Introduction

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This book derives from two research projects developed by researchers from four Brazilian and Portuguese universities, namely: University of São Paulo and Federal University of São Paulo, in Brazil; University of Coimbra and Catholic University in Portugal. The same researchers have been working together since 2015 and have already organized five workshops, two at USP (2016, 2019), three at the University of Coimbra (2017, 2018, 2020). The papers presented and discussed on the first two occasions resulted in the book *A poiesis da democracia* (2018), a collective work comprising 17 researchers from Brazilian and Portuguese universities. The work developed since 2015 is, therefore, a precursor and fundamental step of this book, which aims to continue and expand such a promising initiative.[1]

In a broader scope, this book aims to build a solid and proper contribution to the contemporary global debate on the experience of democracy and its possibilities as the most effective mediator of a series of challenges, a debate that is necessarily rooted in the critical reassessment of its Greek cultural heritage. The book is articulated around the identification of a concrete problem: the need for studies that critically discuss Athenian democracy, seen as a daily problem and

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practice, based on its *staseis* (crises) and *metabolai* (changes), and whose solutions and strategies may still contribute to the reflection on the social, intellectual and ethical-political challenges of contemporary democracy. Analogous critical studies have always been produced such as Vidal-Naquet 2000, Agamben 2009, Pébarthe 2012, Bearzot 2013, Arnason, Raaflaub, and Wagner 2013, and Ober 2015; this volume, though, is particularly focused on the concepts of "crisis" and "change".

The notions of *staseis* (crises) and *metabolai* (changes) of democracies enunciated in the title refer to the main concern of the book: understanding "democracy" not as an univocal and absolute concept, but as a result of permanencies and historical transformations inherent both in its Greek formulation and to its contemporary uses, that is, as a problem whose answers derive from permanently meditated and mediated negotiation. Such formulation owes much to the reflection of C. Pébarthe, who draws on C. Castoriadis to discuss "democracy as a human creation" (2012, 148). This book's main problem is the analysis, preferably interdisciplinary and open to multiple theoretical-methodological approaches, of the construction of the concept of Athenian democracy as a conflicting and problematic political-cultural arena (and not as a goal, structure or program) noticeable above all in historiographical, biographical, philosophical, and rhetorical writings of the classical period, as well as in other types of reflections that supplemented them mainly throughout the 5th and 4th centuries BCE.

The book aims therefore to confront approaches that are as critically innovative as, in their times, they were texts centered on problems such as the relationship between public and private justice, between modes of government and the value of its functioning, between rights and duties that configure citizenship and models of identity, between individual autonomy and arbitrary coercion, or between limitations and possibilities of exercising power—among other issues that form the backbone of ancient and maybe also of contemporary concepts of democracy. By using a heuristic strategy similar to the one that Finley (1973), Hansen (1989, 2005), and Mosconi (2021) have put in practice already, for instance, we hope that the confrontation and permanent debate between past and present may shed some light on problems we consider more urgent than ever.

The chapter of Delfim Leão, "Damasias and Thales: *stasis* and *sophia* at the term of Solon's *apodemia*", addresses an obscure aspect surrounding Solon's activity, which occurred after his political and legislative activity and before his opposition to Pisistratus' moves towards tyranny. It tackles, more specifically, the way in which Solon may have been indirectly involved (as a politician but also as a *sophos*) in a triangle of interests that would include, besides himself, two personalities associated with a period of *stasis* (Damasias) and with the status of *sophos* (Thales).

Denis Correa, "The (not so violent) *staseis* and *metabolai* in the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*", discusses the way *Ath. Pol.* 41.2 lists eleven changes (*metabolai*) to the Athenian political system from the heroic age to the democratic restoration of Thrasybulus in 403 BCE. It examines patterns in the *metabolai*, involving the innovations ascribed to the first three (or four) and the main role

played by Solon after the dissension (*stasis*) in which he acted as an arbitrator and avoided the establishment of a tyranny, which, according to this Aristotelian work, marked the beginning of democracy. After Solon, each subsequent *metabole* implicated his legacy, except those that involved tyranny. This pattern oversimplifies complex historical events, but the relationship between *staseis* and *metabolai* structures the *Athenaion Politeia*'s original design and constitutional historical approach.

Martinho Soares: "Nature and natural phenomena in Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*: *physis* and *kinesis* as factors of political disturbance" debates why the natural phenomena hold an enduring interest for Thucydides, which often links natural problems to political and military decisions and events of the war. Like war, *physis* (nature) also seems to be understood as *kinesis* (movement), a disturbance that affects all aspects of human existence and causes changes (*metabolai*). It analyzes the presence and influence of natural phenomena on the Peloponnesian War development, and draws some literary and philosophical conclusions about the way in which Thucydides understands the interaction between humans and the natural environment.

Breno Battistin Sebastiani and Lucia Sano, "Democracy under the *kothornos*: Thucydides and Xenophon on Theramenes", analyze the political actions of Theramenes as described by Thucydides (during the coup of 411 BCE) and Xenophon (under the Thirty Tyrants' dictatorship, 404–403 BCE) in order to map the features that converged to make him a paradigmatic character in the ancient Greek political imaginary. The analysis aims to highlight the traits of Theramenes that fostered his identification as either the quintessence of the turncoat or as a role-model for moderate politics, as well as the implications of his political stances for the configuration of Athenian democracy in the last quarter of the 5th century and how this, as a *ktema es aei*, may still help us to consider our own democratic system and its flaws.

Maria do Céu Fialho, "Uniting past and present: Sicily as a locus of identity between Greece and Rome", approaches the representation of the proposed expedition to Sicily, as a strategic bridge to advance over Carthage and to define both figures and what they represent. First, old Athens, composed of experienced rulers and devoted, thoughtful citizens, who retreat, aware of the madness and threat of disaster that will lead to the ruinous outcome of the civil war. The threat that constitutes the people in a manipulated uproar in the Assembly intimidates and inhibits the arguments of this Athens. Forced to join the expedition, Nicias, as the embodiment of this polis, will stay until the end, in a campaign with which he does not agree, trying to save his fellow citizens. On the other side, Alcibiades, and what he represents, are fighting fiercely for the realisation of a megalomaniacal dream that will bring fortune and power for their own advantage.

Priscilla Gontijo: "Forms of government and rhetoric: perceptions of democracy and oligarchy in Demosthenes" analyses the role of Demosthenes as a defender of Athenian democracy and freedom, particularly in voicing his concern about the growth of Macedonian power. While the defence of democracy is a recurring theme in his speeches, Demosthenes did not develop a theory

of democracy. Rather, he tended to idealize the Athenian democratic experience prior to the Peloponnesian War. Further, in his defence of democracy and the *ethos* of the democratic citizen, Demosthenes references oligarchy, though again not from a theoretical perspective. The objective of this paper is to analyse Demosthenes's use of the democratic and oligarchical forms of government in his defence of Athens, with a focus on his construction of an antithesis between them and his deployment of the Athenian experiences with oligarchy in 411 and 404 BCE in his oratory.

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