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Lies, Misdirection, and Gaslighting: On Establishing and Maintaining Tyranny at Athens
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Hdt. 1.59.3-5

Γενέσθαι οἱ μετὰ ταῦτα τὸν Πεισίστρατον τοῦτον, ὃς στασιαζόντων τῶν παράλων καὶ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου Ἀθηναίων, καὶ τῶν μὲν προεστεῶτος Μεγακλέος τοῦ Ἀλκμέωνος, τῶν δὲ ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου Λυκούργου τοῦ Ἀριστολαΐδεω, καταφρονήσας τὴν τυραννίδα ἤγειρε τρίτην στάσιν, συλλέξας δὲ στασιώτας καὶ τῶ λόγῳ τῶν ὑπερακρίων προστὰς μηχανᾶται τοιάδε· [4] τρωματίσας ἐωυτόν τε καὶ ἡμιόνους ἤλασε ἐς τὴν ἀγορὴν τὸ ζεῦγος ὡς ἐκπεφευγὸς τοὺς ἐχθρούς, οἳ μιν ἐλαύνοντα ἐς ἀγρὸν ἠθέλησαν ἀπολέσαι δῆθεν, ἐδέετό τε τοῦ δήμου φυλακῆς τινος πρὸς αὐτοῦ κυρῆσαι, πρότερον εὐδοκιμήσας ἐν τῇ πρὸς Μεγαρέας γενομένη στρατηγίῃ, Νίσαιάν τε ἐλὼν καὶ ἄλλα ἀποδεξάμενος μεγάλα ἔργα. [5] Ὁ δὲ δῆμος ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐξαπατηθεὶς ἔδωκέ οἱ τῶν ἀστῶν καταλέξασθαι ἄνδρας τριηκοσίους οἱ δορυφόροι μὲν οὐκ ἐγένοντο Πεισιστράτου, κορυνηφόροι δὲ ξύλων γὰρ κορύνας ἔχοντες εἶποντό οἱ ὀπίσθε. Συνεπαναστάντες δὲ οὗτοι ἅμα Πεισιστράτῳ ἔσχον τὴν ἀκρόπολιν. Ἐνθα δὴ ὁ Πεισίστρατος ἦρχε Ἀθηναίων, οὔτε τιμὰς τὰς ἐούσας συνταράξας οὔτε θέσμια μεταλλάξας, ἐπὶ τε τοῖσι κατεστεῶσι ἔνεμε τὴν πόλιν κοσμέων καλῶς τε καὶ εὖ.

[59.3] Later, at Athens, two factions formed, one of the coastal district under the leadership of Megakles son of Alkmeon, and another of the plains district under Lykourgos son of Aristoleides. Peisistratos then formed a third faction, intending to make himself the city's tyrant. When he had collected his partisans and made himself nominal leader of the hill district, he devised the following plan. [4] First, he wounded himself and his mules and drove his chariot into the center of town, claiming to be in flight from enemies who had attempted to kill him as he drove into the countryside. He then asked the Athenian people to grant him protection, reminding them of his many past achievements on their behalf, particularly his service as general in the war against Megara, when he had captured Nisaia. [5] The Athenian people, completely duped by Peisistratos, selected some of their city's men to serve as a bodyguard for him. These men carried wooden clubs instead of spears as they followed him about, and they supported him when he revolted and took control of the Acropolis. From then on, Peisistratos ruled the Athenians, but he neither disrupted the existing political offices nor changed the laws. He managed the city in accordance with its existing legal and political institutions, and he provided it with moderate and good government.

Μετὰ δὲ οὐ πολλὸν χρόνον τῷαυτὸ φρονήσαντες οἳ τε τοῦ Μεγακλέος στασιῶται καὶ οἱ τοῦ Λυκούργου ἐξελαύνουσί μιν. Οὕτω μὲν Πεισίστρατος ἔσχε τὸ πρῶτον Ἀθήνας καὶ τὴν τυραννίδα οὐκ ἔκαρτα ἐρριζωμένην ἔχων ἀπέβαλε, οἱ δὲ ἐξελάσαντες Πεισίστρατον αὐτίς ἐκ νέης ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι ἐστασίασαν. [2] Περιελαυνόμενος δὲ τῆς στάσις ὁ Μεγακλῆς ἐπεκηρυκεύετο Πεισιστράτῳ, εἰ βούλοιτό οἱ τὴν θυγατέρα ἔχειν γυναῖκα ἐπὶ τῆς τυραννίδι. [3] Ἐνδεξαμένου δὲ τὸν λόγον καὶ ὁμολογήσαντος ἐπὶ τούτοις Πεισιστράτου, μηχανῶνται δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς κατόδῳ πρῆγμα εὐηθέστατον, ὡς ἐγὼ εὐρίσκω, μακρῶ (ἐπεὶ γε ἀπεκρίθη ἐκ παλαιτέρου τοῦ βαρβάρου ἔθνεος τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἔθνος καὶ δεξιώτερον καὶ εὐηθείης ἡλιθίου ἀπηλλαγμένον μᾶλλον), εἰ καὶ τότε γε οὗτοι ἐν Ἀθηναίοισι τοῖσι πρώτοις λεγομένοις εἶναι Ἑλλήνων σοφίην μηχανῶνται τοιάδε. [4] Ἐν τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Παιανιείῳ ἦν γυνή, τῆς οὐνομα ἦν Φύη, μέγαθος ἀπὸ τεσσέρων πήχεων ἀπολείπουσα τρεῖς δακτύλους καὶ ἄλλως εὐειδής. Ταύτην τὴν γυναῖκα σκεύασαντες πανοπλίῃ, ἐς ἄρμα ἐσβιβάσαντες καὶ προδέξαντες σχῆμα οἷόν τι ἔμελλε εὐπρεπέστατον φανέεσθαι ἔχουσα, ἤλαυνον ἐς τὸ ἄστυ, προδρόμους κήρυκας προπέμψαντες, οἱ τὰ ἐντεταλμένα ἡγόρευον ἀπικόμενοι ἐς τὸ ἄστυ, λέγοντες τοιάδε: [5] «ἽΩ Ἀθηναῖοι, δέκεσθε ἀγαθῶ νόμῳ Πεισίστρατον, τὸν αὐτὴ ἡ Ἀθηναίη τιμήσασα ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα κατάγει ἐς τὴν ἐσωτῆς ἀκρόπολιν.» Οἱ μὲν δὲ ταῦτα διαφοιτῶντες ἔλεγον, αὐτίκα δὲ ἔς τε τοὺς δήμους φάτις ἀπικέτο ὡς Ἀθηναίη Πεισίστρατον κατάγει, καὶ οἱ ἐν τῷ ἄστεϊ πειθόμενοι τὴν γυναῖκα εἶναι αὐτὴν τὴν θεὸν προσεύχοντό τε τὴν ἀνθρωπὸν καὶ ἐδέκοντο Πεισίστρατον.

[60.1] After a little while the partisans of Megakles united with those of Lykourgos, and together they drove out Peisistratos. Thus the first time Peisistratos took control of Athens and held the tyranny, his rule did not become deeply rooted and he lost it. However, the men who drove him out divided into quarrelsome factions once again, and [2] Megakles, who was particularly harassed by this factional strife, sent a message to Peisistratos offering to restore him to the tyranny if in return he would marry his daughter. [3] Peisistratos agreed to the terms and accepted the offer; they then, in order to help him return to power, contrived the silliest scheme I've ever heard of – particularly silly in this case, for long ago the Hellenes distinguished themselves from barbarians by their superior cleverness and freedom from naive stupidity; moreover, they carried out this scheme against the Athenians, who were at the time reputed to surpass all other Hellenes in intellect! [4] There was a woman named Phye in the deme of Paiania who was almost six feet tall and strikingly beautiful. They dressed her up in a full set of armor, placed her in a chariot, showed her how to project a distinguished appearance, and then drove her into the city. They sent heralds on ahead of them to tell the people to remain in the city and to proclaim: [5] “Athenians, hail Peisistratos and welcome him joyfully, since Athena herself is bringing him home to her own Acropolis, honoring him above all men.” They repeated these words as they made their way onward, and before long the rumor that Athena was bringing Peisistratos home had reached the demes. In the city, people actually worshiped this woman in the belief that she was really the goddess; and they welcomed Peisistratos back.

Δημοτικώτατος δ' εἶναι δοκῶν ὁ Πεισίστρατος καὶ σφόδρ' εὐδοκιμηκῶς ἐν τῷ πρὸς Μεγαρέας πολέμῳ, κατατραυματίσας ἑαυτὸν συνέπεισε τὸν δῆμον, ὡς ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντιστασιωτῶν ταῦτα πεπονθῶς, φυλακὴν ἑαυτῷ δοῦναι τοῦ σώματος, Ἀριστίωνος γράψαντος τὴν γνώμην. λαβῶν δὲ τοὺς κορυνηφόρους καλουμένους, ἐπαναστὰς μετὰ τούτων τῷ δήμῳ, κατέσχε τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἔτει δευτέρῳ καὶ τριακοστῷ μετὰ τὴν τῶν νόμων θέσιν, ἐπὶ Κωμέου ἄρχοντος. [2] λέγεται δὲ Σόλωνα Πεισιστράτου τὴν φυλακὴν αἰτοῦντος ἀντιλέξει καὶ εἰπεῖν ὅτι τῶν μὲν εἶη σοφώτερος, τῶν δ' ἀνδρειότερος· ὅσοι μὲν γὰρ ἀγνοοῦσι Πεισίστρατον ἐπιτιθέμενον τυραννίδι, σοφώτερος εἶναι τούτων, ὅσοι δ' εἰδότες κατασιωπῶσιν, ἀνδρειότερος. ἐπεὶ δὲ λέγων οὐκ ἔπειθεν, ἐξαράμενος τὰ ὄπλα πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν, αὐτὸς μὲν ἔφη βεβηθηκέναι τῇ πατρίδι, καθ' ὅσον ἦν δυνατός (ἤδη γὰρ σφόδρα πρεσβύτης ἦν), ἀξιοῦν δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ταῦτο τοῦτο ποιεῖν. [3] Σόλων μὲν οὖν οὐδὲν ἤνυσεν τότε παρακαλῶν. Πεισίστρατος δὲ λαβῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν διώκει τὰ κοινά, πολιτικῶς μᾶλλον ἢ τυραννικῶς. οὐπω δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐρριζωμένης, ὁμοφρονήσαντες οἱ περὶ τὸν Μεγακλέα καὶ τὸν Λυκοῦργον, ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔκτω ἔτει μετὰ τὴν πρώτην κατάστασιν, ἐφ' Ἡγησίου ἄρχοντος. [4] ἔτει δὲ δωδεκάτῳ μετὰ ταῦτα περιελαυνόμενος ὁ Μεγακλῆς τῇ στάσει, πάλιν ἐπικηρυκευσάμενος πρὸς τὸν Πεισίστρατον, ἐφ' ᾧ τε τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτοῦ λήψεται, κατήγαγεν αὐτὸν ἀρχαίως καὶ λίαν ἀπλῶς. προδιασπίρας γὰρ λόγον, ὡς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς καταγούσης Πεισίστρατον, καὶ γυναῖκα μεγάλην καὶ καλὴν ἐξευρών, ὡς μὲν Ἡρόδοτός φησιν ἐκ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Παιανιέων, ὡς δ' ἔνιοι λέγουσιν ἐκ τοῦ Κολλυτοῦ στεφανόπωλιν Θραῦτταν, ἣ ὄνομα Φύη, τὴν θεὸν ἀπομιμησάμενος τῷ κόσμῳ, συνεισήγαγεν μετ' αὐτοῦ· καὶ ὁ μὲν Πεισίστρατος ἐφ' ἄρματος εἰσήλαυε, παραιβατούσης τῆς γυναικός, οἱ δ' ἐν τῷ ἄστει προσκυνοῦντες ἐδέχοντο θαυμάζοντες.

[14.1] Peisistratos, who had the reputation of being an extreme populist, and had also distinguished himself greatly in the war with Megara, wounded himself, and by representing that his injuries had been inflicted on him by his political rivals, persuaded the people, through a motion proposed by Aristion, to grant him a bodyguard. After he had got these “club-bearers,” as they were called, he made an attack with them on the people and seized the Acropolis. This happened in the archonship of Komeas, thirty-one years after the legislation of Solon. [2] It is related that, when Peisistratos asked for his bodyguard, Solon opposed the request, and declared that in doing so he proved himself wiser than half the people and braver than the rest – wiser than those who did not see that Peisistratos designed to make himself tyrant, and braver than those who saw it and kept silence. But when all his words availed nothing he carried forth his armor and set it up in front of his house, saying that he had helped his country so far as lay in his power (he was already an old man), and that he called on all others to do the same. [3] Solon’s exhortations proved fruitless, however, and Peisistratos assumed the sovereignty. His administration was more like a constitutional government than the rule of a tyrant; but before his power was firmly established, the adherents of Megakles and Lykourgos made a coalition and drove him out. This took place in the archonship of Hegesias, five years after the first establishment of his rule. [4] On the twelfth year after this, Megakles, worn out because of the stasis, and having sent heralds to come to an agreement with Peisistratos, on terms of receiving his daughter in marriage, led him back to the city in an antiquated and extremely simple manner: for after having spread the rumor that Athena was leading Peisistratos back to the city, and having found a tall and beautiful woman (according to Herodotus a member of the demos of Paiania, but according to some others a Thracian flower girl from Kollytos named Phye), he dressed her up to imitate the goddess’s external appearance, and brought her to the city with Peisistratos, who on his part entered the city on a chariot with the woman standing at his side, while the people in the city were filled with awe and bowed down before them.

Please look at the following two photos: Photo A and Photo B.



Which photo has more people?

Photo A has more people

Photo B has more people

Shaffner and Luks 2018, Figure 1 (page 138)

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