly radical—"parties."[15]

In Germany more than anywhere else, the question of the existence of "parties" in the ancient period was bound up with the contemporary political environment. By contrast, in Britain, France, and the United States, circumstances did not compel such a close (and ideologically charged) association with the current situation. Thus, standing more strictly aloof, the supporters of the *topos* applied themselves rather to bringing out the "distinctive" aspects of the "party" phenomenon in antiquity, by drawing the first rudimentary distinctions between the ancient period and their own time. In actual fact, however, these distinctions also constituted the first internal—though not easily discernible—logical weaknesses of the

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15 For the ideal of national unification and the party system in Germany after 1871, see, in brief, Kaack 1971.33–34.

topos as a whole, because arguments were presented that essentially refuted the hypothesis that "parties" existed. Whibley himself did not underestimate the fact that the oligarchs, flatly rejecting the democratic regime, were obliged to work in secrecy and to conceal their plans, because, once publicised, any subversive intentions would instantly have been condemned as treachery, and, as a general rule (1889.36): "men in pronounced antagonism to the existing constitution do not usually form a political party."[16] A similar reservation was also expressed with regard to the democrats, in France this time, by Maurice Croiset soon after 1900 (1906.32):

> en face du groupe aristocratique, variable en son organisation et vaguement délimité, la démocratie ne constituait pas, à proprement parler, un "parti." Elle était l'État lui-même, le corps des citoyens tout entier.[17]

Moreover, the *topos* seems to have been regarded more critically after the publication of G. Miller Calhoun's dissertation in 1913. Henceforth, the study of the "parties" in general was dissociated from (and to an extent de-emphasised) the study of the various *hetaireiai* or *synômosiai* (political clubs) that they were said to consist of (1913.3, n. 2; cf. 138, n. 1). Though this is something of a generalisation,[18] this dissociation contributed to a shift of interest towards small, short-lived political groups, chiefly on the oligarchic (though sometimes on the democratic)[19] wing. Though relevant with regard to subject and sources, research did not set out principally to verify the initial hypothesis that "parties" existed. On the contrary, the hypothesis was, if anything, weakened. In illustration of this,

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16 Cf. 81: "neither their methods nor their objects entitle them to be regarded as a party." Furthermore, this notion may be tied in with Beloch's point that there was no oligarchic "party" before the time of the Four Hundred, because the oligarchs abstained from public life in an attempt to withhold legitimacy from the democratic regime. Beloch adds that, in the absence of a representative system, the middle class also failed to form a solid *Mittelpartei* (Beloch 1884.13 and 7).

17 Cf. West 1924.137, n. 1: "the democratic party was practically coextensive with the state"; Romilly 1956.459 (see n. 28 below): "et il peut parfois n'être pas légitime de trancher de façon absolue entre 'le peuple' et 'le parti démocratique'" (cf. Aurenche 1974.8).

18 Miller Calhoun maintains that every citizen—"as is often the case in our own day"—could belong to several clubs and, in the case of a party leader, the club associated with his name was composed exclusively of his most loyal and powerful supporters (Miller Calhoun 1913.30–31 and n. 9).

19 For the relevant discussion, see Pecorella Longo 1971.10–11, n. 3.

one might recall that, twenty years later, R. J. Bonner (who suggested the subject and supervised Miller Calhoun's dissertation at the University of Chicago), having compared the political leader in Athens to the prime minister in the British parliamentary system and his strongest opponent to the—unofficial—leader of the opposition, concluded: "But it is a mistake to press the analogy too far. There was no definite party system in Athens" (1933.50).[20]

All these observations, reasonable in their conception and simple in their formulation, are not surprising if one considers that, in Britain and the United States at least, the parties were organic components of the political system and had already developed a more or less clearly defined profile after a long historical process. Both Whibley, adducing the oligarchs' possible intention of overthrowing the regime, and Bonner later on, with his "no definite party system," were creating clear contrasts between the Athenian democracy and its modern equivalents. Croiset was a similar case. If the "aristocrats" and the "democrats" both constituted "parties" in the same sense of the word, then one would have risked the anachronistic—and undoubtedly erroneous—conclusion that the political conflicts of the Athenian democracy focused on constitutional issues; they were, in other words, a manifestation of an abiding constitutional crisis. His observation, which he implicitly bases on the polysemy of the term *demos*, suggests the notion of a *volonté générale* of which the democratic regime was the mouthpiece. Lastly, as the parties' positive contribution to the political system was gradually recognised, it became necessary to contradistinguish them more clearly from any implication of a conspiratorial and presumably subversive *factio*. The self-contained nature of the study of the "political clubs" from Miller Calhoun onwards to a great extent reflects the influence of precisely this distinction.

Generally speaking, after 1900, when universal suffrage had become more widespread, the political parties in most European countries ceased to constitute mere groups of people involved in the electoral or parliamentary process and gradually acquired a more organised aspect, which was characterised by the recruitment of a variety of non-parliamen-

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20 In an earlier lecture, however, evidently with Whibley in mind (Whibley 1889.125ff.), he had cited the political identity of the *strategoi*, who were elected annually during the Peloponnesian War, as evidence of the fluctuating power between the "war party" and the "peace party" (Whibley 1889.21).

tary agencies to actively intervene in political and social life (Duverger 1976.39–40). Such parties obviously did not exist in antiquity, and we may regard a contemporary awareness of the risks attendant on an anachronistic application of the concept as self-evident.[21] Until the inter-war period, then, research concentrated on identifying imaginary or genuine differences between the two types of "parties": those of the ancient period and their twentieth-century counterparts. One might say that an attempt was made to lay the theoretical foundations of the party phenomenon in the ancient period. The significance of the attempt is obvious: the theoretical approach—which, furthermore, had no precedent—revealed an awareness of the risks attendant on an imprecise application of the concept, while yet defending the expediency of using the modernising *topos*. In the circumstances, it was only to be expected that Athenian democracy as an historical example would be politically exploited in the current situation. Nowhere is the intention more lucidly revealed—nor more eloquently interpreted—than in a lecture given by the Polish historian Thaddée Wałek-Czernecki in Oslo in 1928 (published 1929). It is worth examining in some detail.

In antiquity, he argued, "parties" existed in the broad—and diachronic—sense of the term, namely, as groups of citizens with a shared consciousness; but not, however, in the narrow sense of *groupements organisés*. What obtained in Athens was also encountered in modern times under the *régime parlementaire pur*, which bypassed the parties and enabled its representatives either to make decisions in the name of the nation—rather than of their electors—or to be influenced by corridor intrigue and backstage string-pulling. Under this system, however, the French Third Republic and Italy before the rise of Fascism (like Pericles' democracy), descended into *anarchie organisée*; whereas, in England, the functioning of the parties ensured stable governance. Often, Wałek-Czernecki added, a healthy democratic conviction manifests itself to the detriment of the *système oligarchique du gouvernement des partis*; but (1929.214),

> l'expérience suffisante nous manque encore pour décider
> si cette réaction de l'esprit vraiment démocratique contre
> le système oligarchique du gouvernement des partis sera
> un bienfait, ou bien, comme on pourrait le supposer

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21 See, e.g., West 1924.137, n. 1; Meder 1938.xxviii and n. 52.

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d'après l'analogie avec les démocraties antiques, un
grave danger pour les États qui ont adopté la forme
moderne de la démocratie directe.

In the case in point, the ancient period set a negative precedent
from every point of view: both the dominance of the "material interests
parties" in the broad sense and the absence of "organised parties" in the
narrow sense contributed to political destabilisation. In his first observation,
Wałek-Czernecki was obviously thinking—he actually said as much—of
the Bolshevik party; in the second, the tottering democracies of western
Europe before the rise of the national socialist and Fascist parties; possibly
even Poland itself, which—after a mere five years of democratic govern-
ment—had found itself under Piłsudski's dictatorship. However, both these
parallels with the modern period could be substantiated only by a somewhat
flexible answer to the question of whether or not "parties" existed in
antiquity: the rather vague—or confused—distinction between what Wałek-
Czernecki himself termed "party" in the broad and "party" in the narrow
sense served not as an attempt to salvage the credibility of the *topos*
regarding "parties," but to fill precisely this—instructive—need.

Wałek-Czernecki's theoretical support of the *topos* had only a
fleeting impact, if any. A few years later, a substantial effort was made to
demolish it completely. Regardless of the various arguments used, it must
first be said that, although it deprecated Grote's modernising approach, the
rebuttal originated in the same liberal tradition. But we should focus, above
all, on its most characteristic feature, namely the reversal of the ideological
content with which German historians had invested the *topos*. Just as the
"party" aspect of the state had been used then to create a censorious image
of Athenian democracy, so the refutation of that "party" aspect now served
a positive reassessment of direct democracy.

This intention was almost triumphantly revealed in an article by
Victor Martin in 1933, which, in Olivier Reverdin's eloquent words,
demonstrated "les avantages de souplesse et d'humanité que l'absence de
partis politiques procura aux Athéniens" (1945.202). Specifically, Martin
described, on the one hand, a regime in which self-confidence and talent,
straight speaking and the power of argument, independent judgement and
spontaneity, personal authority and eloquence thrived—a regime, in other
words, which favoured conviction and absolute freedom of decision and
action; and, on the other, a synchronous inflexible regime of representative
democracy dominated by the infallibility and interests of the party—a

regime, in other words, which favoured the *militarisation de l'opinion commune*. Ultimately, it is the contradistinction between regimes that are based on the free agency of the individual and those that seek to hold him captive ("le système des partis . . . emprisonnant les individus").

This trenchant indictment of the party system obviously goes beyond the bounds of an affirmative or negative answer to the question of whether or not "parties" existed in the ancient period, and may probably be attributed to the climate of general crisis and political instability that followed the end of the First World War in France, if not also to the perplexity aroused by the political machinations going on in neighbouring Italy and Germany. In the circumstances, Martin was apt to take a somewhat rosy view of the absence of "parties" (reflected not only in his opinions, but also in the way he expresses them), an idealised view that was far more closely related to his own perception of current events than to the needs of scholarly argument. This is clearly apparent in the use of such imagery as the following (1933.36): "C'est l'individu [dans la politique athénienne] qui fait la politique, par une création continue; la masse politique, glaise plastique, quasi amorphe, obéit à son pouce d'artiste."

No less categorically, though not quite so enthusiastically, the existence of "parties" was rebutted four years later by the American philologist and historian Lionel Pearson. He described the existence of a "party" system in the Athenian state as superfluous, since there was absolute freedom of speech (*parrhesia*) in the *ecclesia*. He underlined both the absence of "party" staff serving the political leaders, who were "not party representatives, but powerful autocratic individuals" (1937.50), and the fact that ancient Greek lacked a collective noun to express the concept of a "party"; at the same time, he opined that "the use of ostracism prevented the danger of party-politics (a mild form of *stasis*)" (1937.46).[22] Lastly—and this is particularly worth noting—Pearson imputed the decadence of the polity in the fourth century B.C. precisely to the prevalence of unlawful—and, in the heyday of democracy, alien—factionalism.

Pearson's reference to the ultimate prevalence of "factionalism"— though it obscured his answer to the question of whether or not "parties"

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22 This is a particularly interesting view in that it refuted the earlier, commonly accepted, perception that, for instance, ostracism was a preventive measure against ambitious tyrants (Carcopino 1935.26–27 and 35) or was due to *phthonos* (Raubitschek 1958.109). Regarding the subsequent degeneration of ostracism into a *Waffe im Parteikampf*, see Reinmuth 1942.1684–85.

existed at any time in antiquity[23]—once again indicated that he had drawn his own "contemporary" conclusions, clearly influenced by the general political atmosphere of his time. The question of whether or not "parties" existed was not merely a scholarly pretext, certainly, but it did provide an opportunity to express one's philosophical and political convictions. It is no coincidence that Martin and Pearson shared the same high regard for the concept of the individual, obviously in contradistinction to the co-ordinated, disciplined, "militarised" party group. It would not be totally out of place to associate this contradistinction with the increasing aggression of the national socialist and Fascist parties: the approach of totalitarianism brought with it the menace of the individual's assimilation into the state, and the command of the state was being assumed by those parties that constituted the national élite, which alone was capable of expressing the national will. The suppression of individual political freedom in the single-party system of the Soviet Union could rouse similar feelings.

So, for different reasons, and despite their break with earlier perceptions, these first inter-war rebuttals of the *topos* were still actuated by a certain animosity towards "parties." In fact, it was not the non-existence of "parties" in antiquity that was idealised so much as the outstanding role of the individual, which was a natural corollary of that absence; this was in line with one of the fundamental perceptions (as early as 1826) of the liberal tradition of Grote.[24] Furthermore, in different circumstances, this idealisation would have turned against the parliamentary system and would have shared totalitarianism's aversion to the free operation of political parties,[25] which is far from what either Pearson or Martin was implying. Naturally, the circumstances that led scholars to develop this notion that the non-existence of "parties" was ideal for the elevation of the individual

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23 At about the same period, Prestel dismissed the existence of "parties" before Thucydides' time, though he conceded an intense two-party rivalry thereafter and ultimately underlined the role of the charismatic leader (Prestel 1939.17, 30, and 44–45). For the designation of Thucydides as a *Parteiführer* or *Organisator*, see Busolt 1897.496–97; cf. Ehrenberg 1951.340, n. 4, and Wolff 1979.298.

24 See Momigliano 1966.61.

25 Like other issues connected with the party phenomenon, the criticism meted out to the "parties" for their potentially divisive role against the national interest has been a matter of some interest to students of ancient history. In 1940, M. F. McGregor (95) refuted the overrated role attributed to various domestic expediencies in foreign policymaking (Robinson 1939.234–35), and concluded: "With Athens free from actual danger from abroad, the division of party politics frequently split the citizens . . . Athens, in her crises, learned and appreciated the blessings of Nationalist government."

changed after the War. But nonetheless, the same notion, explicitly or tacitly, has been the most constant *Leitmotiv* in modern accounts of Athenian democracy, and commentators have frequently failed to notice that, chiefly for this reason, the hitherto common modernising *topos* has been completely supplanted in both its forms—i.e., Athenian democracy either as a quasi-parliamentary, multi-party system or as a single-party dictatorship of the *demos*.

The need for a clearer—and, as regards personal assessments of the modern party phenomenon, neutral—answer was pointed out just after the War. Its desired ideological framework and *actualité* were summed up by Reverdin in 1945, in an appeal for a scientific approach to Athenian democracy, "en un temps où l'on fait appel à l'idée démocratique pour régénérer le monde" (1945.202).

Despite the timely incentive to which Reverdin refers, the new approach was chiefly characterised by deprecation of any attempt to view history in modern terms. Thus research concentrated on enumerating the differences between modern and ancient political forces and ascribed various negative assessments to the modernising *topos*, while paying less attention to its political and ideological implications. The method followed rested on the assumption that the typology of modern parties was based on certain criteria, and there thus arose the common perception that because the ancient "parties" did not conform to these criteria, they did not in fact exist. Specifically, the relevant studies pointed out that the political groupings lacked names,[26] internal organisation[27] (and therefore unity,[28] discipline,[29] and hierarchy),[30] a programme, and principles (which, of

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26 Bruce 1962.63; Strauss 1986.16.

27 Wüst 1938.1, n. 2; Loenen 1953.5 (I am grateful to my colleague, the late Leonidas Manolopoulos, for making a translation of this article available to me); Connor 1971.6 (cf. Thomsen 1972.120); Aurenche 1974.7 and 9; Strauss 1986.16; Sinclair 1988.139; Ober 1989.122; Manolopoulos 1991.221, n. 219.

28 Romilly 1960.263; Ober 1989.122.

29 Sinclair 1988.139.

30 Stockton 1990.124. Strauss 1986.16, presents a similar argument, namely that the relations between leaders and followers were "loose and fluid" and, in fact, "followers were not very numerous"[!]. The *hetaireiai*'s extremely small number of followers, certainly, has been noted on many an occasion by scholars from Calhoun's time (Miller Calhoun 1913.29–30) to more recently (Bleicken 1994.377–78, for instance, mentions 5–20 people) and has been discussed in various contexts, such as by Ruschenbusch (1978.37–41) with regard to the warring political blocs at Corcyra, Samos, Miletus, and Thespiae. But it is difficult to regard this, in itself, as a criterion for the existence or absence of "parties" because the low

course, constitute "party" ideology).[31] To all this may be added the lack of duration and continuity in the activity of the political groupings[32] (and thus the absence of any "historical" tradition in each),[33] and also their non-institutionalised role in the state.[34]

In contrast to the views about the "distinctive" form of the "party" phenomenon in antiquity, some of the earliest of which, as we have seen (Whibley, Croiset, *et al.*), were inclined to deny the very existence of "parties," the discussion of how the ancient "parties" differed from their modern counterparts has been based almost exclusively on *argumenta ex silentio*—i.e., on the conditions that the ancient "parties" did *not* fulfil. All the same, even the fragile differences that led Wałek-Czernecki to an extreme instance of modernisation were based on the axiomatic principle that the "parties"—like any political phenomenon, for that matter—in the ancient period were not obliged to, nor indeed could, tally precisely with their modern counterparts. At the same time, the characteristics of the modern parties on which the comparison was based corresponded more to an ideal type of representative democracy party than to the actuality. Furthermore, "party" as a *terminus technicus*, as established in the nineteenth century, was not always used in the same sense,[35] and indeed, owing to their common desire to seize and wield power, widely differing organisations were sometimes subsumed under the same term. These range from the *protozoaire* (to quote Maurice Duverger) form of some "parties" that were active from the time of the ancient democracies onwards to the overgrown organisms that are the modern parties of Europe and the United States (1976.20 and 23).

So one may reasonably say that the detection of differences with respect to the modern parties, however incontestable, does not necessarily

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numbers are quite in keeping with the relatively small populations of the city-states; nor is it easy to express in precise numerical terms (with regard to either members or voters) the "mass character" of modern parties.

31 Wüst 1938.1, n. 2; Reverdin 1945.201 and 212; Loenen 1953.5; Sealey, 1956a.242 (= 66); cf. 1956b.181; Perlman 1963.352–53; Sinclair 1988.139; Stockton 1990.124–25. Cf. Jones 1957.131; Connor 1971.6; Aurenche 1974.7 and 9. Cf. Ostwald 1986.355.
32 Loenen 1953.1, n. 2; Jones 1957.131; Romilly 1960.263; Connor 1971.6; Strauss 1986.16.
33 Murray 1990.20–21.
34 Reverdin 1945.201; Bruce 1962.63; Murray 1990.20.
35 It was sometimes defined, for instance, as the organ of one segment of the electorate in a context of universal suffrage and sometimes as a mechanism for effectively laying claim to public office in a predetermined environment of institutional structures. For a brief discussion, see Schlesinger 1968.429–30. Cf. Seiler 1978.7–9.

preclude the existence of a "protozoan" form in antiquity, in which case the whole issue would boil down to a contradistinctive—and in many respects arbitrary—definition of the term "party," adapted to the circumstances of the ancient world. To exclude this as a possibility and cling blindly to the entelechy of the modern parties could well be regarded as no less anachronistic.

It is worth mentioning two points here: the attempt to revive the *topos* during the 1950s and the systematic study of the political *hetaireiai* in Italy. Specifically, K. D. Stergiopoulos' noted monograph (1955–64) rested precisely on the conviction that an explicit distinction between ancient and modern "parties" is unnecessary because self-evident. Although he followed an analytical structure appropriate to modern parties and was criticised for it by his reviewers,[36] in his second volume he answered the accusations of anachronism and pointed out that any affirmative conclusion arising out of an (inevitably unsuccessful) quest for similarities must be methodologically unsound.[37] Thus, the dilemma over whether or not "parties" existed in the ancient period boils down to so much hot air, though not entirely devoid of "topical" political significance: Stergiopoulos' work is actuated by a frankly didactic purpose with regard to the "party system," its sound implementation, and, of course, its pitfalls. He assures his readers that any reference to the "imperfections of the parties" does not spring from any antipathy towards parties; rather he hopes, by studying the "parties," to strengthen the "flagging" relationship between state and citizen. He adds that (1955–64.vol. 1.8–9; translation mine):

> the issue is a difficult one chiefly because it serves as a lesson to all concerned, and particularly to Greeks, who, perhaps more than citizens of any other nationality, have inherited a closer relationship with the party. [!]

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36 Regarding the "modernising approach," see particularly Will 1959; cf. Romilly 1956.459 and 1960.263. Cf. Pecorella Longo 1971.8–9, n. 3. Berve, however, in his largely favourable review, defended precisely the *non*-anachronistic nature of the work (1956.544: "Der Verfasser . . . ohne jedoch Parteien im modernen Sinne für die antike Polis annehmen zu wollen . . .").

37 Stergiopoulos 1955–64.vol. 2.4 and n. 1 (translation mine): "Organised in accordance with their own place and time, [the parties] cannot be compared with others in an attempt to establish inferior or superior aspects. This error of method has been made by many studies."

This last remark is not only an exaggeration, it is also historically inaccurate: the political parties in modern Greece have obviously existed for a much shorter time than those in western Europe. Stergiopoulos was actually referring to the current (in the narrowest sense) political environment: Greece was still making its way through the first decade after a bloody civil war and most of the Greek parties were characterised by some very distinctive features—their highly developed patronage system, their leader-centred structure, their organic connection with the state (or rather their substitution for the state) (Drosos 1982.119–23).[38] Stergiopoulos himself was not criticising the "party" phenomenon, he was defining its legitimate bounds: on the one hand, he was defending the legitimacy of the oligarchical "party" and, on the other, he was affirming that: "wherever political life is divided into parties, there is culture . . . as long as the division is conscientious and sustained by theory" (1955–64.vol. 1.56).

Not surprisingly, this attempt to revive the *topos* remained an isolated one and had little effect. From the 1950s onwards, particularly in Italy, there was a renewed interest in the study of the political *hetaireiai*. The relevant monographs were produced at the University of Padua[39] and covered in chronological sequence the archaic and classical periods: an analysis of small political groupings in each period, based on the specific, relevant documentation, proved that large organised political structures did not exist. In other words, Miller Calhoun's hypothesis that the occasional, small, amical political associations were components or models of larger "parties" found no support whatever and was definitively abandoned. Thus, even though a comparison with the present may sometimes assist in a better understanding of the past, scholars have nonetheless moved appreciably away, at least, from the once dominant image of "two-party" conflict. As K. J. Dover points out, for the modern scholar, ancient Greek political history: "wears a grotesque look; but it would perhaps seem less so if he were also a student of modern countries which have many small political parties" (1968.51).

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38 It should also be noted that the idea of the Greeks' "inherited relationship" with the parties was already commonplace in the last century. In the first Greek study of the parties (Drosos 1982.79, n. 52), Georgios Mikonios commented that "few countries have displayed the effects of party politics and factionalism so clearly as Greece" (Mikonios 1885.κγ′; translation mine).

39 See Sartori 1957 (sixth-fifth cc.); Ghinatti 1970 (mid-seventh c. to the end of the Persian Wars); Pecorella Longo 1971 (fourth c.). More generally, cf. Wolff 1979.297.

Furthermore, as M. H. Hansen has shown (1989b.107ff.), the shift towards the study of smaller political groupings has been assisted by the special role played by extra-institutional forces in the modern democracies. Specifically, according to Hansen, the study of Athenian democracy has been influenced by the shift of interest on the part of modern political science towards the networks of unofficial groupings, political organisations and forces, pressure groups, mouthpieces for public opinion, and distinctive social structures that exist alongside the official state apparatus and constantly grow in strength and influence to the latter's detriment. All this despite the fact that Athenian democracy was characterised by an extremely complex institutional framework that restricted the influence of such forces.

It has been pointed out on numerous occasions that the political forces in a "direct," non-representational democracy differ radically in their nature and function from their modern counterparts. Similarly, researchers have frequently noted the telling absence in ancient Greek of a collective noun to render the concept of "party."[40] Our conclusions, therefore, concern not the manifest truth of these observations, but the attempts each time to draw "topical" lessons or analogies. In the final analysis, an affirmative or negative answer to the question of whether or not "parties" existed in antiquity reflects a negative or positive assessment not of Athenian democracy, but, on the contrary, of the prevailing current circumstances. Furthermore, although diametrically opposed, the responses of both the supporters and the opponents of the *topos*, share—more conspicuously before the inter-war period—the same negative attitude towards the "party" phenomenon. It is not exclusive to historians of the ancient period, but goes hand in hand with the use of the term—and its accompanying prejudices—in the political philosophy of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth (Sartori 1976.3–24; cf. Beyme 1978.732–33).

In view of all this, taken together with the finite nature of the ancient sources, it seems reasonable to argue that the discussion has run its course; though without, of course, ruling out efforts to enrich what has already been said with fresh approaches, perhaps from the point of view of political anthropology, for instance (Meier 1984).[41] The post-war revival of

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40 However, Strauss' comment (1986.16), that "Attic Greek has no neutral word for party," because "Athenians purported to be somewhat embarrassed by their political groups," is rather obscure.

41 Meier makes a thoroughgoing distinction (regarding the programme, the principles, and the duration of the political groupings) that includes some older, rather vague *topoi*, such

the discussion has been influenced by external factors: it is no coincidence, for example, that scholars began to look for differences between the political forces of the ancient period and modern parties just at a time when the form of the latter had finally consolidated in the stable conditions of the western parliamentary system. Thus, as far as the morphology of the political forces in antiquity is concerned, research has now far outstripped the efforts of pre-war scholars. With regard to political theory, however, scant, or at least inadequate, attention has been paid to the question of whether, in the framework of democratic "theory"—or rather of the democratic "idea"[42]—there was widespread acceptance of the notion of creating a more or less organised, impermeable group that sought to impose (presumably by legitimate means), the common political will of its members.[43]

Modern party-systems are founded on the premise that the operation of formal political groups does not go against the common interest. On the contrary, it is thought that parties are essential to free government. As is widely accepted, the Athenians did not entertain this pluralistic view. Hence, the understanding that they held the operation of organised and impermeable political groups to be incompatible with democracy would account for the absence of relevant allusions in Aristotle's *Politics*. It would also explain the Athenians' general distaste for the activities of the *hetaireiai*[44] and—to recall Pearson and his description of "party" rivalry as a mild form of it—for *stasis*.

Nevertheless, in certain instances, the Athenians had tried to transcend their own premises of democracy. The emergence of entities somewhat resembling political "parties" may be considered a centrifugal

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as "le peuple constituait lui-même un parti" (52, cf. 50; see n. 21 above). The essence of the distinction lies in the (somewhat idealised) fact that decisions were freely taken on the initiative of the *ecclesia*, which apparently made it possible for political leadership to operate on the "discussion plane," though not on the "organisation plane" (51). Cf., more recently, Meier 1993.495–96.

42 See Raaflaub 1989.34; but cf. Brock 1991.160 and 169.

43 In formulating this question, it is essential to bear in mind the view that, although the politicians and their associations did not enjoy constitutional privileges, they did hold a *de facto* semi-official position, which was regarded as "similar to that of the other officials of the state"; see, for the fourth century B.C., Perlman 1963.353–54. Cf. Hansen's discussion on Athenian *rhetores* (1983.41–42, 46–49).

44 Plato's unreservedly negative attitude is typical (see Sartori 1958.164–71). See also Connor's succinct comment (1971.6): "political organization was often thought synonymous with conspiracy."

tendency, among others that appeared in their society. Insofar as it opposes the collectivity which absorbs—as Sartori puts it (1987.286–89)—individual political freedom, this tendency may be easily misinterpreted—and indeed it was—as an unexpectedly "modern" turn. However, the dilemma of whether or not "parties" did actually exist in the ancient period may be released from the narrow confines of a one-word answer. Instead, it may be more profitably discussed in terms of political mentalities, in both the ancient and modern contexts—conceptualised as unstable and often resembling something like a contradictory polyptych.[45]

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