

“Political Shorthand: Thucydides’ Metaphorical Use of ‘Tyranny’”  
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<p><b>1.</b> Pericles, in his final speech to the Athenians: “And do not imagine that what we are fighting for is simply the question of freedom or slavery: there is also involved the loss of our empire and the dangers arising from the hatred which we have incurred in administering it... <b>You now possess an empire like a tyranny</b>, which may have been wrong to take, but is certainly dangerous to let go.”</p>	<p><b>1.</b> “μηδὲ νομίσαι περὶ ἐνὸς μόνου, δουλείας ἀντ’ ἐλευθερίας, ἀγωνίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχῆς στερήσεως καὶ κινδύνου ὧν ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ἀπήχθεσθε...ὡς τυραννίδα γὰρ ἤδη ἔχετε αὐτήν, ἣν λαβεῖν μὲν ἄδικον δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἀφεῖναι δὲ ἐπικίνδυνον.” Thucydides 2.63.1-2</p>
<p><b>2.</b> The Corinthians, closing their speech to the Spartans: ““And so, <b>considering that the state established as a tyrant in Hellas is established against all alike</b>, already ruling over some and intending to rule over others, let us attack it and bring it to terms, and live securely, ourselves, into the future and set free those Hellenes currently enslaved.’ Thus spoke the Corinthians.”</p>	<p><b>2.</b> “καὶ τὴν καθεστηκυῖαν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι πόλιν τύραννον ἡγησάμενοι ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ὁμοίως καθεστάναι, ὥστε τῶν μὲν ἤδη ἄρχειν, τῶν δὲ διανοεῖσθαι, παραστησώμεθα ἐπελθόντες, καὶ αὐτοὶ τε ἀκινδύνως τὸ λοιπὸν οἰκῶμεν καὶ τοὺς νῦν δεδουλωμένους Ἑλληνας ἐλευθερώσωμεν,” Τοιαῦτα μὲν οἱ Κορίνθιοι εἶπον.” Thucydides 1.124.3</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Cleon, speaking in the Mytilenian Debate, arguing in favor of killing the rebellious Mytilenians: “You do not consider that <b>you possess a tyranny</b>, exercising it over subjects who are unwilling and who are always plotting against you...”</p>	<p><b>3.</b> “οὐ σκοποῦντες ὅτι τυραννίδα ἔχετε τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ πρὸς ἐπιβουλεύοντας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἄκοντας ἀρχομένους...” Thucydides 3.37.2</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Thucydides’ segue from discussing the Peisistratids to Alcibiades’ recall: “Thinking of these events [Harmodius and Aristogeiton] and recalling all that they knew of them by tradition, the Athenian people were bitter then and suspicious towards those who had taken blame concerning the mysteries; and <b>it all seemed to them to have been done in a conspiracy for oligarchy or tyranny.</b>”</p>	<p><b>4.</b> “Ὡν ἐνθυμούμενος ὁ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ μιμησκόμενος ὅσα ἀκοῆ περὶ αὐτῶν ἠπίστατο, χαλεπὸς ἦν τότε καὶ ὑπόπτῆς ἐς τοὺς περὶ τῶν μυστικῶν τὴν αἰτίαν λαβόντας, καὶ πάντα αὐτοῖς ἐδόκει ἐπὶ ξυνωμοσίᾳ ὀλιγαρχικῇ καὶ τυραννικῇ πεπραχθαι.” Thucydides 6.60.1</p>

<p>5. Bdelycleon, responding the Chorus:</p> <p><b>"How is everything a 'tyranny' and 'conspirators' to you, if anyone makes any criticism, big or small.</b></p> <p>I haven't heard the word for fifty years, but now it's much cheaper than salted fish, such that the name is even tossed about in the market."</p>	<p>5.</p> <p>“ὡς ἅπανθ' ὑμῖν τυραννίς ἐστί καὶ ξυνωμόται, ἦν τε μείζον ἦν τ' ἔλαττον πράγμα τις κατηγορή. ἧς ἐγὼ οὐκ ἤκουσα τοῦνομ' οὐδὲ πεντήκοντ' ἐτῶν. νῦν δὲ πολλῶ τοῦ ταρίχους ἐστὶν ἀξιωτέρα, ὥστε καὶ δὴ τοῦνομ' αὐτῆς ἐν ἀγορᾷ κυλίνδεται.”</p> <p>Aristophanes, <i>Wasps</i> 488-492.</p>
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\*\* Thucydides quotations were taken from Jones (1974 and 1976). Aristophanes was taken from Sommerstein (1980). All translations my own.

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