

### Constructing Periander in Plutarch's *Symposium of the Seven Sages*\*

#### 1. Plato, *Protagoras* 343a1-b2

τούτων ἦν καὶ Θαλῆς ὁ Μιλήσιος καὶ Πιπτακὸς ὁ Μυτιληναῖος καὶ Βίας ὁ Πριηνεὺς καὶ Σόλων ὁ ἡμέτερος καὶ Κλεόβουλος ὁ Λίνδιος καὶ Μύσων ὁ Χηνεὺς, καὶ ἕβδομος ἐν τούτοις ἐλέγετο Λακεδαιμόνιος Χίλων. οὗτοι πάντες ζηλωταὶ καὶ ἐρασταὶ καὶ μαθηταὶ ἦσαν τῆς Λακεδαιμονίων παιδείας· καὶ καταμάθοι ἂν τις αὐτῶν τὴν σοφίαν τοιαύτην οὖσαν, **ρήματα βραχέα ἀξιωμακρόνεντα ἐκάστω εἰρημένα· οὗτοι καὶ κοινῇ ξυνελθόντες ἀπαρχὴν τῆς σοφίας ἀνέθεσαν τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι εἰς τὸν νεῶν τὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς,** γράψαντες ταῦτα, ἃ δὴ πάντες ὕμνοῦσι, γνῶθι σαυτὸν καὶ μηδὲν ἄγαν.

Such men were Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, Solon of our city, Cleobulus of Lindus, Myson of Chenae, and the seventh in this group was said to be Chilon of Sparta. All these were enthusiasts, lovers and disciples of the Spartan culture; and one can recognize that character in their wisdom **by the short, memorable sayings uttered by each of them; they assembled together and dedicated these as the first-fruits of their wisdom to Apollo in his Delphic temple,** inscribing there those maxims which are on every tongue—“Know thyself” and “Nothing in excess.”

#### 2. Plutarch, *Symposium of the Seven Sages* 146B-C (Diocles)

οὔτε γὰρ μόνων, ὡς ὑμεῖς ἀκηκόατε, τῶν ἐπτὰ γέγονε τὸ συμπόσιον, ἀλλὰ πλειόνων ἢ δις τοσοῦτων (ἐν οἷς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦμην, συνήθης μὲν ὦν Περιάνδρῳ διὰ τὴν τέχνην, ξένος δὲ Θάλεω· παρ' ἐμοὶ γὰρ κατέλυσεν ὁ ἀνὴρ Περιάνδρου κελεύσαντος), οὔτε τοὺς λόγους ὀρθῶς ἀπεμνημόνευσεν ὅστις ἦν ὑμῖν ὁ διηγούμενος· ἦν δ' ὡς ἔοικεν οὐδεὶς τῶν παραγεγονότων.

**For, in the first place, the dinner was not a dinner of the Seven alone, as you and your friends have been told, but of more than twice that number, and I was among them;** for I was on intimate terms with Periander by virtue of my profession, and I was also the host of Thales, for he stayed at my house by command of Periander. In the second place, your informant, whoever he was, did not report the conversation correctly; apparently he was not one of those at the dinner.

#### 3. Dicaearchus, fr. 32 Wehrli (= D.L. 1.41):

Δικαίαρχος δὲ τέσσαρας ὠμολογημένους ἡμῖν παραδίδωσι, Θαλῆν, Βίαντα, Πιπτακόν, Σόλωνα. ἄλλους δὲ ὀνομάζει ἕξι, ὧν ἐκλέξασθαι τρεῖς, Ἀριστόδημον, Πάμφυλον, Χείλωνα Λακεδαιμόνιον, Κλεόβουλον, Ἀνάχαρσιν, Περιάνδρον.

Dicaearchus hands down four names fully recognized: Thales, Bias, Pittacus, and Solon; and he appends the names of six others, from whom one has to choose three: Aristodemus, Pamphylus, Chilon the Lacedaemonian, Cleobulus, Anacharsis, Periander.

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\* When available, I have used the translations of the Loeb series with some modifications.

4. Aristotle, fr. 517 Rose (= D.L. 1.99)

καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης μὲν φησι τὸν Κορίνθιον εἶναι τὸν σοφόν· Πλάτων δὲ οὐ φησιν.

And Aristotle maintains that the Corinthian (Periander) was the sage; Plato, on the other hand, denies it.

5a. Diodorus Siculus, 9.7

ὄν (sc. Μύσωνα) ἀντεισηῶσαν εἰς τοὺς ἑπτὰ σοφούς, ἐκκρίναντες τὸν Περιάνδρον τὸν Κορίνθιον διὰ τὸ τύραννον γεγονέναι πικρόν.

He (i.e. Myson) was included among the Seven Sages in the place of Periander of Corinth, who was rejected because he had turned into a bitter tyrant.

5b. Pausanias, 10.24.1

τὸν δὲ ἕβδομον Πλάτων ὁ Ἀρίστωνος ἀντὶ Περιάνδρου τοῦ Κυψέλου Μύσωνα κατείλοχε τὸν Χηνέα...οὗτοι οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες ἀφικόμενοι ἐς Δελφοὺς ἀνέθεσαν τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τὰ ἀδόμηνα “Γνώθι σαυτὸν” καὶ “Μηδὲν ἄγαν”.

As the seventh sage Plato, the son of Ariston, has included in his list not Periander, the son of Cypselus, but Myson of Chenae...These men, then, (i.e. the Sages) came to Delphi and dedicated to Apollo the celebrated maxims, “Know thyself, and” Nothing in excess.”

5c. Diogenes Laertius, 1.41

Πλάτων δὲ ἐν Πρωταγόρᾳ Μύσωνα (sc. ἐγκρίνει) ἀντὶ Περιάνδρου· Ἐφορος δὲ ἀντὶ Μύσωνος Ἀνάχαρσιν.

Plato in his *Protagoras* (accepts) Myson instead of Periander; Ephorus (accepts) Anacharsis instead of Myson.

6a. Plutarch, *Symposium of the Seven Sages* 147A-C

“..ἀλλ’, ὅπερ ἔφην, διεβλήθης μισοβασιλεὺς εἶναι, καὶ τινες ὑβριστικαὶ σου περὶ τυράννων ἀποφάσεις ἀνεφέροντο πρὸς αὐτόν, ὡς ἐρωτηθεὶς ὑπὸ Μολπαγόρου τοῦ Ἰωνος τί παραδοξότατον εἶης ἑωρακώς, ἀποκρίναιο ‘τύραννον γέροντα’(...)” “Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν,” εἶπεν ὁ Θαλῆς, “Πιττακοῦ ἐστίν, εἰρημένον ἐν παιδιᾷ ποτε πρὸς Μυρσίλον:(...) διὸ καὶ Σόλων σοφώτατον ἠγησάμην οὐ δεξάμενον τυραννεῖν. καὶ Πιττακὸς οὗτος εἰ μοναρχία μὴ προσῆλθεν, οὐκ ἂν εἶπεν ὡς ‘χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.’ Περιάνδρος δ’ ἔοικεν ὥσπερ ἐν νοσήματι πατρῷ τῇ τυραννίδι κατελημμένος οὐ φαύλως ἐξαναφέρειν, χρώμενος ὁμιλίαις ὑγιεναῖς ἄχρι γε νῦν καὶ συνουσίας ἀνδρῶν νοῦν ἐχόντων ἐπαγόμενος, ἅς δὲ Θρασύβουλος αὐτῷ κολουσεῖς τῶν ἄκρων οὐμὸς πολίτης ὑφηγεῖται μὴ προσιέμενος.

[Neiloxenus is speaking] “But, as I said, you have been unjustly accused of having an animosity against kings, and certain offensive pronouncements of yours regarding tyrants have been reported to him. For example, he was told that, when you were asked by Molpagoras the Ionian what was the most paradoxical thing you had ever seen, you replied, ‘A tyrant that lived to be old.’(…)” “But the fact is,” said Thales, “that Pittacus is responsible for that statement, which was once made in jest with reference to Myrsilus...This is the reason why I regarded Solon as very wise in refusing to accept the position of tyrant. And as this Pittacus I mentioned, if he had never addressed himself to the task of ruling single-handed, he would not have said that ‘it is hard to be good.’ But Periander, apparently, in spite of his being afflicted with tyranny as with an inherited disease, is making fair progress towards recovery by keeping wholesome company—at least up to the present time—and by bringing about conferences with men of sense, and by refusing to entertain the suggestions offered by my fellow-citizen Thrasybulus about lopping off the topmost.

6b. Plutarch, Symposium of the Seven Sages 148D (Thales)

ἀλλὰ καὶ φρόνημα θαυμαστὸν καὶ νοῦς ἔνεστι πολιτικὸς καὶ φιλόφρων ἦθος, καὶ τὸν πατέρα τοῖς πολίταις πραότερον ἄρχοντα παρέχει καὶ δημοτικώτερον.

But she is also possessed of wonderful sense, a statesman’s mind, and an amiable character, and she has influence with her father so that his government of the citizens has become milder and more popular.

7a. Plutarch, Symposium of the Seven Sages 152A-B

Μικρὸν οὖν ἐπισχὼν ὁ Σόλων “ἐμοὶ μὲν,” ἔφη, “δοκεῖ μάλιστ’ ἂν ἔνδοξος γενέσθαι καὶ βασιλεὺς καὶ τύραννος, εἰ δημοκρατίαν ἐκ μοναρχίας κατασκευάσειε τοῖς πολίταις.” Δεύτερος δ’ ὁ Βίας εἶπεν, “εἰ πρῶτος χρῶτο τοῖς νόμοις τῆς πατρίδος.” Ἐπὶ τούτῳ δ’ ὁ Θαλῆς ἔφησεν, εὐδαιμονίαν ἄρχοντος νομίζειν, εἰ τελευτήσῃε γηράσας κατὰ φύσιν.

Τέταρτος Ἀνάχαρσις, “εἰ μὴ μόνος εἴη φρόνιμος.” Πέμπτος δ’ ὁ Κλεόβουλος, “εἰ μηδενὶ πιστεύοι τῶν συνόντων.”

Ἐκτος δ’ ὁ Πιττακός, “εἰ τοὺς ὑπηκόους ὁ ἄρχων παρασκευάσειε φοβεῖσθαι μὴ αὐτὸν ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ.” Μετὰ τοῦτον ὁ Χίλων ἔφη τὸν ἄρχοντα χρῆναι μηδὲν φρονεῖν θνητόν, ἀλλὰ πάντ’ ἀθάνατα.

Ῥηθέντων δὲ τούτων ἠξιοῦμεν ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτὸν εἰπεῖν τι τὸν Περιάνδρον. ὁ δ’ οὐ μάλα φαιδρὸς ἀλλὰ συστήσας τὸ πρόσωπον “ἐγὼ τοίνυν,” ἔφη, “προσαποφαινομαι τὰς εἰρημένας γνώμας ἀπάσας σχεδὸν ἀφιστάναι τοῦ ἄρχεῖν τὸν νοῦν ἔχοντα.”

Solon then, after a moment’s delay, said, “In my opinion either a king, or a tyrant, would best gain repute if out of a monarchy he should organize a democracy for his people.” Next Bias said, “If he should be the very first to conform to his country’s laws.” Following him Thales said that he accounted it happiness for a ruler to reach old age and die a natural death. Fourth, Anacharsis said, “If he should not be the only one to have sound sense.” Fifth, Cleobulus, “If he should trust none of his associates.” Sixth, Pittacus, “If the ruler should manage to make his subjects fear, not him, but for him.” Chilon followed by saying that a ruler’s thoughts should never be the thoughts of a mortal, but always divine thoughts.

When these (maxims) had been expressed, we insisted that Periander himself should also say something. And he, not very cheerful, but with a hard set face, said, “Well, I add my view that the opinions expressed, taken as a whole, practically divorce any man who has sense from being a ruler.”

7b. Plutarch, *Symposium of the Seven Sages* 152C (Solon)

οὐκ ἂν δοκεῖ σοι μετριώτερον ἄρχοντα ποιεῖν καὶ τύραννον ἐπιεικέστερον ὁ πείθων ὡς ἄμεινον εἶη τὸ μὴ ἄρχεῖν ἢ τὸ ἄρχεῖν;

Don't you think that one could make a ruler more moderate and a tyrant more reasonable if he could persuade them that it is better not to rule than to rule?

8. Plutarch, *Symposium of the Seven Sages* 154E-F

Τελευταῖος δὲ πάλλιν ὁ Περίανδρος ἐπικρίνων ἔφη δοκεῖν αὐτῷ πάντας ἐπαινεῖν δημοκρατίαν τὴν ὁμοιοτάτην ἀριστοκρατία.

Finally, Periander once more concluded the discussion with the decisive remark, that they all seemed to him to approve a democracy which was most like an aristocracy.

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